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Vertical Up-Scaling and Academic Job Performance in Tertiary Institutions in Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between vertical up-scaling and lecturers' academic job performance in tertiary institutions within the Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State. Guided by two research questions and two null hypotheses, the study adopted a descriptive survey design and utilized a stratified random sampling technique to select 369 lecturers as respondents. Data were collected using the *Questionnaire for Vertical Up-scaling on Academic Job Performance in Tertiary Institutions (QVUSAJP)*. Responses were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for research questions, while simple linear regression was employed to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 significance level. The findings revealed that professional development opportunities accounted for 33.8% of the variance in academic job performance and had a statistically significant positive influence. Similarly, enhancing research capacities explained 34.8% of the variance and also demonstrated a significant effect on lecturers' academic job performance. Based on these findings, it was recommended that institutions promote regular workshops, training sessions, and mentorship programs to enhance pedagogical competencies. Furthermore, lecturers should be encouraged to participate in national and

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international conferences to remain current with global educational and research developments. Future research should extend this study to other regions and explore alternative data collection instruments to enrich understanding of the impact of vertical up-scaling on academic performance.

Keywords: Vertical Up-scaling; Academic Job Performance; Lecturers; Professional Development; Tertiary Institutions

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental pillar of national development, influencing economic growth, technological advancement, and social transformation. Among the various levels of education, tertiary education plays a crucial role in producing skilled professionals, fostering research, and promoting innovation that contribute to national progress (Adeyemi & Uche, 2021). Tertiary institutions serve as centers of knowledge production, equipping students with the expertise necessary to address societal challenges and drive sustainable development (Ofoegbu & Nwankwo, 2022).

One of the key determinants of quality education in tertiary institutions is the academic job performance of lecturers, which encompasses teaching effectiveness, research productivity, and engagement in community service (Usman, Bello, & Adeyemi, 2023). Academic staffs are expected to deliver high-quality instruction, conduct research that contributes to knowledge creation, and actively participate in institutional growth and development (Ekong & Ojong, 2023). However, their effectiveness is significantly influenced by their qualifications, experience, professional development opportunities, and access to research resources (Ekwueme, Nwachukwu, & Uche, 2021).

In the evolving landscape of tertiary institutions, there is increasing emphasis on vertical up-scaling, a concept that underscores continuous professional development, skill enhancement, and career progression among academic staff (Asuquo & Bassey, 2023). This process involves obtaining higher degrees, participating in professional training programs, publishing research in reputable journals, engaging in academic collaborations, and acquiring specialized skills to meet global educational standards (Okon & Ekong, 2023). Vertical up-scaling in academia refers to the systematic progression of academic staff through higher educational qualifications, specialized training, and research development

(Odu & Umeh, 2021). It is a deliberate process aimed at enhancing academic job performance by equipping lecturers with advanced knowledge, technical skills, and pedagogical competencies (Ekwueme et al., 2021).

Academic job performance is a multi-dimensional construct that assesses the effectiveness of lecturers in fulfilling their core responsibilities, including teaching, research, and institutional service. It serves as a critical indicator of the quality of higher education and directly impacts students' learning experiences, institutional reputation, and academic advancement (Usman et al., 2023). One of the primary dimensions of academic job performance is teaching effectiveness, which encompasses various aspects such as student performance, instructional strategies, course delivery, and student feedback. Lecturers who engage in vertical up-scaling—such as acquiring additional qualifications or participating in professional development programs—tend to enhance their pedagogical skills, thereby improving their ability to deliver quality education (Odu & Umeh, 2021). By integrating modern teaching methodologies and leveraging updated knowledge in their disciplines, these lecturers are better equipped to engage students, foster critical thinking, and improve overall academic achievement.

In addition to teaching, research productivity is a crucial factor in assessing academic job performance. Research output is evaluated based on the number of peer-reviewed journal publications, participation in academic conferences, and the ability to secure research grants (Ekong & Ojong, 2023). Lecturers who pursue vertical up-scaling by obtaining advanced degrees or engaging in research training programs demonstrate greater research competence. This, in turn, enhances their ability to contribute to knowledge creation, attract funding opportunities, and collaborate with scholars across various disciplines. Increased research engagement not only elevates an individual lecturer's academic standing but also enhances the institution's research profile and global recognition.

Another essential aspect of academic job performance is institutional contribution, which involves responsibilities beyond teaching and research. This includes mentoring students, participating in departmental administration, and engaging in community service initiatives (Ogunleye & Nwachukwu, 2021). Lecturers who continuously improve their qualifications and skills tend to demonstrate a stronger commitment to institutional development. They actively engage in mentoring activities, provide academic leadership,

and contribute to policy formulation within their institutions. Such involvement strengthens the overall academic environment and fosters a culture of professionalism and continuous improvement.

Several studies have underscored the positive impact of vertical up-scaling on academic job performance. For instance, Okoro and Udoh (2022) found that lecturers who engage in continuous professional development exhibit higher teaching effectiveness due to improved instructional strategies and subject mastery. Similarly, Asuquo and Bassey (2023) reported that academic staffs with higher qualifications and research training demonstrate greater research productivity, as evidenced by increased publication output and success in securing research grants. Furthermore, Ekwueme et al. (2021) highlighted that lecturers who pursue further academic and professional development display stronger institutional commitment, actively contributing to mentorship programs, departmental administration, and academic leadership roles.

Despite the importance of vertical up-scaling, many tertiary institutions in the Nigeria face significant challenges that hinder academic staff from advancing their careers. These challenges include limited funding, inadequate access to research grants, heavy workload, and institutional policies that do not prioritize continuous professional development (Ogunleye & Nwachukwu, 2021). Additionally, some lecturers are reluctant to pursue further education due to personal constraints, lack of motivation, or the absence of clear incentives for career advancement (Nwosu & Onwumere, 2021).

Although the National Universities Commission (NUC) and other educational regulatory bodies have established minimum qualification standards for academic staff, many institutions struggle to bridge the gap between policy expectations and actual implementation (Okoro & Udoh, 2022). Consequently, skill deficiencies, low research output, and outdated teaching methods persist, affecting the overall quality of education in Nigerian tertiary institutions (Eze et al., 2023). However, many tertiary institutions struggle to implement these guidelines effectively, leading to disparities in staff qualifications and overall job performance (Eze, Okafor, & Nwankwo, 2023). It is on this background that this study seeks to examine the influence of vertical up-scaling on academic job performance in tertiary institutions within the Calabar Educational Zone.

Statement of the Problem

Academic job performance in tertiary institutions is a crucial factor in ensuring the quality and effectiveness of higher education. It encompasses teaching effectiveness, research productivity, and institutional contributions, all of which collectively determine the overall academic standard of an institution. However, the ability of lecturers to meet these expectations is largely influenced by their level of professional development and career progression. Vertical up-scaling, which involves obtaining higher degrees, engaging in professional training, and participating in research and academic collaborations, is increasingly recognized as a key strategy for enhancing lecturers' job performance. Despite its importance, many lecturers in tertiary institutions within the Calabar Educational Zone struggle to engage in continuous professional development due to financial constraints, heavy workload, institutional policies, and limited access to research resources.

The gap between policy expectations and actual implementation of vertical up-scaling measures in tertiary institutions remains a significant challenge. While regulatory bodies emphasize the need for academic staff to improve their qualifications and skills, many institutions lack clear career advancement pathways and incentives that encourage lecturers to pursue further education and research activities. Consequently, this has led to skill deficiencies, low research output, outdated teaching methodologies, and reduced institutional commitment among lecturers. These challenges ultimately affect students' learning experiences, research advancements, and the overall reputation of institutions in the region.

The failure to prioritize vertical up-scaling in tertiary institutions has far-reaching implications, including declining teaching effectiveness, reduced research productivity, and limited institutional contributions from lecturers. If not addressed, these issues could compromise the standard of education and hinder the ability of institutions to compete at national and international levels. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the influence of vertical up-scaling on academic job performance in tertiary institutions within the Calabar Educational Zone, highlighting the extent to which professional development opportunities, career progression initiatives, and institutional policies influence the effectiveness of lecturers in fulfilling their academic responsibilities.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of vertical up-scaling on academic job performance in tertiary institutions within the Calabar Educational Zone, Cross River State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the extent of the influence of professional development opportunities on academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone.
2. Investigate the extent of the influence of enhancing research capacity on academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed to guide the study.

1. To what extent do professional development opportunities influence academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone?
2. To what extent do enhancing research capacities influence academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone?

Hypotheses

The following null hypothesis was formulated to guide the study and will be tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant influence between professional development opportunities and academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone?
2. There is no significant influence between enhancing research capacities and academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone

Literature Review

Education is a cornerstone of national development, significantly impacting economic growth, technological progress, and social change. Tertiary education, in particular, is vital for producing skilled professionals and fostering research and innovation that drive national advancement (Adeyemi & Uche, 2021). Tertiary institutions are pivotal in knowledge production, equipping students with the necessary skills to tackle societal challenges and promote sustainable development (Ofoegbu & Nwankwo, 2022). The academic job performance of lecturers, which includes teaching effectiveness, research productivity, and community engagement, is a critical determinant of educational quality (Usman, Bello, & Adeyemi, 2023). Factors such as qualifications, experience, and access to

professional development opportunities significantly influence lecturers' effectiveness (Ekwueme, Nwachukwu, & Uche, 2021), especially those faced with teaching people with disabilities and those in rural areas with limited access to health and other necessary information (Nnanyelugo, et al. 2025; Ekwok et al, 2025).

Vertical up-scaling, emphasizing continuous professional development and skill enhancement, has gained traction in tertiary education (Asuquo & Bassey, 2023). This process involves obtaining higher degrees, participating in training programs, and engaging in research activities to meet global educational standards (Okon & Ekong, 2023). Enhanced academic job performance, characterized by improved teaching methods and increased research output, is often linked to lecturers' commitment to professional growth (Odu & Umeh, 2021). However, challenges such as limited funding, heavy workloads, and inadequate institutional support hinder many lecturers from pursuing further education (Ogunleye & Nwachukwu, 2021). Despite regulatory bodies like the National Universities Commission (NUC) setting minimum qualification standards, disparities in implementation persist, leading to skill deficiencies and outdated teaching practices that affect the overall quality of education in Nigerian tertiary institutions (Eze et al., 2023). This study aims to explore the influence of vertical up-scaling on academic job performance within the Calabar Educational Zone.

METHODOLOGY

The research employed a descriptive survey design to investigate the influence of vertical up-scaling on the academic job performance of lecturers in public tertiary institutions within the Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. This research design is helpful when considering population size of this nature (Ngwu, et al., 2024). The study targeted a population of 4,758 academic staff across four institutions, from which a sample of 369 was drawn using Taro Yamane's formula and proportionate sampling techniques. Data was collected through a self-constructed questionnaire, titled "Questionnaire for Vertical Up-scaling on Academic Job Performance in Tertiary Institutions (QVUSAJP)," which included demographic information and 20 items related to professional development, research capacity, and job performance, rated on a 4-point Likert scale. The instrument was validated by experts and demonstrated high reliability, with an overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.87. Data analysis involved calculating means and

standard deviations for research questions, with a mean of 2.50 as the decision benchmark, while hypotheses were tested using simple linear regression at a 0.05 significance level.

RESULTS

Research Question One

To what extent do professional development opportunities influence academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents on how professional development opportunities influence academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone

S/N	Item Statement	N = 369 Mean ($\overline{x}$)	SD	Dec.
1	Professional development opportunities make me more satisfied with my job	3.01	0.81	A
2	My participation in training programs has improved my chances for promotion.	2.99	0.84	A
3	Opportunities for continuous learning motivate me to remain in the academic profession	3.00	0.81	A
4	Institutional support for professional growth enhances my commitment to my job.	2.93	0.69	A
5	Career advancement training has increased my effectiveness as an academic staff member	2.81	0.95	A

Dec = decision, A = agreed, D = disagreed

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviations of respondents on how professional development opportunities influences academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone. The result obtained show that items 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 had mean ratings of 3.01, 2.99, 3.00, 2.93 and 2.81 with standard deviations of 0.81, 0.84, 0.81, 0.69 and 0.95 respectively. These mean values are above the bench mark value of 2.50 which implies agreed. This means the following respondents on how professional development opportunities influences academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone are agreed. These include: professional development opportunities make me more satisfied with my job, my participation in training programs has improved my chances for promotion, opportunities for continuous learning motivate me to remain in the academic profession, institutional support for

professional growth enhances my commitment to my job**,** and career advancement training has increased my effectiveness as an academic staff member.

Hypothesis One:

There is no significant influence of professional development opportunities on academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone.

Table 2: Regression Summary for the influence of professional development opportunities on academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone

Model	**Source**	Df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	1	.026	.026	3.576	.026[b]
1	Residual	367	26.748	.150		
	Total	368	26.774			
Parameter Estimate						
Variable		**B**	**SE**	**r^2**	**r^2 (adjusted)**	
(Constant)		3.192	.189			
Professional development opportunities		.625	.559	.338	.331	

The result in Table 2 showed the simple linear regression analysis of the influence between professional development opportunities on academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone. The result showed that the regression coefficient for professional development opportunities was 0.625 and significant at $p<0.05$ level. The coefficient of determination r^2 was founds to be 0.338 the value revealed that professional development opportunities accounted for 33.8% of academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone. Table 2 also reveals a β weight of 3.192. The regression equation therefore is $Y= 0.625x + 3.192$. Besides, table 2, revealed that analysis of variance for the regression data produced an F-value of 3.576 and significant at $p<0.05$ levels therefore hypothesis 1 not retained. ($p<0.05$), this means that the result is significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant influence of professional development opportunities on academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone is rejected. Inference drawn therefore is that professional development opportunities significantly influence academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone in Calabar Education Zone.

Research Question Two

To what extent do enhancing research capacities influence academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents on how enhancing research capacities influence academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone

		N = 369		
S/N	**Item Statement**	**Mean($\overline{x}$)**	**SD**	**Dec.**
6	Strengthening my research capacity has positively impacted my career progression	3.03	0.71	A
7	Research opportunities in my institution have not motivated me to remain in academia	2.10	0.80	D
8	Engaging in research has increased my chances of professional recognition and awards.	2.96	0.67	A
9	Research development programs have improved my ability to network with other scholars	2.83	0.75	A
10	My research experience has not contributed to my ability to supervise postgraduate students effectively.	2.03	0.77	D

Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviations of respondents on how enhancing research capacities influences academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone in Calabar Education Zone. The result obtained show that items 6, 8, and 9 had mean ratings of 3.03, 2.96, and 2.83with standard deviations of 0.71, 0.67, and 0.75 respectively. These mean values are above the bench mark value of 2.50 which implies agreed. This means that how enhancing research capacities influence academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone in Calabar Education Zone include; strengthening my research capacity has positively impacted my career progression, engaging in research has increased my chances of professional recognition and awards, research development programs have improved my ability to network with other scholars. However, research opportunities in my institution have motivated me to remain in academia, and my research experience has not contributed to my ability to supervise postgraduate students effectively were disagreed; this is because its mean value is below the bench mark value of 2.50 and implies disagreed

Hypothesis Two:

There is no significant influence of enhancing research capacities on academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone.

Table 4: Regression summary for the influence of enhancing research capacities on academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone

Model	Source	Df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1	.572	.572	3.884	.040[b]
	Residual	367	26.202	.147		
	Total	368	26.774			
Parameter Estimate						
Variable		**B**	**SE**	**r^2**	**r^2 (adjusted)**	
(Constant)		2.817	.232			
Enhancing research capacities		.939	.171	.348	.317	

The result in Table 4 showed the simple linear regression analysis of the influence of enhancing research capacities on academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone. The result showed that the regression coefficient for enhancing research capacities was 0.939 and significant at $p<0.05$ level. The coefficient of determination r^2 was founds to be 0.348 the value revealed that enhancing research capacities accounted for 34.8% of the academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone. Table 4 also reveals a β weight of 2.817. The regression equation therefore is $Y= 0.939x + 2.817$. Besides, table 4, revealed that analysis of variance for the regression data produced an F-value of 3.884 and significant at $p<0.05$ levels therefore hypothesis 2 is not retained. ($p<0.05$), this means that the result is significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant influence of enhancing research capacities on academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone is rejected. Inference drawn therefore is that enhancing research capacities significantly influence academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone in Calabar Education Zone.

DISCUSSION

The discussion of findings of the study was presented under the following sub-headings

Professional development opportunities and academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions

The result obtained from Table 1 showed how professional development opportunities influences academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone is agreed. These include: professional development opportunities make me more satisfied with my job, my participation in training programs has improved my chances for promotion, opportunities for continuous learning motivate me to remain in the academic profession, institutional support for professional growth enhances my commitment to my job**,** and career advancement training has increased my effectiveness as an academic staff member. Also, Table 2 showed that professional development opportunities accounted for 33.8% of academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone, and professional development opportunities significantly influences academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone. These findings also supported the work of Malami and Onen (2023) on the effect of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) on the job performance of academic staff at Sokoto State University, focusing on teaching, research, and community service. The findings revealed that CPD significantly enhanced teaching and community service performance among academic staff. Also, McKee and Tew (2013) work on faculty perceptions of professional development activities in teaching, research, and service at a four-year university. The study found that professional development improves faculty performance and student success in higher education. *However,* Doherty (2011) examined the effectiveness of professional development workshops for educators. The study found that the majority of participants did not implement what they learned into practice, suggesting that professional development, as currently structured, may not significantly influence teaching practices.

Enhancing research capacities and academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions

The result obtained from Table 3 showed how enhancing research capacities influence academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone include; strengthening my research capacity has positively impacted my career progression, engaging in research has increased my chances of professional recognition and awards, research development programs have improved my ability to network with other scholars. Also, Table 4 showed that enhancing research capacities accounted for 34.8% of the academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Calabar Education Zone, and enhancing research capacities significantly influence teachers' job performance. These

findings are in line with the findings of Ajadi and Oyelade (2023), this study investigated the relationship between capacity building initiatives and academic staff job performance in Colleges of Education in North-Central Nigeria. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between capacity buildings particularly in research skills and improved job performance among academic staff. The study concluded that engaging lecturers in capacity-building programs enhances their teaching effectiveness, research output, and community service. Similarly, Li and Zhang, Y. (2017) examined the relationship between teachers' competencies—including research capacity and job performance in research universities with industry characteristics. The study found a significant positive correlation between research capacity and job performance, indicating that enhancing research skills contributes to improved academic staff performance. Conversely**,** Adeoye and Olusola (2021) examined the relationship between institutional factors such as physical facilities and staff workload and academic staff job performance in public universities in Southwest Nigeria. The findings indicated that while enhancing research capacities is beneficial, factors like inadequate physical facilities and high staff workload significantly impede academic staff performance. The study suggests that without addressing these institutional challenges, the positive effects of improved research capacities may be limited.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that;

By engaging in professional development, academic staff enhance their teaching methodologies, research competencies, and administrative efficiency, ultimately improving overall institutional performance. Institutions that prioritize professional growth opportunities are more likely to experience increased staff motivation, productivity, and commitment to academic excellence.

The ability of lecturers to conduct quality research, publish in reputable journals, and contribute to knowledge advancement is directly linked to institutional reputation and student success. The study confirmed that investment in research infrastructure, grants, and academic collaboration significantly influences lecturers' effectiveness, job satisfaction, and contributions to academia.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations were made:

1. Tertiary institutions should establish structured professional development programmes, including regular workshops, training sessions, and mentorship initiatives, to equip academic staff with modern teaching methodologies and pedagogical skills.
2. Academic staff should be encouraged to participate in national and international conferences to stay updated on global trends in education and research.
3. Institutions should increase funding for research activities, providing grants and scholarships to encourage faculty members to undertake meaningful research projects.
4. Establishing well-equipped research centers, digital libraries, and laboratory facilities will enhance research output and academic innovation.

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