

Leadership Challenges in Tertiary Education in Nigeria and the Way Forward

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Abstract: The realization of tertiary education depends on the availability of competent leaders and other resources. Leadership is germane in the development of tertiary education. So, this study examined the leadership challenges in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Depending on secondary data, print materials and online publications were collected for this study. The content analysis and elimination method were adopted to choose the literature that was suitable to the topic and line of the study. After critical review and selection, some pieces of the literature indicated that poor funding, political interferences, inadequate infrastructure facilities, shortage of academic staff, strike action, brain-drain, corruption and insecurity are the major leadership challenges that tertiary institution leaders face. The study also identified low implementation of tertiary education programmes and low extent of attainment of tertiary education goals as the implications of the challenges on the leadership. Based on this, the paper recommended huge investment in tertiary institutions by the federal and state governments. Secondly, capacity building should be organised for leaders in the management of tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Keywords: Challenges, Leadership, Tertiary education



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INTRODUCTION

Ogunode, Edinoh and Okolie (2023) define tertiary education as a planned and organized educational system designed for the total development of man/woman and the total transformation of society through the utilization of teaching, research and provision of community service. Tertiary education can also be viewed as post-basic and secondary school education that embraces advanced teaching, research and community service (Ogunode, Ayeni, & Ogwuche, 2024). Tertiary education is an advanced educational system meant for human capital development through teaching, research and provision of community service (Ogunode, Iyabode, & Olatunde-Aiyedun, 2022). Tertiary education is the third tier of education that is designed for the production of skilled professionals for socio-economic and technological advancement. Tertiary institutions are a micro section of the larger society. Tertiary institutions are an organized fraction of the whole society carved out for teaching programmes, research and provision of community services. The tertiary institutions can also be seen as a subset of the general society that is made of a collection of different people, different cultures, different lifestyles and different values (Ogunode & Odo, 2023).

Tertiary education is viewed by the National Policy on Education (2013) as the education given after Post Basic Education in institutions such as Universities and Inter-University Centres such as the Nigeria French Language Village, Nigeria Arabic Language Village, National Institute of Nigerian Languages, institutions such as Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs), and Colleges of Education, Monotechnics, Polytechnics, and other specialized institutions such as Colleges of Agriculture, Schools of Health and Technology and the National Teachers' Institutes (NTI). Tertiary education is an instrument for national development and manpower development. Tertiary education can be described as an organized education saddled with the production and reproduction of knowledge for the betterment of the whole country. Tertiary education is a social agent of development for self and national realisation and for manpower production. Tertiary education, in particular, is fundamental

to the construction of a knowledge economy and society in all nations. The nation looks up to higher education through its traditional functions of teaching, research and community service to develop manpower and disseminate necessary knowledge that is needed in industry and other sectors (NOUN 2012).

The realization of tertiary education depends on effective leadership and funding. Leadership is vital to the development of tertiary education. Leaders are appointed or elected into the various educational institutions to achieve the objectives of the schools. Leadership in tertiary institutions is complex and demanding. Leadership in tertiary institutions has been described as one of the tougher tasks because of the large resources involved in management. Leadership in tertiary institutions differs according to the rank. For instance, the polytechnics are headed by a Rector, the College of Education is also headed by provosts and the universities are headed by a Vice-Chancellor.

According to NOUN (2009), the Vice-Chancellor is the Chief Executive and Academic Head of the university. He is vested by law with the general function of directing the activities of the university for which purpose he is advised and assisted by the Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Registrar, Bursar, University Librarian, the Provost, Deans and Heads of Department. Unlike the President of a country, whose members are only in an advisory capacity, the Vice-Chancellor is an ordinary member of the Council with the Pro-Chancellor as Chairman. Admittedly, since the Pro-Chancellor is on a part-time appointment, most of the policies of the council are normally carried out by the Vice-Chancellor and his staff. Moreover, in all his dealings with outside bodies, organizations and individuals, the Vice-Chancellors are the university representatives. The Vice-Chancellor is the Senate chairman and all statutory committees in the university. However, because of his involvement in numerous committees, he can delegate duties or his Deputy Vice-Chancellors, the Deans, the heads of departments and at times his representative.

The performance of tertiary education leaders in Nigeria seems not to be encouraging. There has been poor implementation of programmes and the quality of graduates from the various institutions is nothing to write home about. Punch, (2021) reported that Afe Babalola (SAN), the founder of Afe Babalola University, Ado Ekiti, noted that the quality of education in Nigeria had degenerated to the extent that, many graduates cannot defend their certificates. Babalola, expressed displeasure at the growing declining standards of education, particularly university education while the Guardian newspaper (2019) quoted the President and Chief Executive Officer of, the Postgraduate School of Credit and Financial Management, Chris 2019 who expressed concern over the quality of Nigerian graduates, saying about 95 per cent of them are not employable. He lamented that our present crops of graduates do not meet the needs of the reality in the workplace and called for urgent attention from all concerned to address the trend. Also, the ranking of Nigerian tertiary institutions in Africa and across the globe by different international ranking institutions has not been encouraging. Leaders in tertiary institutions are plagued with many challenges that are militating against their effectiveness. It is important to examine the leadership challenges facing tertiary institution leaders in Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this paper includes;

1. to find out the leadership challenges in tertiary education in Nigeria
2. to assess the implication of leadership challenges in tertiary education in Nigeria

Research Questions

To guide this study the following questions were formulated;

1. What are the leadership challenges in tertiary education in Nigeria?
2. What are the implications of leadership challenges in tertiary education in Nigeria?

Theoretical Framework

The paper is anchored on system theory that was propounded by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy in 1920. The theory states that an organization can be seen as a system. The system was seen as a series of interrelated and interdependent parts in such a way that the interaction of any part of the system affects the whole system. That is, one part of the system must interact and depend on the other parts around it to function effectively.

The implication of this theory to this paper is that tertiary education can be likened to a system made up of different components like leadership, funds, infrastructure facilities, supervision, plant management, student administration, curriculum development, staff administration and student. These sub-units in the tertiary system have one objective and work together, interact, interdepend on each other to work and need each other to realize the objective of the system. The inability of any unit or structure to perform its function will cause the system to malfunction (Ayeni & Nwaorgu, 2018). The failure of one of the units affects the work of the other units. So, the leadership challenge of the leaders in the various tertiary institutions affects almost every aspect of the institutions. So, the realization of tertiary institutions' objective demands every unit in the tertiary institutions should be catered for.

Literature Review

Concept of Leadership

Leadership is the process of motivating people to carry out functions. Leadership is an inbuilt and acquired knowledge of inspiring, directing, guiding and ensuring people that who are supposed to carry out some responsibilities carry them out at the right time. Leadership is an act of practically motivating and supervising subordinates to carry out specific tasks for institutions to realize the institution's objectives (Ogunode, 2023). Leadership is the process of ensuring specific assignments are carried out by those who are assigned to carry them out trot the act of personal and acquired skills of motivation and organization. Leadership is the operational tool in influencing people to strive willingly and enthusiastically towards the achievement of organisational goals, including in secondary schools (Adwella, 2014). Leadership is a process of social influence,

which maximises the efforts of others towards the achievement of a goal (Nworgu, 1991). Leadership is the process of influencing the activities of a group of people by a leader in an effort towards goal achievement (Kruse 2013). Leadership is a process, by which leaders can direct, guide and influence the behaviour and work of others towards the accomplishment of a specific goal in a given situation (Igbal, Anwar, & Haider, 2015).

Leadership is the act of giving direction to followers. Leadership is the provision of guidance and leadership is the process of motivating others to perform some specific assignment without forcing them. Leadership is the ability and capacity to inspire and motivate people to work and to create an atmosphere to work. Leadership is a person with qualities of foresight, self-confidence and personal integrity capable of using them to guide and direct others. Leadership is a process that involves influencing people to carry out some responsibilities without forcing them (Ogunode, Ojochnemi, & Ayoka, 2023).

Method

This paper is a review paper. Secondary data were used to support the assumptions. The secondary data were collected from print and online publications. Content analysis was used to eliminate insignificant literature reducing it to forty-seven (47) journals and reports. The forty-seven (47) significant literature.

Discussion

Q1: What are the leadership challenges in tertiary education in Nigeria?

Poor funding

The role of funding in an organisation is germane. this is because Money is the most essential of every organisation (Ayeni, 2017). Funding has been described as the major challenge in the management of tertiary education in Nigeria. On this note, Akinola (1990) was worried about the funding situation and commented thus: "Our higher institution education systems are in dire need of money to cater for both their capital and recurrent needs. For a few years past, the budget has been cut back from year to year by the federal government. This cutback has affected both capital and recurrent expenditures. The above development informs the argument of scholars that the chief duty of actors of governance in Nigeria has been the frustration of public institutions (Ayeni & Sani, 2021). In many higher institutions capital projects embarked upon are few years ago, are yet to be completed due to lack of adequate funds". Also, Udida, Basse, and Udofia, (2009) asserted that the major issue in educational development is shortage of funds. One of the most serious problems threatening the survival of the educational system is that of dwindling level of public funding in the face of rising demands and hence rising cost of higher education. This shortage of funds affects job performance and the growth of the institution. Higher educational institutions cannot perform optimally without funding. This situation calls for increased funding initiatives from both the government and educational stakeholders to sustain the tempo and growth of the education industry. The inability of the Nigerian government to objectively accept and implement the 15%-20% funding formula for education recommended by UNESCO impact negatively on the performance and sustainability of higher education. Thus, it has become obvious that Nigeria's neglect of the funding formula is detrimental to higher educational institution performance and development aspiration as quality performance is the veritable instrument for the sustenance of the education system. This neglect has further precipitated crises in the entire higher educational system as effective teaching; research and service are no longer taking place seriously. Leaders in tertiary institutions are limited by a shortage of funds (Ojudu, 2012; Adetunji, & Ogunleye, 2015; Ogunraku, 2016; Ogunode, Haliru, Shehu & Peter2023)

Political Interference

The ruling elite's siting of government projects is based on political considerations rather than the needs of the people (Ayeni, & Ezirim, 2023). Political interference is another challenge that has hampered the development of tertiary education in Nigeria. Leaders in the management and administration of tertiary institutions are facing the problem of political influence and interference in the internal management of the various institutions across the country. Ogunode, Atobauka, and Ayoko, (2023) conclude that political interference in the management of tertiary institutions in Nigeria has affected the development of tertiary institutions and there is a need to critically look for ways and free tertiary institutions from the political actors. Emiko, (2023) reported the President of the Association of Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Professor Emmanuel Osodeke to have said that the National Assembly is distracting university vice-chancellors from carrying out their duties through incessant invitations to Abuja to face committees. He observed that undue interference with the autonomy of the university system by the federal government is affecting academic activities negatively. He maintained that most vice-chancellors are being distracted from carrying out their duties by Ministries and other government agencies who frequently invite them to Abuja to face committees. The autonomy law for Universities enacted in 2003 is there. If we follow that law and allow it to run without interference from the bureaucrat, the University system will be fine". "Let me read a section of the Miscellaneous Act to you. The powers of the governing council which is going to run the University shall be exercised as the law and statutes of the Universities and to this extent, establishment circulars that are inconsistent with the law and statutes of each University shall not apply to the Universities". "But today, no Vice-Chancellor can employ staff, a Professor without getting permission from the office of the Head of Service. Is that done anywhere? Is that not interference? As of today, university governing councils cannot pay the salaries of its workers. Is that not interference? Those are the interference that we are talking about". He concluded that no vice-chancellor will be invited less than two or three times a month to come to Abuja and appear before a panel or committee in the National Assembly, House of Reps and Office of the Accountant-General. When will they have time to run

their universities? Is that how it was in the 70s and 80s? Ogunode and Musa, (2022) concluded that the high level of political influence in the administration of tertiary institutions in Nigeria is not aiding the sustainable development of tertiary institutions. Tertiary institutions in Nigeria are programme and designed in terms of operation to be answerable to the political appointees in the management. The situation is worse now that both state governors and federal ministers hijacked the appointment of principal officers, recruitment and siting of tertiary institutions. The above development informs the argument of scholars when they noted that the ruling elites employed laws and politics to rule Nigeria to their advantage to the detriment of the citizens (Godwin, Ayeni, Peter, 2021). The combination of law and politics to rule to the benefit of the ruling elite is an unnecessary political interference.

Shortage of Academic staff

Leaders in the various tertiary institutions in Nigeria are faced with the problem of inadequate academic staff. Most tertiary institutions in the country appear to be having the problem of shortage of staff. Ogunode, Ngezack and Usi (2024a) noted that inadequate academic staff in various tertiary institutions across the country is another issue calling for urgent attention by the administrators and managers of tertiary institutions. Academic staff are professionals trained in their field of specialization and employed to teach, research and provide community services. Academic staff are professionals in tertiary institutions translating the curriculum into action via teaching and research. According to the Punch (2022), no federal university scored up to 50 per cent in the ranking of full professors. This implies that no federal university has the required number of full Professors. Some of the federal universities ranked in the top 10 are the Usmanu Dan-Fodiyo University, Sokoto, with 36.44 per cent; Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, 35.80 per cent; Federal University of Technology, Akure, 27.28 per cent; Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, 27.25 per cent; the University of Abuja, 25.33 per cent; the University of Benin, 23.26 per cent; University of Port Harcourt, 21.26 per cent; the University of Calabar, 21.20 per cent; and the University of Ilorin, 21.12 per cent. The effects of the shortage of academic staff on the leadership of tertiary institutions are that most of the leaders will not have adequate staff to deploy for the implementation of teaching, research and community service programmes. Ahaotu & Ogunode (2021); Okpata, & Udofia, (2016) and Okoroma, (2006) maintained that leaders in higher institutions are lamenting of shortage of staff which has affected their job performance and the entire system.

Inadequate infrastructure facilities

Even though, infrastructure can empower people (Ayeni, 2017). An inadequate infrastructure facility is another pressing problem leadership in the various tertiary institutions in Nigeria is faced with. There is no meaningful teaching, research and community service programme that can be implemented without adequate infrastructure facilities down. Reports by Ebehikhalu and Dawam (2016) on the universities portray a general lack of infrastructural facilities. An average public university in Nigeria lacks basic infrastructure like regular water supply, electricity, and standard accommodation for students. In many instances, the toilets that serve the students are in bad shape as many do not have running water. Lecture rooms and offices are not available and where available need refurbishment. Libraries are poorly equipped and are short of modern books and equipment. Laboratory equipment is obsolete and inputs for teaching are in short supply. Roads and buildings on many campuses are in a state of disrepair. Poor and dilapidated infrastructures are the major factors that have led to the despicable state of Nigerian Universities. It is therefore not surprising that the products of these infrastructures often fail to rise to the occasion when put to test and task. Inadequate infrastructural facility is another major challenge facing administrators of higher institutions in Nigeria. Higher institutions across the country do not have adequate infrastructural facilities to use for teaching and learning in their schools and facilities shortage affect policies implementation (Ogunode & Emmanuel, 2023; Atelhe, & Akande, 2018; Ahmed, & Dantata, 2016). With inadequate infrastructural facilities meaningful progress might be difficult to attain in any society. The above is corroborated by scholars who argued that infrastructural development, industrialization and good economic policies are the only things that can reduce poverty and conflict to a minimum level, rather than vote buying (Ayeni, Doosur & Kefas, 2021).

Strike actions

Strike action in the various tertiary institutions across the country is another big problem facing the leadership of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Recently, the Non-academic staff of Nigerian universities embarked on a one-week warning strike that suspended administrative activities in all the federal universities. Another problem facing the administrators of higher institutions in Nigeria according to Ahaotu and Ogunode (2021) and Okoli, Ogbondah & Ewor (2016) is the issue of incessant strike action by different unions in higher institutions. Labour unrest by different unions in Nigeria's higher institutions is slowing down the realization of the goals of the higher institutions as well as growth and development. Administrators in Nigerian higher institutions cannot boast of a stable academic calendar for a year without a strike by one union or the other. Many school administrators have ideas for transformation and innovation for their schools but the strike actions are not allowing them to fully apply the plans and programmes they have for their respective institutions. Continuous strike actions affect the activities and programmes of leaders in the institutions. It frustrates the implementation of their plans and actions for the development of the institutions. Strike slows down development in the institutions (Oluremi & Oyewole, 2014; Edet, Sani, & Ogunode 2023).

Brain-drain

Brain drain is another problem leaders in tertiary institutions across the country are facing. Every day professors, senior lecturers and researchers are moving out of tertiary institutions for better placement in other sectors or even migrating to other developed countries where their services are more rewarded and appreciated. Recently, Ogunode, Cletus, and Usi (2024) observed that tertiary institutions in Nigeria are plagued with a major problem called "Japa" syndrome which simply means a

mass exodus of professionals from Nigeria to other parts of developed countries for greener pastures. Daily, academic staff and non-academic staff of Nigerian tertiary institutions are moving out of the country for a better placement in the developed countries. In the tertiary education sub-sector, the Japa syndrome has affected almost all aspects of tertiary institutions. A report by Waheed (2023) and Politics Digest (2023) disclosed that the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) raised the alarm that most departments in Nigeria's public universities were short-staffed due to the resignation of lecturers in search of greener pastures due Japa syndrome. It is imperative to discuss the implication of Japa syndrome on the management of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The implication of brain-drain on the leadership of tertiary institutions is that they will not have adequate staff to deploy for teaching and this will also affect the accreditation exercise of each of the institutions. Ogunode et al (2024) identified factors responsible for Japa" syndrome among academic staff of tertiary institutions to include; poor salaries, poor work conditions, economic hardship, insecurity problems in Nigeria, inadequate infrastructure facilities and bad leadership (Victor & Babatunde, 2014). On the effects of brain drain on university development, Ogunode (2020) and Otonko (2012) listed a shortage of academic staff, poor quality of tertiary institutions, capital flight and slowing down tertiary institutions development.

Corruption

Leaders in tertiary institutions are also facing the problem of corruption in the system. This is why scholars have posited that corruption has almost been accepted by people as a way of life (Ayeni, Tusayi, Joseph & Obatayo, 2018). This is even as Oghondah (2010) maintained that despite the inadequacy of allocations to the public university system, any fund made available often goes down the drain through the corrupt practices of those entrusted with the implementation of university programmes due to inadequate monitoring of university income and expenditure, such is the grim state of affairs, thus the future will need a paradigm shift. There are negative effects of academic corruption on the higher institutions in the country. In 2020, Transparency International maintained in their annual report that 66 per cent of the money the Nigerian government allocation to education is stolen by corrupt officials. According to the report, corruption is commonplace in education systems across the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS, (Premium Times 2020). UNESCO (2014) reports on *Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality for All* shows that Nigeria is among the 37 countries that are losing money spent on education because children are not learning. UNESCO disclosed that the menace is already costing governments USD 129 billion a year. The above is validated by scholars who contended that corruption in Nigeria has been a source of worry and concern as it affects the local economy (Amaechi, Ayeni, & Madu, 2019). Despite the money being spent, the rejuvenation of primary education is not so soon because of poor-quality education that cannot ensure that children learn (NEEDS, 2014). According to Acho, (2017), corruption is capable of sapping the development potentials of not only the institutions but the entire nation. Corruption in the administration of tertiary institutions has affected the implementation of the programme and has hampered the development of the institutions (Asiyai, 2015; Ogunode, Josiah, & Ajape, 2021; Ogunode, Ohunene, & Olatunde-Aiyedun, 2022). The end product of corruption has been explained by scholars who argued that corruption poses a challenge to the well-being and sustainable peace of Nigerians (Ayeni & Sani, 2021).

Insecurity Problems

Tertiary institution leaders in Nigeria especially those in the Northern part of Nigeria are facing the problem of insecurity. Garba, Ogunode, Musa, & Ahmed, (2022) and Manga (2019) asserted that insecurity is another problem that has hindered the development of higher institutions in Nigeria. Ogunode (2020) noted that Nigeria is facing an insecurity challenge and this is affecting the entire educational institutions in the country. The Islamic sect called, "Boko haram" meaning Western education is forbidden" is attacking educational institutions in the Northern part of Nigeria. Muhammad & Mohammed (2019) noted that Nigerian higher institution administrators are also battling with the challenges of insecurity in their various institutions. Nigeria has been facing numerous security challenges since the return of democracy in 1999. These security challenges are directly or indirectly affecting the administration of higher education in the country. For instance, many students and academic staff of higher institutions have been attacked at different times resulting in their death within the campus. The higher institution environment is not safe for students and lecturers (Ogunode, Ezema & Olugbenga, 2023). The above development has been attributed to another leadership challenge known as corruption. Thus, Corruption causes poverty and poverty causes insecurity (Muhammed & Ayeni, 2018).

Q2: What are the implications of leadership challenges in tertiary education in Nigeria?

Implementation of tertiary education programme

The challenges in Nigerian tertiary institutions are many and have implications for the implementation of tertiary education programmes. Leaders in the institutions do not have the adequate human and material resources to deploy to ensure full implementation of the programme and this affects the level of implementation.

Attainment of tertiary education Goals

Attainment of tertiary education goals is frustrated by the various challenges in tertiary institutions across the country. The non-availability of adequate human and material resources for the managers of tertiary institutions in Nigeria has affected the leaders in the institutions to administer and manage the various institutions to realize their objectives. The above is validated by scholars who posited that the failure of the governance system to perform its roles is hurting the educational sector (Ogunode, Ayeni, & Olorundare, 2024). This above development can hinder access to education that is expected to empower people to enable them to provide for their basic needs (Ayeni, Sani, Idris, & Uzoigwe, 2019).

Findings

The study discovered that poor funding, political interferences, inadequate infrastructure facilities, shortage of academic staff, strike action, brain-drain, corruption and insecurity are the major leadership challenges tertiary institution leaders face. The above finding correlates with the findings of a scholar who argued that the quality of leadership is the bedrock of development in every country of the world (Ayeni, 2018). Further, findings identified low implementation of tertiary education programmes and low extent of attainment of tertiary education goals as the implications of the challenges on the leadership.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that poor funding, political interferences, inadequate infrastructure facilities, shortage of academic staff, strike action, brain-drain and corruption are the major leadership challenges tertiary institution leaders face. Further findings identified low implementation of tertiary education programmes and low extent of attainment of tertiary education goals as the implications of the challenges on the leadership.

Based on this, the paper recommended huge investment in tertiary institutions by the federal and state governments. Secondly, capacity building should be organised for leaders in the management of tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

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