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MANAGING UNIVERSITY EDUCATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF INNOVATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Innovation in education is all about providing solutions to aid development and promoting equitable learning. University education from the perspective of innovation tends to bring about curriculum changes, effective transformation, e-learning in the tertiary institution, amongst others. The university is designed in a way that on-going efficiency is crucial in quality education. Management and innovation are essential for achieving these qualities of sound principle and values. The management of any university institution starts from its leadership and goes down to its school designed curriculum, staff organizational structure, and administration. On the other hand, innovation comes in to improve on the existing management structure in the university to ensure modernization and all-round effectiveness. Innovation in university educational management has experienced a drastic change worldwide which has forced innovation to be at the forefront of university education. The Nigerian university system has been flawed by insecurity, poor funding, financial vulnerability which fuels strikes and other internal conflicts. With this in mind it is imperative to approach innovation in Nigerian university education in a manner that provides functional education for national development. An introduction on this research paper will consist of the purpose, aims and relevance of innovation in university education management. This paper also provided an insight on several opinions of different authors regarding this topic. Issues and limitations which can arise in the course of engaging in innovation in managing university education will be discussed. The suggestions will be a response on how best to tackle them in the long run.

Keywords: Management, Education, University Education, Innovation, Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

Innovation and management in university education are two vital elements which play very important roles in the educational system. The world is gradually transitioning into a digital age where new technological innovations are springing up to aid the daily lives of humans. Thus, it is imperative that humans keep up with these emerging trends of innovation. This would be possible through the use of education which serves as the foundation for the transfer of knowledge, especially at the university level.

University education produces graduates who are the main actors in the development of the society. It would be a great disadvantage if the students in these universities pass through the university system and failed to adapt to existing trends of an innovative university education. It is against this background that it is pertinent for university administrators, who are charged with the responsibility of managing the affairs of the university so as to achieve the university's goals and objectives ensure that their activities are in line with current innovative trends in university education. The objective of this paper is to examine how Nigerian university administrators can manage the university in order to introduce current innovative trends in the university system. The aim of this paper is to identify possible problems facing the management of Nigerian universities in relation to innovation and to further identify solutions to these problems.

Management

The term "management" may infer two different things. Firstly, the term may refer to the activities of planning, organizing, directing, coordinating and controlling the activities of an organization. Secondly, it may refer to the personnel responsible for the planning, organizing, directing, coordinating and controlling the activities of an organization. The personnel responsible for the management of activities within universities are referred to as university administrators. The development of an organization is highly dependent on the quality of the management of organizational activities.

Yale (2010) cited in Ofor-Douglas (2021a) mentioned that management is an effective organization and utilization of human and managerial resources in particular system, for the achievement of identified objectives. Onwuchekwa in Ezeani (2012) opined that management is the organization and utilization of all human and material resources in a particular system for the attainment of acknowledged objectives in the system. Management is the effective and efficient utilization of the available human and material resources in a certain system with the purposes of achieving the set goals of that system. Management exists in any institute to make resources fruitful in order that the organization may achieve its objectives (Ezeani, 2012).

Education

Education, whether it be formal or informal, serves an essential tool in which an individual utilizes to shape his society. It serves as the foundation for the evolution of a society. Ogoli (2008) rightly put it that education is the acquisition of knowledge for the benefit of the individual and society. Selvamm and Devil (2014) opined that education is the gradual process of acquiring knowledge, that education is a preparation for life, explaining that the development of any nation depends mainly on the standards of its educational institutions, that education is the most powerful and effective instrument for inducing radical changes in the behavior of students.

Similarly, no education system is established without the aim of building human capacity for societal development; for the present and the future generations (Amaele & Undie, 2011). For innovations to thrive in any society, education is to serve as a pillar of that innovation. Solomon (2018) agreed with this assertion when he mentioned that education is one of the important pillars of economic and technological development of most advanced nation. Education plays a key role in the ability of any developing country to absorb modern technology and to develop the capacity for self- sustaining growth and development (Todaro & Smith, 2009).

Innovation

Innovation is a decisive operation carried out to introduce a given change to be accepted and used. Innovation is the development and implementation of ideas to produce new or improved products, processes, or services. It can be described as incremental radical and revolutionary changes in thinking, products, processes, or organization (Akomolade, 2011). Innovation is a deliberate introduction of something new as a way of solving individual or group problems or a way of accomplishing goals. It is a process of creativity, changing, experimenting, transferring, and revolutionizing is a key to the economic development of any nation and a factor of research together with innovation. This situation emphasizes even more the adoption by various educational institutions of the self-management and self-financing principles as well as the concern for competitiveness, as basic condition of survival in the context of a competitive educational reality (Stan, 2014).

Innovation in management is seen as the invention and implementation of practice, structure, techniques or management process that is new to the highest level of development in the field and that is accomplished in order to contribute to reaching organization objectives (Birkinshaw et al., 2008 as cited in Manea, 2015). Innovation in management should be used effectively to maintain an effective and dynamic management approach and it is emphasized that executive behaviours have a direct effect on this process. Akomolade (2011) asserted that innovation may be linked to performance and growth through improvement in efficiency, productivity, quality, competitive positioning, etc.

Innovation is a driving force in the form of problem solving. It seems in recent time, learning is only done but relevant skills for problem solving is not available. Innovation in higher education management has experienced a drastic change worldwide which has forced innovation to be at the forefront of university education. The university system in Nigeria has been flawed by insecurity, poor funding, financial vulnerability which fuels strikes and other internal conflicts. With this in mind, it is imperative to approach innovation in the Nigerian University education to provide functional education for national development.

The school system is designed in a way that on-going efficiency is crucial in quality education. Management and innovation are key in achieving these qualities of sound principles and values. The management of any university institution starts from its leadership, down to its school designed curriculum, staff, organizational structure, and administration. On the other hand, innovation comes in to improve on the existing management structure in the university to ensure modernization and all-round effectiveness.

Innovation makes use of knowledge, creativity, and available resources which in-turn creates ideas, products for the society at large. Innovation is said to be a new idea, approach, or the introduction of new concepts. This is basically a new development, practical application in improving on already existing ideas. Innovation is not helpful to an organization unless it is

tested and implemented. In other words, innovation is an organizational system in which a lot of thinking and processes is deeply involved. In every organization, innovation is an integral part as it tends to have an impact in attaining goals, ambitions and supporting decisions for the greater good. Change is inevitable as far as university education is concerned, innovation is the best bet in improving not only learning but all forms of administrative, economic, educational interests in the university. Innovation comes in as a source of improvement in motivation and success in the educational sector.

The demand for skillful, critical and creative thinking is on the increase in various fields of human endeavor. Critical thinking which is one of the bedrocks of academic achievement not only aid in the manipulation of information to form concepts, it also helps in problem setup and decision making (Ogbe, 2008 as cited in Onu et al., 2012). Higher institutions otherwise known as universities has its major function, which is the obligation to empower students with specific skills, knowledge and attitudes that will enable them to live and work in the knowledge society (Campbell & Rozenyai, 2002 cited in Onu et al., 2012).

INNOVATION IN EDUCATION

This can be defined as change, reformation upgrade, invention, introduction of something new, an addition in education. In addition OECD (2016) looked at this concept as the introduction of an improved or a new process, products, services, new ways of managing activities or new marketing approaches. As important as it is, innovation tends to impact the quality, standard of education, administration and products of the university. The former having to do with the day to day running of activities and the later which concerns graduates year in year out.

Smith and Fund (2009) emphasized that innovation in education is a new product, new process, new ideas that are shifting the way people view an issue or question by redefining our sense of what is possible, and innovation at the platform level. The OECD (2016) categorized innovation in education into four types which are organizational, products, marketing, process innovation. They can be seen in the form of:

- Introduction of new services or products such as new curriculum, educational resources or textbooks.
- Introduction of new process in delivery such as the use of technologies in e-learning activities.
- Fresh approaches in activities of the organization such as the use of ICT to interact with parents and students.
- New marketing techniques such as the cost for each course in university.

BENEFITS OF INNOVATION IN THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

Innovation in education means solving a real problem in a new simple way to promote equitable learning. The essence of innovation in university education is to train undergraduates to attain success in high demand fields, scale the high impact practices that result in deeper learning, personal growth and critical thinking for a novel idea. The role of the educational system in training its citizens would also include the use of educational innovations to develop skills, gifts, abilities and capabilities of citizens, so they can function and ensure innovation and transformation of the world in which they live. Thus, innovation in a university system would be

beneficial as it will update the skills and knowledge of students and staff. It would also benefit the students in the sense that they would be able to keep up with their peers globally in terms of technological advancement in the educational system.

University Education

This is education also known as post-secondary education. In other words, education attained after secondary school. Through university education, graduates gain a level of professionalism in a course of interest. This tends to boost one's level of confidence to succeed in the extremely competitive labor market. A university education exposes a student to broader perspective and improve one's level of thinking and interest.

Ng (2009) is of the opinion that globalization had placed a strain on education to build a creative and innovative force to achieve a competitive advantage. Furthermore, Findikoglu and Ilhan (2016) stressed on how education has been lax in emphasizing learning for its own sake and overlooking the importance of training on problem solving. Breakthrough in innovation will turn the students from just using the knowledge by making them centres of our educational setting. Maier (1971) cited in Faud et al. (2020) said that the present method of teaching did not produce students who can solve problems using knowledge when they leave schools. The stock of highly-educated individuals produced by higher-education institutions (university education inclusive) plays an important role in the innovation and the sustainable development of any society (Akinyemi & Basse, 2012). University education is a necessary tool for any nations' survival. Education is supposed to be affordable, of high standards, quality but this is not the case in Nigeria. A sound educational system is designed to nurture intellectuals in knowledge building. OECD (2010) stated that problem solving, self-regulation and the application of technologies are the learning outcomes of 21st century education.

MANAGING UNIVERSITY EDUCATION FOR INNOVATION IN NIGERIA

The University administrators needs adequate knowledge of management to functions and for arms with the skill to function efficient and effectively to achieved the organizational objectives and goals in process of running his daily activities in order to attain their objectives, they establish targets to be attained, set out strategies and continuously strive to perfect their management processes (Bok, 2003 as cited in Ofor-Douglas, 2020). University administrators can manage their universities in the perspective of innovation through these two ways:

Implementation of E-learning Practices

E-learning can be seen as the international use of network information and communication technology in teaching and learning which includes, virtual learning, distributed learning, network and web-based learning (Goyal, 2012). Akhtar (2010) rightly said that teaching through technology-based learning environment enhances the achievement level of the students. The implementation of e-learning practices in Nigerian universities would allow for the use of 21st century teaching and learning practices that would promote quality and sustainable university education. The e-learning process would promote easier and faster teaching and learning amongst staff and students of the university and would further place these students on parity with their peers in international universities who are already used to these teaching and learning

practices. The COVID-19 era served as an eye opener to educators that a digital educational system was a necessity in the 21st century as it was only universities that were already utilizing e-learning practices before the global pandemic that could continue the academic session while universities that utilized outdated teaching and learning practices had to shut down academic operations.

Global Partnership for Innovation

It is a common saying that “two heads are better than one”. The 17th sustainable development goal (SDG), “Partnership for the Goals” calls for partnerships to mobilize and exchange information, expertise, technology and even financial resources to support the attainment of other SDGs. Innovation in the university system may fall under SDG 9 which is the goal of industry, innovation, and infrastructure. Where global universities partner with each other to achieve innovation in their various universities, this would bring about quality and sustainable university education. The exchange of innovative ideas, policies and finances between Nigerian universities and global universities should be an important agenda for Nigerian university administrators to look into if they want to ensure innovation within their universities.

CHALLENGES FACED BY UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATORS IN MANAGING INNOVATIVE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

The following act as problems that hinder university administrators from successfully managing their universities in the perspective of innovation:

Incompetent Leadership: Leaders in the university include the lecturers, teachers, administrators and policy makers who have the sole responsibility of better teaching, learning, research processes to enable students match up to the challenges and issues in life, work and security at large. Unfortunately, this is not the case (Leithwood et al., 2010) found out that leadership in education continues to be an area of high interest for practitioners and scholars alike. Public education as it has come under incredible scrutiny in the last several decades has fueled a heightened interest in the role of leadership in regards to school improvement and student outcomes, especially because principals have significant influence in schools at all levels of performance. The leadership of universities must be willing to adapt to current trends as the world is dynamic, changing every day and those who fail to change with it would definitely be at a disadvantage. Institutions must adjust their economic models and service offerings as higher education (university education inclusive) grows more expensive and digital technologies become more vital to the educational experience in order to remain relevant to societies, economic, and most importantly students (Stephanie, 2021).

Financial constraint: Olayinka (2008) postulated that the Nigerian government has never treated universities as worthy partners. Universities are neither encouraged nor challenged to play constructive role on research and development through generous discretionary funding from government. The foundation of education is frail when education (university education inclusive) is not well funded, and the products of such foundation are weak intellectually (Okorie, 2020). Nigerian universities as cooperate bodies are hardly involved in projects sponsored by the government which ordinarily would be a good source of revenue to them. In developed

countries, universities are major contractors to government because they bid for projects that provide the basis for knowledge that is used to move the society forward. The inadequate funding has put educational managers under pressure and stress (Nwiyi, 2016).

Inadequate ICT, E-learning and Internet Facilities: Another problem facing the promotion of innovative university education in Nigerian universities is that of the lack of ICT, e-learning and internet facilities. In order for the e-learning process to occur smoothly, there needs to be a steady and consistent provision of material devices and facilities such as computers, computer laboratories, internet and e-mail facilities, video phone systems and teleconferencing devices, fax and wireless applications, digital library, digital classrooms, multimedia systems and the problem of multimedia courseware development among others (Olutola & Olatoye, 2015). The required facilities are inadequate to cater to the demands of the e-learning process. This problem can be tied to the above problem of financial constraint within Nigerian universities. The inadequacy of these facilities further brings about anger and frustration amongst staff and students of the university as they feel unequal to their peers who have access to these facilities. There is also need for constant maintenance of these ICT, e-learning and internet facilities. Ofor-Douglas (2021b) rightly stated that the e-learning facilities require maintenance because they are machine. Irregular or lack of maintenance of these facilities, they might not function properly, thus e-learning would not be able to take place effectively.

Computer Illiteracy: This serves as another hindrance to the promotion of innovation within Nigerian universities by the university administrators. One may be described as computer illiterate where he/she fails to properly understand the workings of computer hardware and software. This problem of computer illiteracy stems from the fact that most individuals were not properly trained on the use of digital devices from their early educational years (primary and secondary school level). Godwin in Chigozie-Okwum (2018) opines that when teachers are digitally literate and trained to use ICT, these approaches can lead to higher order thinking skills and provide creative and individualized options to learners to express their understandings and also leave them better prepared to deal with the on-going technological changes in society and workplace.

Mismanagement of Funds: Some administrators of institutions are not left out from mismanagement and corrupt attitudes as regards funds allocated to their institution (Ofor-Douglas, 2022). The meagre funds made available to the University for the Implementation of an innovative university educational system are usually diverted to the accounts of greedy university administrators, thus making it impossible for innovation to take place. Sometimes, the funds provided are not allocated where they would serve meaningful purpose thus leading to a wastage of financial resources.

Poor Attitude to Research: Lack of funds has been one of the sole reasons for a decline in research activities in Nigeria. The government policy makers alike have no interest whatsoever in funding research. Researchers depend on their personal funds to establish themselves academically by attending conferences, carrying out studies and publishing activities. The limited funds tend to deter and discourage research. Researchers have suffered inaccessibility to relevant information due to the fact that over the years information that should have been used was not properly stored and cannot be retrieved. Although, the internet is an easy place to gather

information, it is also an expensive route for researchers and with these constraints in the way research work is easily abandoned.

Lack of knowledge in the technological aspect of research has greatly suppressed the advancement in conducting research. Data stored online cannot be accessed by someone who does not know how to retrieve it thus affecting the quality of research. It is very noticeable that educational research is poorly funded in Nigeria. Moreover, funding is not forthcoming for research so lecturers are left with little or no money to complete their research and this is preventing personal development (Ofor-Douglas, 2019).

CONCLUSION

The need for innovative university education in Nigeria has been overemphasized in this paper, stressing the fact that those who fail to follow the emerging trends in innovative university education cannot evolve in the 21st century. Innovation in the Nigerian university educational system can be achieved if the students, lecturers, administrators and government embrace it. It will be very beneficial as it will succeed in achieving greater students output in academics. New teaching methods and approach to learning are great innovative strategies which lecturers can adopt directly in influencing learning quality. Universities should garner innovative ideas and strategies with the same energy as they do in their research and teaching, yielding students and research bases to those succeeding in this area of expertise. The paper discussed various challenges facing the effective management of university education in the perspective of innovation in Nigerian universities, which includes poor adaptation of e-learning practices in curriculums, financial constraints, and computer illiteracy, amongst others. These challenges may be resolved with the following suggestions:

- Leadership should guide their subordinates in creating an environment by which innovation can be the order of the day.
- There should be a provision of state-of-the-art ICT, e-learning and internet facilities to promote the e-learning process within Nigerian universities.
- Nigerian universities should partner up with universities abroad to allow for exchange of technological information and policies that promote innovation.
- Staff and students of the universities should engage in online tutorials on the dynamics of e-learning and should be further trained by the university in seminars and workshops on the use of e-learning facilities.
- Strict monitoring of the utilization of funds within the university should be carried out by the university administration to allow for innovation to properly take place.
- There should be government policies encouraging research in different fields for innovation to be upheld.

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