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LEADERSHIP IN MANAGING HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (HEI) AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined leadership in managing higher education institutions (HEI) and political development in Nigeria. The leadership of higher education institutions has been under increasing scrutiny due to the importance of the role of leaders. Institutional leadership is the mobilization and influencing of people working towards a common goal of the institution through building interpersonal relationships and breaking traditions to achieve organizational objectives. The study explored the challenges of institutional leadership, the concept of leadership, and various leadership styles. Educational management involves the process of planning, organizing, and directing activities in an institution of higher learning to effectively utilize human and material resources in order to accomplish institutional aims and objectives. The importance of educational management is listed, and political development, which is a very important aspect of institutional leadership and educational management, is highlighted. The study concluded among others factors that institution of higher learning lack strong institutional leadership to develop and execute their plans and policies. The study therefore suggested that the government should ensure sustainable political development in the education sector and that institutional leadership in educational management should be strengthened through the recruitment of competent, committed, and morally sound personnel. Ministerial appointments on academic matters should be strictly based on merit and experience in relevant field, which will help to achieve the educational goals and objectives. As the appointee is well grounded in the field of educational management, proper and adequate funding of the educational sector will give room for effective implementation of educational policies.

Keywords: Institutional Leadership, Leadership, Educational Management, Management, Political Development.

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INTRODUCTION

Institutional leadership plays a pivotal role in the effective management and overall development of higher education institutions (HEI). The significance of institutional leaders in educational management and political development in Nigeria cannot be overstated, as they are instrumental in ensuring the provision of high-quality education, creating effective management systems, and motivating staff to work towards the institution's goals (Eacott, 2015; Ololube, 2024). Within the educational context, institutional leaders are responsible for directing the affairs of institutions such as universities, colleges of education, and polytechnics, overseeing policies and programs, student welfare, and the overall management of the institution in alignment with its mandate of manpower development. FRN (2014) described the goal of tertiary education as contributing to national development through relevant manpower training. Leadership in educational institutions influences processes that ultimately lead to the achievement of desired objectives. Drucker (2006) emphasized that leadership in institutions involves influencing subordinates at all levels to achieve objectives, which is crucial for maintaining the quality of executive leadership. An ideal leader provides guidance, direction, and motivation to individuals within the institution, fostering a sense of responsibility and a shared vision for achieving organizational goals (Jamaica, 2021). Leadership, as described by Ololube (2024), entails goal-directed behavior that requires corporate support and unity towards goal achievement, transforming potential into reality.

Effective institutional leadership goes hand in hand with promoting efficient management practices. Management involves utilizing both human and material resources to accomplish institutional goals, thereby establishing a direct link between leadership and educational management (Smith & Wolverton, 2010). However, leadership in higher education institutions presents unique challenges due to the decentralized nature of decision-making and the autonomy of academic members. Key positions within these institutions, such as Vice Chancellors, Deans, and Directors, require rotational leadership, each bringing their own experiences to the table (Smith & Wolverton, 2010). Amidst political developments, the appointment of individuals lacking expertise in higher education poses challenges to effective institutional leadership. Leadership qualities, characterized by charisma and qualitative decision-making, are essential in navigating the complexity of educational institutions amidst political uncertainty. While management principles guide institutional leaders in decision-making, leadership remains the driving force behind organizational success. The evaluation of institutional leadership in educational management and political development is imperative for ensuring the continued progress and excellence of tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria. By emphasizing effective leadership practices, promoting managerial efficiency, and addressing the challenges posed by political dynamics, educational institutions can fulfill their mandate of providing quality education and contributing to national development.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Institutional Leadership

Institutional leadership involves the establishment and protection of institutional values and characters, of which the orientation focuses more on self-maintenance and leans less towards future or change orientation (Washington et al., 2008). Leading institutions is another dimension

that determines the quality of executive leadership. It is no secret that leadership capabilities are effective in such seemingly different contexts as work and family relationships. Institutional leaders are those who direct the affairs of institutions; they are in charge of policies and programs, students, and the overall management of the institutions, which is in line with their manpower development. The most important legacy of institutional leaders is the sustainability of the institution's health over time, including fundamental ideas about the purpose, values, scope of activities, key factors for success, transformational projects, and those responsible for implementing change in teaching and learning (Surya, 2011).

The ingredients of institutional leadership are the clarity of ideas, the ability to communicate those ideas to the organization, and the creation of incentive systems aimed at aligning the work of managers with the institution over the long term. The clarity of ideas presupposes the skills that enable the creation of a more prestigious brand, improved attractiveness of the environment for inclusion and excellence in teaching and learning within and beyond their institutions, innovative management, the creation of cultures that promote the advancement of people, and the design of efficient organizational processes and systems. A good executive team is not only diverse but must also be unified around a core set of ideas and approaches. This also means decisions on the use of capital, people management, and the distribution of executive time are made with the utmost professionalism and discipline. Chkhaidze (2023) stated that institutional leaders should work collaboratively with faculty, staff, parents, and students to create a positive and inclusive school culture. They are also involved in setting goals and procedures, monitoring and evaluating students' progress, and teachers' performance. The ultimate goal of institutional leadership is to promote academic achievement, social-emotional development, and the overall well-being of students and employees.

Challenges of Institutional Leadership

Several challenges are being faced by leaders of higher education institutions based on the influence and powers of government, as stated by Ikegbusi et al. (2016):

- Appointments for institutional leadership are done by the ministry or commission in charge of education in various states. The Minister or Commissioner for Education is invariably a politician who has the interests of his party in mind before making any appointment. On this note, an inappropriate person might be appointed and as such, management might not be successful.
- Religious issues are also being considered in most of the appointments to institutional leadership. In a situation where the person in the ministry or commission in charge of the appointment, in most cases, often consider people of the same faith with him. These have created distinctiveness in the educational system. Distinctiveness is viewed as supporting both academic success and positive actions in teaching and learning. One tangible way the institutions demonstrate their distinctiveness is through the school curriculum (Toyo, 2009). However, on students' admission, a green biro signature from a member of the house of assembly or upper house has given unqualified students admission, displacing the chances of qualified students due to the number required for admission that very year.
- The issue of the quota system equally affects leadership position in the educational sector as well as student admissions. It was made a policy in Nigeria that a percentage of every state is reserved either for admission or employment in every institution as one Nigeria.

In this case, chances of better people are being denied to non-indigenes based on the Nigerian quota system. On this note, it is evident that political development will enhance institutional leadership.

Leadership

Leadership encompasses a multifaceted process wherein individuals exert influence to achieve defined objectives or goals within a group or organization (Ololube, 2024). Ajikere and Ololube (2021) described leadership as a communication process that inspires and guides individuals towards a common goal. Drucker (2006) emphasized the transformative aspect of leadership, elevating individuals to higher standards and expanding their capabilities beyond conventional limits. Fageyinbo (2005) highlights the relational aspect of leadership, wherein a leader wields greater influence over others within the group. Building upon this, Beals and Jamaica (2023) define leadership as the ability to inspire collaboration and voluntary commitment towards shared objectives. Leadership involves motivating individuals to work collectively towards a common goal. They emphasized the role of leadership in enhancing organizational effectiveness, efficiency, and proficiency.

Despite various perspectives, leadership remains a complex process aimed at influencing individuals within an organization to accomplish set goals and direct the organization towards cohesion and success (Ololube, 2024). He emphasized the persuasive aspect of leadership, where individuals inspire and influence others to work cooperatively towards shared objectives. He went further to highlight the collaborative nature of leadership, wherein individuals enlist support from others to accomplish dominant tasks.

Thus, leadership revolves around achieving results through people, employing attributes such as belief, values, ethics, character, knowledge, and skills, as well as appropriate leadership styles (Ololube et al., 2018). Leadership serves as both the adhesive that binds a group together and the catalyst that motivates employees, thus significantly influencing organizational performance. Without effective leadership, administrative functions such as planning, organizing, and controlling may be ineffective (Ololube, 2024). Therefore, leadership involves a dynamic process of influence, collaboration, and inspiration, aimed at achieving organizational goals and enhancing performance. Effective leadership is essential for fostering cohesion, motivation, and productivity within organizations, thereby driving success and achieving desired outcomes.

Some Leadership Styles by Aguba (2009)

Autocratic Leadership Style: In this leadership style, all decision-making powers are centralized with the leader, as with dictators. These leaders do not entertain any suggestions or initiative from subordinates. Autocratic leadership has been successful as it provides strong motivation for the manager. It permits quick decision-making as only one person decides for the whole group and keeps each decision to himself until he feels it needs to be shared with the rest of the group.

Transformational Leadership Style: Transformational leadership theory emphasized the leader's ability to inspire and motivate their followers to exceed their own self-interests for the

greater good of the organization. Transformational leaders inspire their teams through vision, charisma, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

Democratic Leadership Style: This type of leadership style consists of the leader sharing the decision-making abilities with group members by promoting their interests and practicing social equality. It is also known as shared leadership.

Laissez-Faire Leadership Style: This style involves delegating decision-making to the subordinates. They are given the complete right and power to make decisions to establish goals and work out the problems and hurdles in the organization. They are just there as leaders, nothing more, and do not care about what happens in the organization.

Task-oriented leadership Style: Emphasis is placed on work, but good relations are incidental. Production is the main concern, so close supervision and authoritarian styles are noticed, and interaction is strictly official. This style agrees with the assumption of theory X, and formal authority is used to exert conformity and ensure high productivity.

People-oriented leadership style: Focus on the needs of people, and production is incidental. The leader emphasizes sound interpersonal relations and keeps organizations goals ambiguous or general so as to make room for the personal needs of members, which is contrary to organizational goals. A leader makes a concerted effort to avoid conflict and develops high morale among members.

Integrated leadership: A balanced leadership style prioritizes both production and people. Work is accomplished by highly committed and motivated people, and effort is made to achieve a high degree of congruence between organizational goals and the personal goals of members. This style has faith in members, so there is participation, and communication is open and free to aid teamwork and group decision-making. A leader is expected to encourage his followers to develop a willingness not only to work but to work with zeal and confidence. To achieve this, a leader, amongst other attributes, must possess basic innate intelligence, have a good sense of judgement, be emotionally mature, be zealous, exude self-confidence, be versatile, have initiative, and have task-relevant knowledge (technical) skills. He is not to stand behind a group to push himself before the group, as he facilitates progress and inspires the group to accomplish organizational goals.

Educational Management

Educational management is a field that is concerned with the operation of educational organizations (Areadne, 2015). Castillo (2016) opined that educational management is a process of planning, organizing, controlling, and directing the activities in an institution of higher learning, evaluating and effectively utilizing human and material resources, in order to accomplish the institutions aims and objectives. It is not a field limited to school principals but all parties involved in education should gain insight in to educational management as it is vital to help institutions function successfully and effectively realize their goals. Ololube (2024) stated that educational management is the administration of educational system with the assistance of professionals and material resources (human and material resources). He explained that its goals

are to supervise, plan, strategize, and implement structures in order to carry out an education system.

The role of institutional leaders in educational management is paramount in ensuring the provision of high-quality education, the establishment of effective management systems, and the motivation of staff towards institutional goals (Eacott, 2015). Educational leaders are responsible for setting the vision and mission of the institution, providing a guiding framework for all stakeholders (Chkheidze, 2023). They play a crucial role in creating a conducive learning environment that fosters student and teacher success, encompassing safety, respect, and conducive atmosphere for learning (Chkheidze, 2023). Educational management relies on effective leadership to guide institutions towards excellence in education. Leaders must establish clear goals, facilitate effective management practices, and create a supportive environment conducive to learning and growth. By embracing their role as educational managers, institutional leaders can drive positive change and contribute to the overall success of educational institutions.

Importance of Educational Management

The three major importance of educational management, as explained by Aguba (2009):

- **Efficient planning and execution:** Planned and organized implementation of best practices and activities will certainly help you achieve far better results than unplanned ones. A well-thought-out implementation plan will assist you in defining the authorities and responsibilities of each entity involved in the process, monitoring its performance, and making any necessary changes to the approach.
- **To project or maintain a positive image:** The reason educational management is important is because it will project and maintain a positive image of the institution. Given the global proliferation of educational institutions, establishing a positive image of your organization or nation's education landscape has certainly become essential. Hence, students and administrative staff will only join institutes with good reputations and track records.
- **Maximize Resource Utilization:** It is important to note that for the smooth operation of an educational institution, it is critical to allocate the right resources at the right place and leverage them to their full potential.

Benefits of Educational Management

These are some benefits of educational management, as listed by Kela (2023):

- **Help you achieve the desired outcomes:** A comprehensive students' information system will assist you in effectively managing all of your human and material resources, as well as bringing all of the components together to form a centralized system. It also assists you in aligning individual objectives, enabling you to achieve the desired objectives successfully.
- **Improved resource management:** Educational management allows you to choose, allocate, and monitor each resource based on its abilities and needs, ultimately ensuring its best use. Effective resource management and utilization not only prevent leakage but also enable you to meet your goals by the deadline. It can also incorporate tools that can

improve resource allocation efficiency by providing comprehensive insights into skill sets and knowledge levels.

- **Increased cost efficiency:** When the system is well organized, and the resources are efficiently assigned, operational costs are greatly reduced. Moreover, having clear visibility into all aspects and operations across the institution allows you to forecast and plan events, make timely decisions in the institute for any issues, or help in crisis management.
- **Proper distribution of authority and responsibility:** Educational management assists in properly allocating responsibilities to the right person, avoiding duplication of efforts and conflicts between the two individuals or departments. This will not only save time, effort, and money but will also ensure that operations run smoothly throughout the institution. You can expect better results when you carry out each activity and operation as planned.

Political Development

The process of political development primarily focuses on enhancing the institutions, attitudes, and values that constitute the political framework of a community or nation. The principal aim of political development is to achieve the welfare of individuals by effectively harnessing human and natural resources and promoting the progress of a nation's economic, social, political, and cultural institutions. According to Maclaren (2013), it is commonly asserted that education is distinct from politics. It is undeniable that education and politics are inherently interconnected. The formulation of policies within an educational system is mostly determined by the governing authority (Chapman, 2006). The speaker additionally asserted that in order to guarantee the political, social, and economic prosperity of any government, it is imperative for institutions of higher education to actively engage in advancing the welfare of the governed. Conversely, educational institutions require the backing of the governing authority (political advancement), the general public, and other governmental entities to effectively execute their duties. As noted by Toyo (2009), it is said that the financial assistance and protection of the government in power are essential for the survival of every educational institution. According to Ikegbusi (2014), the educational policies implemented by successive Nigerian governments have consistently mirrored and frequently contradicted the political ideology and societal perspectives of each government, both at the state and federal levels.

Falola (2010) argued that education has a significant role in political growth, as it serves as a means of socialization and is considered a crucial component of political socialization. At the university, leaders may assert that politics does not play a role in their leadership, but they acknowledge that political leaders are essential for their functioning. In the words of Young (2012), it is emphasized that university leaders and representatives engage in ongoing lobbying efforts to secure approval and sufficient funding for their operations inside the legislative system. To gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of political evolution, it is essential to analyze the relevant elements of certain ideologies and how they interact with education. As stated by Bush (2010) and Rodney (2012), democracy requires its educational system and leadership to be capable of taking on political responsibilities in order to foster national growth. However, to fully capitalize on our political system, it is imperative that we possess a comprehensive understanding of both its vulnerabilities and its advantages. Some impediments of political development by Okonkwo and Obineli (2014) includes:

- Religious Intolerance;
- Poor Leadership;
- Structural Imbalance;
- Political Instability;
- Funding.

CONCLUSION

The researcher concluded that the success of any organization is largely dependent on sound, good, and effective leadership. This is because policies and decisions that can help direct the activities of an organization towards success have to be executed by the leadership. To perform effectively and achieve success, leaders must depend on the situation in which they find themselves as well as the nature of the organization, as different situations require different leadership abilities, skills, and styles. Leadership is indispensable in any organization. It is all about social influence, in which one person is accorded support by other group members to achieve laid-out objectives. In this case, educational management is a crucial component for institutional leaders because it assists in better assigning and managing resources, tracking progress in real time, and making timely and informed decisions. Education contributes to political development, for education is socialization, and quite essential, a form of political socialization.

Suggestions

The following suggestions guided the study:

- Government should ensure sustainable political development in the education system.
- The institutional leadership of educational management should be strengthened through recruitment of competent, committed and morally sound personnel.
- The staff of the institution should be empowered through good salary and other incentives to deter them from being corrupted.
- The institutions must operate within the confines of the rule of law.
- Ministerial appointments on academic matters should be strictly on merit and experiences on areas of specialization, this will help to achieve the goals and objectives of education as the appointee is well grounded on the field of educational management.
- There should be proper and adequate funding of the educational sector, which will give room for effective implementations of the educational policies.

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