University Leadership and Management of Research for National Transformation of Nigeria

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Abstract
Research and development are among the key functions of a university the world over ,including Nigeria. The objective of this study was to find out how the leadership of Nigerian Universities had stimulated research for national transformation of the country. Secondary data, generated through documentary reading, was used for analysis, while systems approach was adopted as a frame work of analysis. It was discovered that universities are yet to realize this goal essentially because of poor, inept, autocratic and dictatorial leadership. They rely essentially on government subventions. It is recommended that a contingency oriented vice-chancellor will harness both human and material resources, carry every unit along, generate more resources, get cooperation of all for industrial harmony, which is conducive for research and development that ensures national transformation.

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Research is one of the key functions of any university in the world, as its major findings play vital role in the development of the society. Bailey (1982) has observed that the university research findings are not only imparting positively on the society, but also the methods themselves are increasingly being used by the various sectors of the society.

Pigors and Myers (1984) define management as the organizational leadership, whose central task is the effective co-ordination and development of the available human and non-material resources for the attainment of the organizational goal.

Carlisle [1978] states that leadership is a process of providing direction in group activities and influencing others to achieve group objectives. The emphasis here is influencing other people to work or do something that facilitates the attainment of a group goal.

In a similar vein, Maxwell [1999] shares the above view when he defines leadership as the capacity and will to rally men and women to a common purpose and character which inspires confidence.

Jones[2000] defines leadership as the art of enabling ordinary people to turn in extra ordinary performance. This means that leadership inspires people in an organization to bring out their best for the attainment of the organizational goal.

Leadership is the catalyst that motivates, inspires and propels both the management and staff of an organization for the attainment of the organizational goal through efficient utilization of its (organization) resources. The success or failure of any modern organization is a pointer to the direction of its leadership strength, as no institution rises above the dynamism of its leader.

Leadership and management are the twin factors that determine the direction of the operational policy of any organization. While management galvanizes human and material resources for the attainment of the organizational goal, leadership is the proactive reagent that propels and determines the operational dynamism of management.

Management mobilizes human and material resources of a university for the attainment of its goal, which includes research and development, but leadership gives "life" to management and determines its operational efficiency. Therefore, the level of research and development of any university in Nigeria will be determined by the degree of congruence between its leadership and management.

If follows, therefore, that since the research findings of our universities have not advanced much the national development of this country, there is, certainly, a disequilibrium between the leadership and management of these institutions. Most Nigerian Universities lack adequate funding, well equipped laboratories, functional libraries, conducive learning and stimulating environment and other basic requirements for academic research. These form the major point of industrial dispute between the government and the Academic Staff Union of Universities, ASUU.

How, then, can the leadership of Nigerian Universities, under the above scenario, stimulate research for the national transformation of the country? Herein lies the problem, which this paper seeks to address.

THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

Theory provides a frame on which research findings are analyzed and interpreted for predicting realities. Structural functionalism, Human resource theory, Marxism, political economy approach and systems approach

are some of the relevant theories for analyzing this topic. However, I adopted systems approach for this paper.
Systems approach, as propounds by David Easton, performs the input-output functions. The input functions are the demands, support, conflicts, pressures and problems that are brought to bear on the system by the populace through the mass media, letters, delegations, strikes, mass protests, among others. These demands and pressures are processed by the leadership, who, in turn, makes decisions that come out as public policies.

Every system, opines Easton, is made up of sub-systems that all work harmoniously for the maintenance and survival of the system. All the sub-systems are very important, and any malfeasance in any of them affects the entire system. He likens a system to a human body where all parts work harmoniously for the existence of man.

The sub-systems in any society include political system, religious system, economic system, institutional system, education system, including universities, colleges of education and polytechnics, which all work harmoniously for the survival and development of the system.

A system breaks down when it fails to perform the input-output functions occasioned by the systems overload. System breakdown is associated with violence, tension, uncertainty, arson and breakdown of law and order, among others.

A university is a sub-system, whose products contribute to the educational, scientific and technological development of the country. It contains many smaller or sub-systems that work simultaneously and harmoniously for the attainment of its goal. The ability of a university to perform the input-output functions depends on the quality of its leadership and management.

The quality and quantity of research and development of a university are determined by the ability of the vice-chancellor to mobilize human and material resources of the university. He co-ordinates the board of governing council and the management of the university, as well as the various schools/faculties and departments, students union, staff unions, among others, for the attainment of the institutional goal.

PRINCIPLES OF MANAGEMENT
Many scholars and practitioners have defined management in various forms. Davis (1981:5) sees management as the functions of managers, who mobilize human and material resources of an organization for the attainment of the organizational goal. Managers, he opines, use the organizational behavior to improve people organization relationship.

In a similar vein, Bailey (1979) defines management as the functions of   managers, who attempt to achieve the stated objectives by directing human activities in the production of goods and services of an organization.

The manager, he maintains, utilizes land, factory, offices, machinery and other facilities at his disposal in most effective manner.

Certo (1997) states that management is the process of working with and through people and other organizational resources to achieve effectively organizational objectives by efficiently using limited resources in a changing environment.

Generally, management is the process of harnessing human and material resources of an organization and deploying them appropriately for the efficient realization of the organizational goal. It guarantees the desired actions and reactions between the human and material elements of an organization[Nwekeaku,2010]
Management involves planning, organizing, motivating, co-coordinating and forecasting an attempt to achieve the organizational goal. Management of a university may include such principal officers as the registrar, the bursar, the librarian, deans of faculties, directors of schools and heads of departments.

LEADERSHIP
Maxwell (1999:1) sees leadership as the capacity and will to rally men and women to a common purpose and the character which inspires confidence.

Similarly, Davis (1981:124) has defined leadership as the ability to persuade others to seek defined objectives enthusiastically. It is the human factor that binds a group together and motivates it towards goals. The leader's act of motivation is similar in effect to that of the secret chemical that turns the insect pupa into a butterfly with all the beauty that was the pupa's potential.

Stogdill (1974:51) says leadership transforms potentials into reality as it is the ultimate act that brings to success all the potentials that are in an organization and its people. It is so important that people have been concerned about it since the beginning of history.

Contemplating on the question: "what makes a leader?" Goleman (2001:7) states that superb leaders have very different ways of directing a team, a division, or a company. Some are subdued and analytical, others are charismatic and go with their gut. And different situations call for different types of leadership. Most mergers need a sensitive negotiator at the helm, whereas many turnarounds require a more forceful kind of authority.

Davis[1981:125] notes that leadership is a part of management, but not all of it. Managers are required to plan and organize, for example, but all we ask of leaders is that they influence others to follow. The fact that they

influence others to follow is no guarantee that they are going in the right direction. This means that strong leaders can be weak managers because they are weak in planning or some other managerial duty. Though they can get their group going, they just cannot get them going in directions that serve organizational objectives.

Leaders are a key human resource in any organization. Successful leadership requires behavior that unites and stimulates followers toward defined objectives in specific situations. All three elements – leader, followers, and situation – are variables that affect each other in determining appropriate leadership behavior.

LEADERSHIP STYLE

Leadership may be classified into the following forms or styles.

i.   Positive and negative leaders
ii. Autocratic, participative and free-rein leaders
iii. Contingency or situational leadership

i.   Positive and Negative Leaders

A leader who emphasizes rewards, such as bonuses, promotion and other motivational actions to make his followers work for the attainment of the organizational goal is a positive leader. If ,however, a leader tends to apply penalties and other harsh treatments on his followers for the purpose of realizing the organizational goal he is applying negative leadership.

Keller and Szilagyi (1978) have observed that positive leaders generally achieve higher jobs satisfaction and performance, while though negative leadership gets acceptable performance in many situations, it has high human cost.

Participative, Autocratic, and Free-rein Leaders

A participatory leader shares, decentralizes and delegates authority, and decisions are made after wide consultation and inputs of various units and departments. The leader does not claim to "know" everything.

Conversely, an autocratic leader tends to concentrate powers and decision-making on himself. Autocratic leaders structure the organization for their followers who are expected to do whatever they are instructed to do without making any inputs. The leader "knows" everything and uses threats and intimidation on his followers.

The free-rein leader depends essentially on his subordinates in various groups or units to establish their various goals and work towards realizing them. He avoids responsibilities and direct exercise of powers. The role of the leader is minimal, and as the group members train themselves they provide their own motivation and rewards. The leader does not make much inputs, as changes and innovations in the organization are slow and very gradual if they ever come.

Contingency Leadership

The contingency leadership believes that the most appropriate leadership depends on the situation and circumstances of the time in which the leader operates. Different problems and situations require different approaches in handling them. The realization that the positive, participative, and considerate leader is not always the best leader is very important here. The best leadership style depends on whether the situation is favorable, unfavorable or in an intermediate range of favorability to the leader.

A contingent leader approaches issues according to the circumstances and situations of the moment as he does not rely on any particular pattern or laid out system. He is a leader of the moment and does not believe so much on precedents.

TASKS OF UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP ON RESEARCH

Successive Nigerian post independent governments have regarded universities as vital partners for national development and transformation. This recognition of the vital role of the universities in national development was the main motivation for the establishment of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, University of Ibadan, University of Lagos, University of Ife, now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, among other first and second generation universities in Nigeria.

Today, Nigeria has over 82 federal and state universities and 27 private owned universities. More universities are still springing up, yet the existing ones have not much advanced research and technology for national development.

The National Policy in Education (2004) stipulates that the university research shall be relevant to the nation's development goals. In this regard, universities shall be encouraged to disseminate their research results to both government and industries. A university engages on all forms of research through its faculties, institute and departments. The focus of research is to understand, analyze, interpret and predict realities for the development

of the institution and the larger society.

The reality is that there are some fundamental problems that confront man in his quest to conquer his environment. Such problems may include teaching and learning, methodology, students and industrial unrest, cultism, new vaccines, farm-inputs, diseases, as well as science and technology breakthrough.

The vice-chancellor, as the chief executive and leader of the university, co-ordinates the activities of his managers in order to realize the goal of the institution. The registrar, the bursar, the librarian, the deans of faculties and students affairs, the heads of departments, directors, and other key functionaries of the university fall into management category. They see to the daily implementation of the university policies and programs.

The tasks before a vice-chancellor for the necessary research and development of a university may include the following:

Inadequate /underfunding

Inadequate or underfunding is one of the greatest challenges facing Nigerian Universities today. Although UNESCO has stipulated that 25 per cent of annual budget of every country should be allocated to education, Nigerian's case is a far cry as less than 10 per cent of the total Federal and State budgets are reserved for education. This has been a major reason for industrial dispute between the Federal Government and the Academic Staff Union of Universities, ASUU.

Inadequate Teaching and non-teaching staff.

Most Nigerian Universities are grossly understaffed. The continued depreciation of the naira and the gamut of economic woes have resulted to unprecedented intellectual flight from the country for greener pastures abroad. Nigerian professionals are leaving the country en mass for greener pastures abroad, while the country's universities are grossly under staffed.

Cultism.

Cultism has become the order of the day in Nigerian universities, and has remained a major source of instability in the country's ivory towers. Lack of stimulating and challenging learning environment, economic woes, acculturation, among other factors, have encouraged the emergence and sustenance of cultism in Nigerian universities.

Industrial and students unrest.

The economic crises, political instability, industrial and civil unrest, among other social vices have aggravated students unrest in the country, as what happens in the larger Nigeria affects the universities, which are sub-systems.

Lack of Adequate laboratory, Library and other facilities.

Nigerian universities are threatened by a dearth of laboratory, library and other infrastructural facilities. Most teaching and learning activities take place in un conducive environment, hence our universities churn   out every year thousands of job seekers and dysfunctional graduates who are unsuitable for national transformation.

Government interference and Community pressure.

Both federal and state universities in the country are victims of undue interference from both government and domiciled communities as they constantly interfere in the programs and activities of the ivory towers, especially in admission of students, recruitment of staff, among other areas through the instrumentality of federal character, quota system and catchment areas. This interference tends to compromise merit for mediocrity in terms of admitted students and recruited staff.

How a vice-chancellor tackles the above problems depends on his leadership skills and style. Though the systems approach has been adopted for this paper, the leadership style of a vice-chancellor will still determine how he responds or approaches the aforestated tasks.

LEADERSHIP STYLE AND UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION

The systems approach, as stated in the theoretical framework, sees all parts of the system as important elements for the survival of the system per se. A university as a system, has such sub-systems as academic staff union, non-teaching staff union, students union, library, bursary, registry, estate and works, academic affairs, which is divided into faculties and further into departments, among others.

The above sub-systems all work harmoniously for the attainment of the university goal, as any threat from each of them affects the peace of the university, which has negative impact on research and development. The effectiveness of these sub-systems depends on the leadership style of the vice-chancellor.

Despite inadequate funding of the university by the government, a positive oriented vice-chancellor who applies systems model, will mobilize all the sub-systems for internal revenue generation. He will emphasize positive rewards, such as, promotion, and bonuses to his teaching and non-teaching staff. He gives grants and loans to students and staff. He funds research work through provision of laboratory equipment and library facilities, as well as embark on foreign linkage relations, which will encourage staff and students exchange programs

A negative oriented vice-chancellor will not bother to mobilize the management and staff, as he will not see any usefulness in harnessing their talents and skills. Disenchantment, disillusionment and frustration will be the order of the day, thus aggravating tension on campus, as well as impacting negatively on research and development.

An autocratic vice-chancellor will usurp the duties of the council, monopolizes powers and functions of the other principal officers of the university and renders them redundant. He runs the institution as his personal estate, and offends the sensibility of the managers, who are wont to resort to subtle sabotage of his efforts and negate the realization of the university goal.

Conversely, a participatory vice-chancellor decentralizes and delegates powers to his deputies, the deans and heads of departments, while the registrar, the bursary, the library, the estate and works units enjoy a modicum of autonomy in implementing their various objectives towards the realization of the institutional goal. Their talents and skills are injected into the input system for improved quality decisions that are favorable to research and development.

A free-rein vice-chancellor over-decentralizes powers and functions to managers to the extent that it is difficult to supervise and control them. There is lack of proper co-ordination of various sections, hence divergent objectives, motivated by narrow interests, become the order of the day. This scenario is inimical to organizational goal, and can hardly prosper research and development of a university.

A contingency oriented vice-chancellor is a visionary and dynamic leader, who has a clear mission, and applies different strategies to different situations for attainment of the institutional goal. He delegates and decentralizes powers and responsibilities and puts in place appropriate mechanism for effective supervision and control. He mobilizes both management and staff for their maximum productivity as well as applies material rewards, promotion, bonuses and other motivational factors to get their best cooperation. He uses sticks and carrots on students leaders and cult members, and gets their maximum cooperation. He interacts effectively with all principal publics or stakeholders of the university for their regular financial and logistic support.

A contingent vice-chancellor harnesses all the sub-systems of the university, maintains cordial and effective relations with relevant government functionaries and reach out to industrialists and corporations who may need the services of the university, especially the research findings for development programs, thereby boosting its internal revenue generation. Such a university will have enough clients for research and development programs, thereby boosting its internal revenue generation. Certainly, such a university will do better than what a majority of Nigerian universities do today in the area of research and development.

The input functions of a university under a contingent vice-chancellor will provide industrial harmony, cooperation of managers, more funding and support of the principal publics, which prosper research and development. The prospect of research and development is discernible within the horizon of a Nigerian university under the dynamic and visionary leadership of a vice-chancellor that is contingent compliance.

Essential Skills For University Leadership

A vice- chancellor that is desirous of stimulating research for national development is expected to possess the following skills:

- Vision- A vice-chancellor should be a man of vision, who should always provide a road-map for future development of his university. He should always ask: where is my university today? What is its ranking among other universities? Where do I want it to be in five, 10, 15, 20 years time? How do we get there? As Plato argues in his Republic, a philosopher King [now a Vice-chancellor] must have a vision for his country.

- Imaginative and Creative- A vice-chancellor must be a man of big and concrete ideas and creativity in order to lead other academia to the right path of industrial and scientific break-through. Niccole Machiavelli, in his book, *The Prince*, has remarked that a country that has a leader who captures the imagination of his people is blessed because there is no limit to her steady rise and development. An imaginative and creative vice-chancellor will improve the fortunes of his university.

- Sound knowledge and Analytical Mind – A vice-chancellor should have sound and diverse academic and professional background sustained by regular conferences, workshops, personal readings, writings and publication in order to be current on research trends and development nationally and internationally.

- Integrity and charismatic – A vice-chancellor should be a man of high integrity and charisma in order to earn the respect, cooperation and followership of his academic colleagues for research and development of his university.

- Interpersonal Relations – A vice-chancellor should relate, interact and mix well with all principal publics or stake holders of his university. He should know their names, contact addresses, including e-mail and telephone numbers, their peculiarities, strengths, weaknesses

and challenges. These elements will give his principal officers, deans of faculties, head of departments, professors and other staff courage and trust to open up and supply him with unsolicited but useful information to weather through the storm of leadership challenges.

- Group Affiliations – A vice- chancellor should identify, associate and maintain contact with credible, professional, political, economic, financial, industrial, educational, informal and social groups for regular vital information and support to his university.
- Team Player and Builder- A vice-chancellor should see every faculty, department, unit and individual staff as a valuable ally and asset that must be co-opted, encouraged and integrated into the university system for improved productivity.
- Motivator and Inspirer – A leader should inspire and motivate his followers through material and social rewards, intellectual growth and development, exemplary life, objectivity, equity, justice and fairness to all in order to get the best from them.
- Democratic principles – A vice-chancellor should encourage wide consultations and participation from relevant departments and officers in the decision making process and implementation of the university policies, programs and projects. He should encourage constructive criticisms and divergent views, and should avoid being Mr Know it all, otherwise the necessary research and development of the university will be impeded.
- Excellent Knowledge of power and authority- A dynamic vice-chancellor should have adequate knowledge of the nature, dimensions and relations of power and authority in order to apply them well in promoting research and development of his university.
- Accountability and Transparency- Accountability and transparency endear a leader to all the stake holders. A vice-chancellor must demonstrate accountability and transparency in all his activities in order to continue to attract financial support, improved funding and other technical support to his university from both cooperate and private agencies.
- Data bank- A vice-chancellor who does not have high quality and quantity data will not go far, because he will be operating yesterday today. He needs to have adequate and current knowledge of all the stake holders of the university, as well as the larger society otherwise he will run out of ideas.

Conclusion

Universities, as the citadels of learning, all over the world spearhead inventions for development and national transformation. Nigerian Universities are expected to champion the course of national development through research and innovations. Nigeria has over 132 universities, but their impact on research and development has remained tangential. Leadership is a catalyst that is needed to mobilize human and material resources of a university for necessary research and national development and transformation. However, the leadership style of a vice-chancellor determines the extent he can mobilize the resources of his university for meaningful development.

A vice- chancellor requires such skills as sound knowledge and analytical mind, vision, imaginative and creative, integrity and charisma, interpersonal relations, motivation and inspiration, group affiliations and democratic principles. He also needs to be a team player and builder, accountability and transparency, excellent knowledge of power and authority, as well as a data bank for regular availability of high quality and quantity information.

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