



Leadership and Autonomy for University Effectiveness

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Abstract

The study investigated leadership and university autonomy for university effectiveness. The research is hinged on liberal theory. The researcher made use of the survey research method to conduct the research. The opinions of one hundred and fifty lecturers (150) from three universities were sought. The findings revealed that leadership and university autonomy are relevant to university effectiveness. Literatures were reviewed for expert opinions based on the demands of the topic. Among other recommendations, it was recommended that, leaderships in the university system should be visionary. They should clearly communicate their goals to their employees for the purpose of the attainment of set goals.

Keywords: Leadership, Autonomy, Effectiveness, University, Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

In the 1970s and 1980s scholars and leaders alike supported the opinion that leadership is situational driven. In other words, they believed that leadership and organizational results were completely a consequence of circumstances beyond a leader's control. Nevertheless, that

perspective has been debunked. It is important to state that the individual at the helm of affairs is actually responsible for the results or outcomes of his organization.

Leadership therefore, in the university system like every other organization is pertinent for the results or consequences in terms of goal attainment. Thus, leadership in every organization matters a lot. The university system is not an exception to that incontrovertible fact, Sherman (2018). The success or failure of any organization is highly dependent on the leadership. No matter the internal and external pressures, leadership is expected to provide its organization with the necessary mechanisms to whether the effects of the pressures. Like a parent (father) cannot justify his failure in running his home or in the upbringing of his child, no leadership should be excused for the failure of its organization.

Effective leaders set up a clear direction for their organizations. Most organizations fail owing to the perplexity of personnel resulting from unclear direction. The control of personnel and the nature of work environment are also established by leadership through established organizational culture and structure.

Autonomy and academic freedom have become serious issues of discussion in the higher education space in Nigeria. This is consequent to the perceived and actual undue interference of the state or government in the internal affairs of institutions of higher learning. The university being a pillar of higher education experiences its full dose of external interference.

Contentions and disputes on university autonomy and academic freedom date back to the 1970s when higher education collided with military dictatorship in Nigeria. The aftermath of the Nigerian Civil War brought about deplorable conditions in the country and this affected the higher institutions of learning in no little measure. The request of university lecturers for the amelioration of the conditions and increase in their payment met stiff resistance from the Federal Ministry of Education. As a result, the university lecturers embarked on a strike precisely in April 1973.

However, the military government's handling of the matter was dictatorial. The government coercively ordered the lecturers to return to class or face dismissal and ejection from their official residence. Since then, the battle for university autonomy and academic freedom has been not just issues of debate but a serious battle between the university system and the government (Amadi, 2011).

However, the need for university autonomy and academic freedom cannot be over accentuated. This is because, human development and the advancement of knowledge is depended upon the freedom to examine, investigate and question (<https://www.iau-aiu-netmg.pdf>). Thus, university autonomy and academic freedom coupled with effective leadership are veritable tools for university effectiveness.

Although, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has been at the forefront in the fight for university autonomy and academic freedom, the government has been relentless in its efforts to determine the activities in the university system, thereby undermining university autonomy and academic freedom, the reason for this ordeal is not farfetched. A major chunk of the funds used to run universities come from the government. It is a case of "he who pays the piper dictates the tune", Arikewuyo in Amadi (2011) recounts how governments have battered university autonomy—staff and student unions were banned and unbanned at various times. The ASUU and NANS were the most affected. Many Vice Chancellors have been removed for not complying with directives from the government. A major general was even appointed as the sole administrator in a first generation university. Many academics have been dismissed; retired and unjustly jailed for teaching what they were not employed to teach.

Statement of the Problem

Among other salient aims of higher education in Nigeria are: the development of intellectual capabilities of individuals to understand and appreciate their environment and the inculcation of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals develop into useful members of the community (FRN, 2014). Nonetheless, higher education in Nigeria is in travail and the university system being the pillar of higher education is falling short of the aims of higher education. This is consequent to poor leadership and external interference in the affairs of the university system.

However, the bullying of the university system by both the Federal and State Governments in the country has punctured university autonomy and academic freedom and made the system ineffective. In reaction to this ordeal by faculty or lecturers, it has resulted in squabbles between the government and members of the university system which has resulted into incessant strike actions from lecturers. Consequently, government on its part has taken several punitive measures to assert their authority over the university system.

Some measures of government to assert its authority include: monitoring and censorship of information within the university system and disciplinary actions against members of the university community who are deemed dissidents. This has invariably placed restrictions on teaching, research and dissemination of information, intellectual publications and activities of academics. However, the advocacy for university autonomy and academic freedom is done blindly without scrutiny or critical analysis of the extent of autonomy the university system should possess.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined leadership and university autonomy as instruments for university effectiveness with the aim of advocating for effective leadership and university autonomy. The study also revealed the mechanisms by which university autonomy and academic freedom are assaulted in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the study suggested strategies on how university autonomy and academic freedom can be entrenched in the university system in Nigeria. The study also scrutinized the extent of autonomy universities should possess and the real implication of autonomy.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- What are the mechanisms used to undermine university autonomy and academic freedom?
- How does external interference affect university autonomy and academic freedom?
- What are the strategies to entrench university autonomy and academic freedom in the university system?
- What are the roles of leadership to university autonomy?

Significance of the Study

The study is significant to politicians, who hold public offices. It will act as a medium to admonish both the Federal and State Governments on the dangers associated with assault on university autonomy and academic freedom. It will also address the domineering role of the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the usurpation of some powers and functions of the university system by the NUC. This will invariably make the Commission perform its functions with caution.

The study is significant to leadership in the university system, lecturers, other members of the university community and advocates for university autonomy and academic freedom to scrutinize the matters in question and evaluate the extent of autonomy the university system should actually possess. Thus, the research is significant in that, it is expected to create a balance on control of the university system and university autonomy and academic freedom.

Scope of the Study

The geographical scope of the study is delimited to Nigeria, precisely Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, University of Port Harcourt and Rivers State University. The study was delimited to the following variables: mechanisms used to undermine university autonomy and academic freedom, contemporary assaults on university autonomy, strategies to entrench university autonomy and academic freedom and leadership and university autonomy as instruments for university effectiveness.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework

The liberal theory also known as liberalism gained grounds in the Enlightenment Age. Hobbes' work, *Theological Political Treatise* (1651), acted as a catalyst for the establishment of the liberal theory. The revelation by <https://eEyipedia.org/wiki/> list of liberal theorists, points out that it will be problematic to identify Hobbes as a liberal. However, his work influenced Locke, Hamilton, Jefferson and many other later liberals which made Strauss identify him as "the father of liberalism".

Liberalism is one of the theories of international relations. It is a political perspective based on liberty and equality. The theory upholds civil rights, democracy, secularism, gender equality, internationalism and the freedom of speech, the press, religion and markets. The theory is opposed to hereditary, privilege, state, religion, absolutism, the divine right of Kings, traditional conservatism and political imposition. Liberalism is sandwiched in democracy and the rule of law (<https://en.wikipediara/wiki/liberalism>). The spirit behind the liberal theory is freedom.

The theory gained grounds in the epoch of history known as the Enlightenment Age. This epoch was characterized by critical thinking and pursuit for knowledge. Liberalism which aided the Enlightenment Age revolutionized the world in terms of vigorous pursuit and acquisition of knowledge. This gave birth to inventions and advancement in technology and in other spheres.

Knowledge and research in universities overtime have not just explained phenomena, but brought inventions and solutions to some problems of mankind. The underlying point and

correlation between the liberal theory and this work is that liberty (autonomy) or freedom of the university system will bring about self-awareness, unhindered pursuit and acquisition of knowledge and innovation in the university system.

As fear and imposition limit and restrain progress. Liberty aids and paves way for exploration and discovery. The Enlightenment Age which followed liberalism brought about revolution in knowledge, science and technology that the world is yet to recover from. In a similar vein, a good degree of university autonomy will invariably make the university system a hub of ideas and a producer of quality manpower for society which will culminate in national development.

However, the liberal theory has a lacuna for its distance from reality. Thus the theory is premised in what 'ought to be' and not 'what is' (reality). It is obvious that relations between and among individuals, groups, organizations and nations are based on power interplay. Consequently, some sectors or areas in the society suffer domination. In the actual sense, there is no true or absolute autonomy, freedom or liberty anywhere in the world.

CONCEPTUALIZATION

University Autonomy

This refers to freedom of the university to act or function independently without external interference. It also means the ability of the university system to exercise independent control over its day-to-day operations and curriculum without interference from its donors and government (<https://nation.com.pk/16-may-2017/university-autonomy>).

Fourie in Amadi (2011) defines it as "the relative freedom of the institution to conduct its own affairs free from outside interference, whether from the state, the market, donors or other stakeholders". The last definition implies that the university system may not experience full or complete autonomy. The autonomy being yearned for is relative.

Academic Freedom

This means the capability of the university to manage its academic activities as it deems fit. These academic activities cut across student admissions, academic content, total quality management and introduction of new academic programmes and degrees. Academic freedom is an ideology put forward to protect an intellectual from the challenges that may deter him from meeting his obligations in the pursuit for and dissemination of knowledge. Amadi (2011) describes academic freedom as: freedom to organize the university design and teach courses or subjects, associate with others. It is also to project, imbibe, exchange and hold ideas without any fear of harassment or victimization. It encourages challenge of harassment or victimization. It encourages challenge of established orthodox practices without any fear of contradiction, all in the pursuit of truth.

The concept of academic freedom tends to protect intellectuals and scholarship. Intellectuals or researchers can impartially and freely do their job well in an atmosphere that is free from fear of any sort.

University Effectiveness

University effectiveness deals with the achievement of the desired results for the establishment of the university. University effectiveness means ability for the university to accomplish a purpose or produce the intended result.

Mechanisms Used to Undermine University Autonomy and Academic Freedom

Universities in Nigeria used to be relatively autonomous. However, the clash of interests between the university lecturers and the government in April 1973 changed the story. Nevertheless, the government has instituted and set in motion mechanisms with which university autonomy and academic freedom are caged. These mechanisms include:

- The establishment of National Universities Commission (NUC) and the expansion of its scope of operations. The NUC has arrogated the powers of the universities to regulate and determine curriculum and syllabus. The NUC determines which university programmes and degrees are accredited.
- The establishment of Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB). This was done in the year 1978. Ever since the creation of JAMB the power of universities to determine the criteria for admissions and students intake have been stripped off.
- The promulgation of decree No 23 in 1975 by the then military government empowered government to take over the regional universities.
- The same decree No 23 also authorized the government to remove and appoint the Vice Chancellors. This is supposed to be the duty of the Joint Committee of Council and Senate.
- The making of universities as part of the civil service. This reduced the prestige, status and effectiveness of universities.
- Appointment of sole administrators to run some universities. The sole administrators were brought to power by a decree which suspended the power of the university internal organs such as the Council, Senate and Vice Chancellor. The powers were transferred to the sole administrators.
- The decree no 23 is far reaching, it squashed the power of Council to employ.

Various decrees which silenced existing laws lowered the power of the Council and Senate and increased the power of the Visitor from ceremonial to one who intervenes in the daily operations or administration of the universities (Amadi, 2011).

Strategies to Entrench University Autonomy and Academic Freedom

- Universities must be liberated from the clutches of external interference or imposition which is deterring their growth.
- The higher education system should be reformed in such a way that universities should be given the power to determine admission of students through a standardized examination.

The duplication of examinations by JAMB and the universities through post Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) for candidates should be stopped.

- The role or functions of the National Universities Commission should be reviewed. Thus, the role of the Commission should be taken to its original state of advisory role.
- The membership of the University Council should be dominated by members of the university community as this will protect the much talked about university autonomy.

Contemporary Assaults on University Autonomy

This basically deals with restrictions placed on research, intellectual publications and activities of academics. These assaults are carried out by repressive governments and overzealous or authoritarian higher education administrators. Happenings have revealed that university autonomy and academic freedom are under serious assault in the world. Amadi (2011), although silent about mentioning names revealed that a lecturer in Nigeria was prevented from travelling to South Africa apparently to participate in an intellectual forum, His passport was seized. Another development saw a professor sacked for a statement he made on the pulpit in this same country in the twenty first century.

This is indeed an aberration. Kenya, an East African country has had her fair share of assaults on academic freedom in the country, lecturers and students are required to get permission from the Ministry of Education and then from the Presidency before they are allowed to leave the country. In Egypt, academic freedom is assaulted by government's censoring of course work, out lawing research on controversial issues. Intellectuals in Egypt cannot freely discuss on issues bordering on politics, religion and sex. Activists and students on campus are sometimes detained by security forces. The Egyptian State sometimes appoints university officials; interfere with academic discussions or lectures and selection of topics for research.

In a similar vein, attacks on academics were reported in countries such as India, Turkey and Russia. Scientific researchers are mandated to report all contacts between them and overseas institutions, Iran is currently suffering from brain drain as a result of assault on academic freedom. In China, between 2000 and 2001, some Chinese scholars were arrested, detained, tried and expelled from the country for charges of espionage against them (Amadi, 2011).

The absence of academic freedom in higher education is an aberration of higher education. Intellectuals, scholars or researchers should be allowed to freely pursue research and teach without fear of being disciplined or censored. Assault on university autonomy and academic freedom should be vehemently resisted otherwise; the flow of knowledge and development in the society will be jeopardized.

University Autonomy and Academic Freedom as Instruments for University Effectiveness

University which connotes universality of knowledge should be an environment where scholars and researchers are free to pursue knowledge and conduct research without interference of any sort (Bango, 2000). The freedom of scholars and researchers to pursue knowledge in itself constitutes university effectiveness. The success of organs of the university (Governing Council, Senate, Congregation, Committee of Deans, Faculty, Departments, Colleges among others) to deliver in their functions is seriously dependent on university autonomy and academic freedom. When the university system enjoys the liberty to operate without external interference the goals for the establishment of the university will certainly be achieved. University autonomy and

academic freedom will create a more dynamic and vibrant university system in the directions of pursue for knowledge and the dissemination of knowledge (Untile, 2008). University autonomy and academic freedom are fundamental pre-requisites for higher education to have the ability to develop strategies, operate in competitive environment and deliver its pivotal duties to the society (www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story).

The universities are known for compromising on their functions or responsibilities to the society owing to the government support they receive especially in the area of funding. The interfering approach or role of the National Universities Commission has usurped the functions of the university council. The absence of autonomy and academic freedom in the university system has caused series of crises and malfunctions in the universities (Enaowho, 1999).

The essence of universities is basically for the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge for the overall development of mankind. These can only be achieved in an environment or atmosphere of autonomy and academic freedom.

The university system cannot function favourably in an atmosphere of restriction, fear, intimidation, rancour and interference. Thus, autonomy and academic freedom are catalysts of effectiveness in the university system.

A chieftain of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Fagi Mohammed opined in an interview that, universities are centres for churning out ideas and strategies. These can be achieved when the functions of teaching and learning are freely carried out and curriculum content is decided by the university senate to be the final authority in academic matters and not the government (Guardian, June 20, 2014).

Universities are expected to be pace setters and leaders in the provision of dynamic knowledge and innovations. This is realization only in an atmosphere of autonomy and academic freedom. Universities face threats and several other challenges that undermine autonomy and freedom in their environments. Educational institutions should be allowed to set their research programmes and select their students. They are not to submit to every political whim or any other external pressures if they must deliver on their functions to the society ([www.http://unesdoc.unesco.org/irnages/0009/000927/092770eo.pdf](http://unesdoc.unesco.org/irnages/0009/000927/092770eo.pdf)).

One reason for assault of university autonomy and academic freedom is the over dependence of the university system on government funding. Universities should seek better and alternative ways to raise funds for their smooth operations. This will to a large extent reduce external interference especially from government. It is almost impossible for the government to hands off from deciding the rhythm of the university system when the system is sustained by it.

Leadership and University Effectiveness

Leadership plays a pertinent role in university effectiveness. The appropriate or proper performance of leadership functions and responsibilities culminate into university effectiveness. The following are ways leadership can bring about effectiveness in the university system.

Vision

Competent leadership provides direction for the university system. The Vice Chancellor who is at the helm of affairs should together with his team provide a clear direction for the entire staff and members of the university environment. The Vice Chancellor should communicate his vision

through writing, speaking and any other form of presentation, and this he must do clearly, as a compelling vision clearly stated provides organizational members on the direction to go.

Control

Effective leadership does not just provide direction but it ensures that employees follow the given direction. This can be achieved through the establishment of a structure that will guide people on how to perform their day-to-day responsibilities. For instance, the establishment of policies and procedures in the university system is a formidable way to control and direct people towards university effectiveness.

Change

The society we live in is not static but dynamic. One major characteristics of dynamism is change. Changes occur with inventions and desire for improvement when there is a change, the leadership should recognize and engage the change by adjusting to the new standard. For instance, the invention of the information and communication technology (ICT) has brought a change to a whole lot of ways of doing things. A Vice Chancellor who desires to be relevant and keep his institution afloat in terms of effectiveness is expected to recognise and engage the change by being ICT compliant.

Change also requires taking risks and encouraging innovative strategies. Any leadership that is willing to promote innovations and take risks is ready for breakthrough. Members of society appreciate innovations and they wish to benefit and identify with these innovations. Effective universities are hubs for various intellectual or academic activities.

Encouragement of Participation

People tend to oppose or resent autocratic leadership. Leaders who adhere to this style of leadership stick on the principle of strict adherence to rules and they look down on employee value. Effective leadership recognizes the value of their subordinates and they welcome contributions from them. When people are given the chance to participate in the decision making process of an organization, they see themselves as stakeholders. This in itself engenders commitment and sacrifice. Individuals working in an environment where they are encouraged to participate tend to develop work satisfaction and improved morale.

Planning

Efficient and successful leaders layout or draw their programmes on how to achieve objectives or attain goals. This is the core responsibility of effective leadership. They map out both short and long term strategies on how to meet organizational targets. No organization can excel no matter the resources at its disposal without adequate planning. In the same vein, no university can be effective no matter the resources made available to it without adequate planning. Thus, for any university to be effective, the leadership must provide strategic and adequate plan on how to run the institution.

METHODOLOGY

The Design of the Study

The research design used in this study is the descriptive design. This is so because, the research establishes the prevailing situations about leadership, university autonomy and academic freedom as they presently affect university effectiveness. Furthermore, the descriptive design is used thus; data were collected, collated and analyzed in relation to the variables in the study. The population of study comprised all the lecturers in the selected universities.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The researcher made use of survey technique. 150 lecturers from the universities had their opinions sought. 50 from each of the universities were selected.

Instrumentation

The instrument used for data collection is a self-designed questionnaire titled "Leadership and University Autonomy for University Effectiveness". The questionnaire is divided into two sections namely: Section A and Section B respectively. Section A gathers information about the respondents, while section B was used to collect data on items. The questionnaire comprised of 20 items. The instrument adopted is the modified four point Likert rating scale, namely: SA = Strongly Agree = 4 points, A = Agree = 3 points, D = Disagree = 2 points, SD = Strongly Disagree 1 point.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The consistency of the instrument to measure at all times what the researcher wants to ascertain was ensured through face and content validity. The instrument (questionnaire) was scrutinized by a research specialist. To determine the validity of the instrument to meet the demands of the study, copies of the instrument were given to expert on measurement and evaluation. Their contributions were incorporated into the instrument to ensure face and content validity. A reliability coefficient of .821 was achieved using Cronbach Alpha analysis.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data collected were analyzed with the use of tables' means and simple percentages to determine the responses of the respondents. The responses from the respondents were computed based on the rating scales of Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA) to determine respondents' opinion.

RESULTS

Demographic Information and Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents

Sex	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
Males	90	60 %
Females	60	40 %
Total	150	100 %
Age	Frequency	percentage %
30-40 years	60	40 %
41-50 years	52	34.7 %
51-60 years	22	14.6 %
61 years and above	16	10.7 %
Total	150	100 %
Marital Status	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Single	20	13.4 %
Married	120	80 %
Divorced	5	3.3 %
Widow	5	3.3 %
Total	150	100 %
Educational Qualification	No. Respondents	Percentage (%)
M.sc	10	6.6 %
Ph.D.	130	86.8 %
Professors	10	6.6 %
Total	150	100 %

From the table above it shows that 60 % of the respondents were males and 40 % were females. This indicates that majority of the respondents were males. The table above indicates that respondents within the age of 30-40, 40 % of the respondents were within the age of 41-50 years, 34.7 % were within the age of 31 to 40 years, 14 % were within the age of 41 to 50 while 10.6 % were within the age the of 50 years and above. From the above table, one can deduce that the age distribution of the respondents represents a mature and responsible set of individuals that have the ability to give information out of experience. The table shows that 14 % of the respondents are single, 80 % are married, 3 % are divorced while 3 % is widowed. 6.6% respondents hold M.Sc. qualification, 86.8% are Ph.D. holders, while 6.6% of them are Professors.

Item 1: University must be liberated from external interference

Table 1: External Interference of Universities

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
S.A	59	39.3 %
A	71	47.3 %
D	9	6 %
S.D	11	7.3 %
Total	150	100 %

Item 2: The universities should be given the power to determine admission of students

Table 2: Power to determine Admission

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
S.A	43	28.6 %
A	84	56 %
D	13	8.67 %
S.D	10	6.66 %
Total	150	100 %

Item 3:- The role of the National Universities commission should be reviewed.

Table 3: Role of National University commission

Responses	Frequency	Percentage %
S.A	62	41.3 %
A	40	26.7 %
D	40	26.7 %
S.D	8	5.3 %
Total	150	100 %

Item 4: Faculty should be allowed to determine the leadership in the university system

Table 4: Leadership in the University.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage %
S.A	58	38.7 %
A	52	34.7 %
D	26	17.3 %
SD	14	9.3 %
Total	150	100 %

Item 5: The University is experiencing external interference

Table 5: External Interference

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
S.A	50	33.3 %
A	37	24.7 %
D	34	22.7 %
S.D	29	19.3 %
Total	150	100 %

Item 6: University autonomy is undermined

Table 6: University Autonomy

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
S.A	90	60 %
A	21	14 %
D	16	10.7 %
S.D	23	15.3 %
Total	150	100 %

Item 7: National universities commission arrogates the powers of the university system.

Table 7: Powers of the University system

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
S.A	69	46
A	55	36.7
D	20	13.3
S.D	6	4
Total	150	100

Item 8: Joint Matriculation Examination affects university autonomy.

Table 8: Joint Matriculation Examination

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
S.A	38	25.3
A	42	28
D	34	22.7
S.D	36	24
Total	150	100

Item 9: The Taking Over of the Regional Universities Have Affected Universities Autonomy

Table 9: Regional Universities Takeover

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
S.A	22	14.7 %
A	45	30 %
D	42	28 %
S.D	41	27.3 %
Total	150	100

Item 10: The visitor determines the leadership of the university system

Table 10: Visitor Determines Leadership

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
S.A	69	46 %
A	37	24.7 %
D	21	14 %
S.D	23	15.3 %
Total	150	100

Item 11: Leadership Matters in University Effectiveness

Table 11: University Effectiveness

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
S.A	47	31.3 %
A	48	32 %
D	28	18.7 %
S.D	27	18 %
Total	150	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

Item 12: Leadership is Responsible for Planning in the University System

Table 12: Planning in University System

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
S.A	41	27.3 %
A	73	48.7 %
D	11	7.3 %
S.D	25	16.7 %
Total	150	100 %

Item 13: Employee Control Aids University Effectiveness

Table 13: University Effectiveness

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
S.A	10	6.7 %
A	40	26.7 %
D	50	33.3 %
S.D	50	33.3 %
Total	150	100 %

Item 14: Vision is Important for University Effectiveness

Table 14: Vision is Important for University Effectiveness

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
S.A	49	32.7 %
A	70	46.7 %
D	19	12.6 %
S.D	12	8 %
Total	150	100

Item 15: Employee Participation is a Factor of Effective Leadership

Table 15: Employee Participation

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
S.A	52	34.7 %
A	56	37.3 %
D	27	18 %
S.D	15	10 %
Total	150	100

Research Question One: Mechanisms that Undermine University Autonomy Research question one states, “What are the mechanisms used to undermine university autonomy and academic freedom?” The aim of this research question is to evaluate the mechanisms used to undermine university autonomy and academic freedom. Responses on items were used to answer this research question. The cross tabulation (78.1%) and mean (3.210) revealed that respondents agree that National Universities Commission, Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board, promulgation of decree No. 23, making universities part of civil service and appointment of sole administrators to run some universities are mechanisms used to undermine university autonomy and academic freedom. Respondents answers to items on mechanisms that undermine university autonomy and academic freedom.

Research Question Two: How External Interference Affects University Autonomy and Academic Freedom

Research Question two states “How does external interference affect university autonomy and academic freedom?” The aim of this research question is to ascertain how external interference affects university autonomy and academic freedom. Responses on items were used in answering this research question. The cross tabulation (66.9%) and mean (2.992) revealed that the respondents agree that the politicization of the university system, use of quota system for admission and the quality of graduates produced affect university autonomy and academic freedom.

Research Question Three: Strategies to Entrench University Autonomy and Academic Freedom

Research question three states “What are the strategies to entrench university autonomy and academic freedom in the university system?” The aim of this research question is to establish the strategies to entrench university autonomy and academic freedom. Responses on items were used in answering this research question. The items were tallied along agree and disagree. The data shows that universities must be liberated from external interference, the power to determine students’ admissions should be determined by the university system, the functions of the NUC should be reviewed and the university council should be dominated by members of the university community. These are evident in the obtained mean (3.341) and cross tabulation (79.8%) analysis conducted.

Research Question Four: Leadership and University Effectiveness

Research question four states “What are the roles of leadership in university autonomy?” The aim of this question is to evaluate the role of leadership in university effectiveness. Responses on items were used in answering this research question. Data were matched along agree and disagree. The results show that leadership determine university effectiveness through vision, control, planning and encouragement of employee participation. These are apparent in the mean (3.231) and cross tabulation (79.1%) scores.

DISCUSSION

The establishment of National Universities Commission (NUC) and the expansion of the NUC’s scope of operations have made it possible for the Commission to usurp the powers of the university to regulate and determine curriculum and syllabus of each of the programmes done in Nigerian universities. The establishment of the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB), has equally crippled the powers of the universities to determine the criteria for admissions. The making of universities as part of the civil services act has reduced the prestige, status and effectiveness of universities. The promulgation of Decree No 23 empowered the Federal Government of Nigeria to take over the regional universities now known as Federal Universities.

The interference of the government in the university system has made the university system impotent in creating its own programmes, curriculum and syllabus. Punitive measures are meted out against lecturers who are critical to the government. Lectures and lecturers are put under surveillance and their lectures and research are censored by government agencies. The determination of the leadership of the universities by the government has rudely and negatively imparted on university autonomy and university effectiveness.

Universities must be emancipated from the clutches of external interference and imposition from both the government and providers of aids to the university system. The university system should be given the power to determine the students they admit through a standardized examination by the university system. The role or functions of the National Universities Commission should be reviewed in a way that the commission will no longer arrogate the powers of the university system. The leadership of the university system should be determined by faculty and not an imposition by the powers that be.

Without any iota of controversy, leadership plays a pivotal role in the effectiveness of organizations. The university system is not an exception to this flawless fact. The first way leadership can lead to university effectiveness is in the provision of vision. Without vision, people will grope and fumble. Leadership is expected to provide direction on the path the university should take. The direction should be clear and communicated in written, spoken and any other forms to clearly make known the vision of the university. It is true that “without vision the people perish (university). With vision therefore, the people (university) are kept alive (effective)

Effectiveness in the university system can be ensured through an established control system. A structure to control employees to move to the direction of the institution’s vision should be established. This can be done through established policies and procedures for the achievement of goals and objectives. Leadership in the university system should be dynamic. This entails recognizing and engaging change to meet the demands of the contemporary society.

Furthermore, leadership in the university system should encourage participation. This is because centralized leaders are most likely to face opposition or resentment which will frustrate the system. Individuals who partake in decision making put in their best to actualize set goals. Importantly, successful leaders are said to be strategic planners. By laying out strategies on how to achieve set goals, the university system will achieve the desired results.

CONCLUSION

The study critically examined leadership and university autonomy for university effectiveness. The researcher’s purpose for embarking on the research was to find out if leadership and autonomy lead to university effectiveness. The responsibilities of leadership and the role of autonomy for effectiveness in the university system were evaluated. The study strongly demonstrates that university autonomy is undermined in Nigeria. It is evident in the response, about 60% of the respondents strongly agree that university autonomy is undermined. Furthermore, over 47% agree that the university system must be liberated from external interference.

In addition, the relevance of leadership for university effectiveness cannot be argued. The study revealed the relevance of leadership in the university system. The foregoing position is drawn from the percentage of those who strongly agree and those who also agree that leadership matters in university effectiveness. As a matter of fact, out of 100% of the respondents, over 31% strongly agree and 32% agree that leadership matters in university effectiveness. Thus, over 60% of the respondents support the relevance of leadership in university effectiveness.

This research was limited by the difficulties to get the actual number of lecturers in the University of Port Harcourt and the Rivers State University. The study has added to the existing body of knowledge, and acts as a catalyst and reminder to leaders in the university system and other organizations on imbibing and the importance of effective leadership in organizations. The study has added to the voice of advocacy for university autonomy as an instrument for university effectiveness.

Recommendations

- Faculty should effectively participate in the decision making process of the university. This will portray the university system as mature and self-reliant before the outside

world. This will discourage external imposition or interference of external bodies in the university system.

- Leaders in the university system should make use of the participatory leadership styles. This engenders commitment on the part of employees.
- Leaders should be strategic in their approach. This entails the laying out of plans on how to achieve set goals.
- Leaders should be visionary. They should clearly state their goals and communicate same in a compelling fashion to their subordinates.
- University should produce honest and strong leadership. This will defend the university against undue and rude interference.
- Government should allow universities to conduct and promote research in all fields of learning and human endeavour. This is because higher education where scholars and researchers are intimidated and knowledge censored is no higher education.
- The interfering functions of the National Universities Commission should be reviewed. The NUC should return to its original advisory role and not supervisory role which interferes with university autonomy and academic freedom.
- Government should allow universities to carry out their constitutional functions to the nation without fear or favour.
- Stakeholders in the higher education sector should work as partners to enhance the goals and value of higher education.

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