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Bright Chima Megbo
Academic Planning
Directorate, Federal
University Wukari, Taraba
State, Nigeria

Tseyang Hassan
Academic Planning
Directorate, Federal
University Wukari, Taraba
State, Nigeria

Impact of Educational Psychology in the Management of Nigerian Universities

Bright Chima Megbo, Tseyang Hassan

Abstract

Universities are saddled with the onerous responsibility of preparing the youth for useful living in all its ramifications through appropriate arrangement and implementation of the curriculum. The business of managing such a curriculum has never been a one-man affair. It takes the collaborative efforts of the Deans, the lecturers and non-teaching staff to achieve the universities goals and objectives. In other words, teamwork has been the means by which universities try to achieve their stated goals. However, developing such a team and maintaining it is a major challenge to university management and success rate is not uniform across universities. Even though the organisational structure of the institution depicts the work relationships and delegation, it is not always easy or possible in a university or any formal organization that every member would operate through that framework. Some individuals may feel they prefer to work alone; others stray out of the group occasionally creating problems for effectiveness of the university.

Keywords: Educational psychology; University Management; Institutional goals; Leadership styles; Education policy

1. Introduction

Education is the bedrock of every society and a tool for nation building (Adegbesan, 2011) [2]. The development of any nation is therefore engendered by the effectiveness of the various institutions that make up its educational sector. The university, also referred to as the academia, is the highest institution in the educational sector in any nation of the world. Oxford advanced learner dictionary (2011) [14] defined the university as the highest level of education where students study for a degree or conduct researches. The successful functioning of the university system is a function of effective administration and leadership style. Various leadership styles have existed in time past, however the five most common leadership styles include charismatic, transformational, visionary, transactional, and servant leadership styles. This paper intends to look at the impact of educational psychology in the management of universities.

2. Aims and Goals of Educational Policy

Nigerian tertiary educational institutions are established with the aim of giving a very sound and qualitative education to any student who enrolls in any programme. The graduate of any Nigerian university should be able to function effectively in any environment in which he/she may find him/herself; so as to become more productive, self-fulfilling and attain self-actualization (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004; Aluede, *et al.* 2005). In realization of all these important goals, the National Policy on Education (NPE) formulated in 1977, and reviewed in 2004 has as its policy:

- a. The acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value-orientation for the survival of the individual and society;
- b. The development of the intellectual capacities of individuals to understand and appreciate their environment;
- c. The acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community; and
- d. The acquisition of an objective view of the local and external environments (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004).

These goals are expected to be pursued through: (i) teaching - imparting knowledge and skills (ii) research - discovery of knowledge (iii) dissemination - spreading existing and new information; (iv) service - fostering community service and professional training for the development of intermediate and high level manpower (Wokocho, 2003; NPE, 2004:31). The goals of tertiary education as enunciated above are crucial for national development. However, research by scholars such as Emaikwu and Eba (2001) [6]; Nwagwu (2005) [10]; and Okebukola (2006) [12] have shown that many of the Nigerian tertiary educational institutions are finding it

Correspondence
Bright Chima Megbo
Director of Academic
Planning, Federal University
Wukari, Nigeria

increasingly difficult to achieve the highlighted goals because of the problems confronting them. One of such is the problem of management.

3. Prerequisites of Educational Development

The phenomenal growth of higher educational institutions in Nigeria is unparalleled anywhere in the African continent. This growth has been in terms of increases in student population and the number of newly established educational institutions. The growth can be attributed to the attainment of political independence and the overall rapid political development in the country. On the eve of independence, i.e. 1959, Nigeria had five major institutions of higher learning: viz, the University College at Ibadan, Yaba College of Technology in Lagos and the Colleges of Arts, Science and Technology at Ibadan, Enugu and Zaria. Student population in the five institutions was just 2,220.

Management of university education can be looked at from two dimensions: the external and the internal levels. At the external level, the federal government controls the university system through the National Universities Commission (NUC); a body charged with the coordination of university management in the country. At the internal level, the Governing Council which is chaired by the Pro-Chancellor is the apex of the management structure within each university. It is agreeable to emphasize that the management of any academic institution can only be as effective as the leadership style adopted.

Knowledge is said to be the best possible basis for managing the human intellectual processes and resources for development. Knowledge, which is the ability to know, recall, experience and to understand, ensures that human abilities, composed of many logical interrelationships, are organized in a single comprehensive system. Hence, Guilford (1977) ^[8] in his structure of the intellect model reflected principles that help to show the roles ability play in controlling mental operations for increased balance functioning.

Furthermore, the utilisation of abilities, critical and creative thinking have been said to lead to the development and transfer of knowledge. Subsequently, skills are learnt and improved upon in problem-solving situations. All these are possible, however, via the utilization of a well-developed educational system and process. Education is a system deliberately designed to equip individuals with the desired knowledge, skills and attitudes, which will help them live worthy and happy lives in the society (Nwafor, 2007) ^[9]. Education is saddled with the responsibility to ensure that people do not just pass through its walls but that they also acquired the ability to analyse, establish relationships, and make accurate judgment, learn to lead and follow, think critically and creatively, use scientific methods and be involved in problem-solving, etc. (Onu, 2008) ^[13].

The role of the educational system in training its citizens would also include the use of educational innovations to develop skills, gifts, abilities and capabilities of citizens, so they can function and ensure innovation and transformation of the world in which they live. Innovation is the generation, acceptance, and implementation of new ideas, processes, methods, etc.; most innovations often lead to transformation. Innovation also leads to persistent changes in the patterns of behaviour of members of an identified social system. It equally leads to such departure from the normal cultural practices that a sustained reform or transformation is noticed (Nwafor, 2007) ^[9].

4. Impact of Educational Psychology in Educational Development

Educational psychology is the branch of psychology concerned with the scientific study of human learning. The study of learning processes, from both cognitive and behavioural perspectives, allows researchers to understand individual differences in intelligence, cognitive development, affect, motivation, self-regulation, and self-concept, as well as their role in learning. The field of educational psychology relies heavily on quantitative methods, including testing and measurement, to enhance educational activities related to instructional design, classroom management, and assessment, which serve to facilitate learning processes in various educational settings across the lifespan.

Educational psychology can in part be understood through its relationship with other disciplines. It is informed primarily by psychology, bearing a relationship to that discipline analogous to the relationship between medicine and biology. It is also informed by neuroscience. Educational psychology in turn informs a wide range of specialties within educational studies, including instructional design, educational technology, curriculum development, organizational learning, special education and classroom management. Educational psychology both draws from and contributes to cognitive science and the learning sciences. In universities, departments of educational psychology are usually housed within faculties of education, possibly accounting for the lack of representation of educational psychology content in introductory psychology textbooks.

The field of educational psychology involves the study of memory, conceptual processes, and individual differences via cognitive psychology in conceptualizing new strategies for learning processes in humans. Educational psychology has been built upon theories of functionalism, structuralism, constructivism, humanistic psychology, Gestalt psychology, and information processing.

Educational Psychology has seen rapid growth and development as a profession in the past twenty years. University psychology began with the concept of intelligence testing leading to provisions for special education students, whom could not follow the regular classroom curriculum in the early part of the 20th century. However, "University Psychology" itself has built a fairly new profession based upon the practices and theories of several psychologists among many different fields. Educational Psychologists are working alongside psychiatrists, social workers, teachers, speech and language therapists, and counsellors in attempt to understand the questions being raised when combining behavioural, cognitive, and social psychology in the classroom setting.

5. Influence of Management on Educational Development

The word 'Management' has been defined from different perspectives by different scholars such as Stoner and Freeman (1989); Ogundele and Okonji (2004) ^[11]; Cole (2002) ^[4]; Abdulkareem (2000) ^[1]; Daft (2003); etc. According to Stoner and Freeman (1989), management is the art of getting things done through people. Ogundele and Okonji (2004) ^[11] defined management as the functional process of accomplishing the goals of the organization through the help of others. Cole (2002) ^[4] sees management as the collection of activities including planning, organizing, motivating and controlling. To Abdulkareem (2000) ^[1] management means (i) a process (ii) a people (iii) a profession. According to him, management is a process by which limited resources are assembled and used to

achieve predetermined goals. On the other hand, management as a people refers to the people that carry out the activities of management. As a special field of study, management is regarded as a profession. To Daft (2003), management is the attainment of organization goals in an effective and efficient manner through planning (defining/selecting goals and means to attain them), organizing (assigning responsibility for tasks accomplishment), (use of influence to motivate employees to achieve organizational goals), controlling (monitoring employees' activities, keeping organization on track toward achieving its goals, and making corrections as needed/necessary). From the foregoing, it is obvious that the focus of management is on the organization (arrangement) and efficient (prudent) utilization of the available resources in an institution or organization in order to accomplish specific goals. By and large, in this paper, management is taken to mean the act of handling and controlling disorderliness in an institution.

Effective management of universities is paramount, particularly as it relates to the university attaining its full autonomy. The need for autonomy or self-determination is the desire to have choice in what we do and how we do it. In other words, it is the desire to act independently, rather than to have external pressures and rewards determine our actions (Ryan and Deci 2000) ^[16]. Porter (1961) ^[15] argued that there is need for independent thought and action, autonomy is a basic need. When the autonomy of the leader is eroded, the chance of the leader to be original is spoiled by a hierarchical attempt to control him by the visitor who is the governor, or the government of the day who interferes in admission policy, the choice of a Vice-chancellor, funding, discipline to mention but a few. When a leader's autonomy is eroded, such a leader has a little appetite for site-based management, his sense of self-determination is stolen (Wool Folk 2007) ^[18].

6.0 Conclusion

University management has been seen to attract public and expert comments and concern. In fact, without definite empowerment of university administrators, backed up by necessary legal supports, the goals and aspirations of university education would not be achieved and the effective management of the university will be a mirage. For Nigerian Universities to record meaningful development, universities need to embrace staff empowerment as orchestrated by the government in its national development agenda. The university leaders should be supported with all the necessary resources needed for effective management of the universities.

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