



RESEARCH ARTICLE

EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR IMPROVEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RANKING OF UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions are regarded as the Ivory Towers of calibrated knowledge where human capacity is enhanced, cultivated and developed. Effective administration of higher education remains a contemporary global response to vigorous teaching and research in order to respond to international marketing opportunities thereby improving their ranking. This study is aimed at examining the level of effective administration of higher education for improvement of ranking in universities in Nigeria. In this paper, effective administration of higher education is presented to mean the strategic process and approach of integrating an international, intercultural or global initiative in the rationale, structure and functions in the implementation of instructional programmes at the post-secondary education thereby birthing excellence to achieve improved ranking and international relevance. This paper adopts secondary data sources and content analysis for the dual purposes of data collection and analysis. This paper therefore advocates that universities in Nigeria should be able to re-shuffle and re-design their instructional programmes (Curricula) so as to be marketable in the global knowledge economy as well as across their national boundaries. This can only be achieved by integrating the process of internationalization which the Ivy League Universities have long adopted to assert their relevance in the world university ranking.

Keywords: Effective administration, higher education, international, improvement, ranking, universities and Nigeria.

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

Administration of higher education in the 21st century calls for a holistic coordination of labour force, balanced instructional programmes, academic content delivery, firm resource and material / school plants resources with the goal of launching higher education to the global esteemed level of internationalization. The task of launching higher education to this expected level behooves on Nigerian higher education stakeholders who are supposed to be enlightened about the quality of education provided the citizens of the country. Higher education still remains the only veritable avenue for accessing higher dimensions of human capacity development.

The overall development of a society is hinged on the level at which its citizens access human capacity development. Higher education is the engine for human capacity development as well as the holistic societal transformation. It becomes imperative therefore to posit that the level of education that needs effective administration the most is higher or tertiary education. The planning and execution of quality programmes in higher education institutions is as important as the efficient and responsive management of resources in such higher education institutions.

Administration of higher education refers to the systematic process of planning, organizing and influencing the behaviour of staff and coordinating all the necessary and available human and material resources in higher education with the purpose of ensuring that the strategic aims and objectives set are efficiently and effectively actualized (Ofoje, Idoho and Ojong 2023). In the words of Badau (2018), higher education administration is the systematic process of coordinating both human and material resources in higher education for the purpose of achieving the predetermined goals.

The rationale of higher education administration is to make sure that the system operates in a manner that the predetermined aim and objectives are effectively accomplished. Thus, quality higher education is a prerequisite for improvement of ranking of Nigerian universities in the Times Higher Education and as such promoting the growth and development of the Nigerian economy thereby making Nigeria to be globally competitive.

It is no longer alien to state that higher education in Nigeria is never free from perennial challenges. Opara and Ushie (2023) point out that while the administrators of higher education are duty-bound to ensure that the mission and vision of the system are effectively actualized, effective administration of higher education in Nigeria is often traumatized and jeopardized by certain challenges such as poor planning, inadequate supervision, poor funding, ineffective communication and institutionalized corruption to say the least.

Nigeria government seems not to have seen the need to allocate a reasonable proportion of her budget to higher education. World Bank (2012) analysis of budgetary allocation to education in some sampled countries of the world reveals that Nigeria is the least country in terms of budgetary to education. According to the analysis, Ghana allocated 31 percent, Cote d'Ivoire 30.0 percent, Uganda 27.0 percent, Morocco 26.4 percent, South Africa 25.8 percent, Swaziland 24.6 percent, Mexico 24.3 percent, Kenya 23.0 percent, Botswana 19.0 percent, U.S.A 17.1 percent, Burkina Faso 16.8 percent, Norway 16.2 percent, Columbia 15.6 percent, India 12.7 percent and Nigeria 8.4%. UNESCO (1995) had recommended 26 percent budgetary allocation to education in terms of GDP, but Nigeria government appears to play down on this prescription by UNESCO despite the nature providence of



huge natural resources at her disposal. This reveals the anti-intellectual development posture of several government administrations in Nigeria.

In the same vein, Kelvin (2019) posits that higher education in Nigeria and beyond can hardly achieve its mandates if the stakeholders and administrators of this level of education fail to address the manifold challenges rocking higher education. He identifies poor funding, bad leadership, inadequate supervision, poor evaluation and insufficient motivation of staff as some of the challenges facing the administration of higher education in Nigeria.

The effective administration of higher education in Nigeria is often inhibited by myriad of problems. The challenges encompass of uninformed or hasty planning, lack of organization and proper coordination, inadequate funding and corruption, anti-intellectual posture of political leaders, and lack of internationalization of instructional programmes. Yet the effectiveness of each problem differs.

For effective administration of higher education to be achieved in Nigeria therefore, administrators of this level of education need to rebrand, explore, understand and implement internationalization-compliant strategies which are capable of pushing Nigerian universities to attain higher ranking in the global higher education ranking index. These internationalization strategies of course are numerous and are driven by globalization and its offshoot, digitalization. Some of these strategies can be self-initiated by administrators through the process of strengthening the Exchange and Linkage Unit of their institutions and synergizing intercultural, interracial and inter-curricular initiatives so as to rebrand and repackage their instructional programmes to attract global marketability.

Management strategies in the context of this paper are basically management principles which have been in use by administrators of the Ivy League higher education institutions that enabled them to achieve improved ranking within the international higher education ranking index.

2.0. CONCEPT CLARIFICATION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

Higher Education in Perspective

Higher education and tertiary education are concepts that can be interchangeably used. This is to state that higher education can otherwise be referred to as tertiary education. It is a post-secondary school education which is aimed at empowering learners with the requisite knowledge, skills and values needed to improve their lives and contribute functionally to the development of the society. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) cited in Adebisi (2014) defined higher education as that level of education which is offered after the completion of secondary education. It encapsulates education given in the universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, and mono-technics including those institutions offering correspondence courses.

According to Obayan (1999) cited in Ogunrode and Abubakar (2020), higher education is the level of education which embodies all organized learning and training activities at the tertiary level designed to provide human capacity resources for the industrial sector in a country. He states that higher education also includes all categories of professional institutions drawing from the available pool of



persons who have completed various forms of secondary school education such as the military, the police, nurses, agriculture and other programmes alike.

In Nigeria, higher education is established to harness manpower resources for the socioeconomic development of the country. The manpower need of Nigeria is at the top of the priority list of Nigeria as a nation. The Federal Republic of Nigeria in her National Policy on Education (2004) cited in Adebisi (2014) identifies seven (7) broad goals of higher education which include the following:

1. To contribute to national development through high-level relevant manpower training;
2. To develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and the society;
3. To develop the intellectual capacity of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments;
4. To acquire both physical and intellectual skills this will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;
5. To promote and encourage scholarship and community service;
6. To forge and cement national unity;
7. To promote national and international understanding and interaction.

2.2. Theoretical Foundation

Effective administration of higher education for improvement of ranking and standard by national governments is primarily crucial in building graduates who are internationally competent and cross-culturally viable thereby creating a strong human capital base which will translate to sustainable socio-economic transformation in such a nation. Sequel to the foregoing, the theory upon which this paper is hinged is the Theory of Quality Management by William Edward Deming which was propounded in 1982.

The theory states that the task of quality improvement behooves on the top management in any organization. He posits that creating and building up quality product in the organization that will be in high demand in the market is a statutory and non-negotiable responsibility of the administrator, proprietor and owner of the organization and it is discretionally decided from the very first time the organization sets out to operate.

The visitor of the university, the Management Council and the Senate as the principal organs, are top management of the university and they are saddled with the mission of quality assurance and control. The ability of the institution to attract foreign patronage and improve in international ranking depends solely on the quality of the instructional programmes and the capacity of staff and facilities the management employers have been able to put in place for the effective functioning of the institution. Effective administration of higher education in the 21st century requires a strategic management technique such as internationalization which is a quality assurance process targeted towards projecting an institution to the outside world to achieve comparative advantage among world class higher institutions.



3.0. METHODOLOGY

This study is adopt qualitative design approach, secondary data source and content analysis are adopted for the dual purposes of data collection and data analysis from with logical conclusion can be deduced and valid recommendations for correction can be generated as well. This paper visualizes the possibility of the Nigeria government to revolutionize its tertiary education system in a manner that it can contribute to the foreign exchange earnings by attracting foreign patronage from all over the world. It equally study declares that administration in higher education must be fully compliant with the process of internationalization and its correlate digitalization if improvement of ranking can be achieved by Nigerian higher education institutions.

4.0. CONTENT ANALYSIS AND DISCOURSES

4.1. Higher Education Administrator

The most influential stakeholders in higher education institution are the Vice Chancellor, Rector, or Provost. The higher education administrator plays very critical function as regards improving the quality of teaching and learning, research, community services and other relevant functions of the institution. Asiyai (2015) is of the view that the vice chancellor has the responsibility to set the academic tone of the institution for students, staff, parents and community members by providing effective leadership. The task of the university administrator is so cumbersome that he is assisted in administering the university by other administrators including the deputy vice-chancellors Academic and Administration, registrar, deans of faculties, and directors of institutes and heads of departments.

Pillane, Camburn and Pareja (2007) posit that the vice chancellor contributes to institutional improvement by putting in place a collaborative team approach to academic planning and problem-solving. They are of the view that the administrator promotes the ranking of the institution by employing a distributive strategy towards routine operations of the institution to ensure profound involvement of other internal and external stakeholders. In other words, employing a distributive approach involving other internal and external stakeholders in the management of operations is capable of enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the decision making process of the institution for improved policy execution and better learning outcomes of students.

According to Asiyai (2015), for adequate improvement in the quality of university education to be actualized, vice-chancellor and management should be proactive and result oriented by focusing on the pursuit of the vision and mission of the university. Synergetic consultation and hard work by the vice chancellor and the management team should improve on internally generated fund in order to bring about infrastructural development, furthermore, the vice-chancellor exhibits effective leadership by ensuring a cordial relationship between students and lecturers and between students and staff as well as between staff and management.

4.2. Effective Administration

Administration is a crucial segment of the management process. It is the systematic application of human and material efforts to achieve formal goals. Peretomode (2008) defines administration as the performance of executive duties, the carrying out of pre-determined policies or decisions to fulfill a



purpose, and controlling of the day-to-day running of an organization. Nwankwo (1987) considers administration as the careful and systematic arrangements and utilization of resources (human and material), situations and opportunities for the achievement of the specific objectives of a given organization.

To Breach (1975), administration is that main part of management which is concerned with the installation and carrying out of procedures by which programmes, plans and targets are laid down and communicated, and the progress of activities regulated and checked against them. It is therefore noteworthy to posit that without the process or system of administration, management cannot be complete; hence administration lays down or executes the plans, budgets, policies, initiatives and programmes established by the management team.

On the other hand, administration is considered to be effective when policies, plans and programmes of the organization are implemented or executed in a manner that the desired goal or result is achieved in the long run. When administration is result-bound, it is considered as effective. An effective administrator is a leader that is preoccupied with radical changes in a bid to bringing practical solutions to problems emanating from the organization. Administration in general is concerned with promoting individual capacities and building them into organizations and with managing and directing those organizations towards productivity.

4.3. Management Approaches to Improvement of Ranking in Higher Education

Higher Education Institutions of which the university is at the apogee are supposed to pursue the goals of creating rebranded knowledge, promoting scholarship, providing vision and also ensuring that the vision materialize through encouragement and active involvement in quality oriented activities and programmes. Birnbaum in Babalola, Adedeji and Erwat (2006) present five key approaches in discussing improvement of ranking in higher education are succinctly presented in what follow:

Institutional Pedigree Approach: This implies quality as a mantra of excellence which connotes the quality and standard of inputs into educational institutions. These input provisions including furniture, teaching and learning materials, layout and recreational amenities. Institutional pedigree is the elite/reputational standard achieved in the Ivy League Universities as well as other products.

Result-Oriented Approach: This has to do with striving to satisfy expectation of external stakeholders by providing efficient products. Desires are specified and objectives are set based on the need of the time. The quality and standard of instructional programmes is determined by the extent to which it satisfies the prescriptions of clients or customers.

Total Quality Approach: The university administrator rebrands instructional programmes in a manner that would add value to the institution. There is need for constant improvement on the existing characteristics of a product or services that brings to bear the ability to satisfy expectations. Here, quality product in higher education is taken holistically to imply graduates who, having fulfilled both in learning and character requirements are awarded certificates.

Strategic Planning: Strategic planning is the process whereby an institution plans for its future needs by identifying its mission, vision, values and strategic goals as well as orchestrating measures that would be employed in managing and implementing its strategic goals. Bigelow and Pratt (2022) state that strategic planning is an act which a leader uses to identify their future visions as well as highlight goals and aspirations of their organization.



Constant Supervision: Constant and adequate supervision holds the key to quality assurance in an institution. Supervision remains the core of administration of higher education. When task performances are assigned to staff, it becomes imperative for team leaders, heads of departments, deans, directors and committee leaders to constantly monitor the progress of work being done with a view to ensuring that the correct thing is being done at the ideal time.

The table below reveals a spotlight on the several dimensions of internationalization strategies that are going on within the Ivy League universities which have empowered them to sustain themselves within the high ranking institutions in the global ranking index:

Table 1: Categories of Internationalization Model for Improvement of Ranking at a glance

Models	Policy Dimension for Improvement
Student mobility	Building high quality-attracting foreign students—obtaining international accreditation for institutions.
Scholar mobility and research collaboration	Support for visiting scholars; grants to send faculty abroad e.g. Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions, the Horizon 2020 initiative.
Cross-border high education	Encouraging campus "outposts," virtual education becomes inevitable, implementation of WHO's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) in 1995.
World class aspiration	Nations pursuing the mantra of excellence, measuring excellence against international standards.
Educating for global engagement	Working very hard to achieve global competence and relevance, strategic planning that extends beyond local peripherals.
Foreign language	Dominance of English language for international openness, attractiveness and competitiveness.
Cooperative networking	Building the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) e.g. the Bologna process.
International competition	International ranking of institutions within and without national scenes for global comparative advantage.
Commercialization	Free trade context of Higher Education as a commodity to be traded internationally.
Internationalization at home (IAH)	European Commission's strategy of 2013 and Nigeria's Internationalization Agency P.T.D.F.
Faculty exchange and Development	Diversification of faculty and staff to strengthen research and knowledge production.
International synergy and networking	Improvement on student preparedness to internationalize the curriculum and to enhance the international profile of institutions.
Building international perspective	The global interest to produce globally competitive graduates capable of co-existing in a complex and interconnected world.
Distance education	Students acquire international skills within the Nigerian academic environment.
Twinning	A shift from producing for domestic to international job markets. Isomorphic trend in internationalization. Trends and practices are being duplicated in different regions with close partnerships.
Articulation programmes	Adaptation to knowledge production and idea generation by institutions, building support for other levels of education
International quality assurance system	Strengthening research and knowledge production, controlling and sustaining high academic standard and enhance curriculum relevance

Source: Modified from Odum (2019)



5.0. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusion

Effective administration of higher education is a strategic process and technique of creating an all-encompassing coordination of labor force and an internationally competitive instructional programme for an institution, which will enhance its marketability in the international ranking index. Improvement of ranking of universities in Nigeria is dependent on the level at which the administrators of the institutions adopt the process of internationalization. The Ivy League group of University in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and in other parts of Europe have long been in the forefront of creating an international, intercultural, or global initiative in the structure and functions of their institutions' instructional programmes.

5.2. Recommendations

Sequel to the foregoing content descriptions and analysis, this paper articulates the following recommendations:

1. Administrators of higher education in Nigeria should rebrand, explore, understand and execute internationalization-compliant strategies to achieve improvement of ranking.
2. Higher education administrators should strengthen the process of supervision to ensure quality assurance.
3. The Federal Government of Nigeria should brace up in the aspect of adequate funding of the institutions as well as improvement in staff remuneration. This is to avoid brain drain syndrome.
4. Higher education administrators in Nigeria should adopt the administrative strategy of Total Quality Management (TQM) in academic planning and implementation.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that no conflict of interest exist in this manuscript.



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