

# TOWARDS TRANSFORMATION OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN RIVERS STATE: THE CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

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## **Abstract**

*The study investigated towards transformation of university education in Rivers state. The study employed two research questions and hypotheses. The population of this study consisted of the total number of academic and non-academic staff in the three (3) universities in Rivers state. The population was therefore 9,601. The sample size of this study comprised of one thousand, four hundred and forty respondents (1440) that represented 15% of the population for both academic and non-academic staff of the population. A stratified random sampling technique was used for the selection of academic and non-academic staff from each university. The instrument for the data collection employed in this study was a structured questionnaire titled: Towards Transformation of University Education Questionnaire (TTUEQ). The research instrument was validated by two experts in the department of educational management. The reliability coefficient index of the questionnaire was established at 0.90. The research questions was analyzed with the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) and rank order statistics, while the hypotheses formulated was tested with the z-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The study found the task of transforming the university education to address and achieve national goals requires university administrators (leadership skills) to drive the vision in the university. For actualization, university education through*

*high quality research and development for capacity building will eliminate brain drain. The study recommended that, for university education transformation to be visible, University administrators should encourage high quality research and development for capacity building by creating avenue for proper funding. This funding can be in form of loan, grants and the university funding high quality research met for international and world class publications.*

**Keywords:** Transformation, university education, contemporary issues capacity building

Education is one of the most crucial sectors in any society, because it is central to the preservation of the society membership. Education as a “process of imparting knowledge, judgment, facts, skills and ideas that have been learned either formally or informally”, forms the basis for human capacity development, both physically and mentally to fit into the society (Lenshie, 2013). The importance and linkage of education to the development of any society is well documented. It is in recognition of this importance that the international community and governments all over the world have made commitments for citizens to have access to education. Thus, education in general, and higher education in particular, are fundamental to the construction of a knowledge economy and society in all nations (World Bank, 1999).

Universities all over the world are accepted as the citadel of learning and development of human resources. The entire intellectual and professional life of a country depends on sound higher education, especially university education that provides quality products (graduates) of international standard. The Nigerian university system sprang out of the need for the development of a high level workforce to take the challenge of nation building after independence (Adeogun, Subair and Osifila, 2009). Based on these national goals of higher education in Nigeria, institutions of higher learning in Nigeria are geared towards and generally focused on teaching, research and community service, with the aim of promoting national unity, develop skilled manpower and advancement in science and technology (self-reliance) that would not only improve the national economy but capable of putting the country in an advantageous position to compete favourably and benefit significantly in the competitive globalized economy (Abiodun and Ganiyu, (n.d). These are the expected goals of the Federal Government of Nigeria for university education. University education is, indeed, a crucial arena of transformation and vital to economic and social transformation and development. Transformation is not automatic; it involves leadership style of the university to bring transformation into university education.

According to Jones in Charlie (2013) defines leadership as the art of enabling ordinary people to turn in extra ordinary performance. This means that leadership

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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.

In this light, transformation of university education without university leaders' involvement, will just be a mere word without actualization. University administrators have the capacity to transform potentials into reality as it is the ultimate act that brings to success all the potentials that are in an institution and its people. The transformation of university education is dependent upon the vision of the university administrators (leaders), the community, the state and the nation at large. That vision must capture university education as a movement which encompasses honest and transparent administration, adequate utilization of available resources for maximum delivery, quality research and innovation for capacity building, reduce brain drain, adequate training of staff (both academic and non-academic) which recognizes and supports the professional development, quality graduate, thereafter embracing new innovation and technologies. Fadipe (2000) asserts that the right type of human resource personnel (university leaders with national vision oriented) in Nigerian universities would enhance the production of the right type of manpower in sufficient quantity and quality for the transformation of the nation from a developing country to a developed one. University administrators exercising transformational leadership style focus on the development of value system of employees, their motivational level and moralities with the development of their skills (Ojokuku, Odetayo and Sajuyigbe, 2012). Middlehurst (1995) opined that leadership is the domain of those in certain positions of power in the academia such as Vice-chancellors, Deans, Professors, Heads of Department and others.

According to Charlie (2013) a positive oriented university administrator (leader) 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.

Nigerian university administrators, in delivering the general mandates of sustaining the quality and standard of the university system have by certain actions and inactions frustrated the realization of the university education vision and have contributed to relegating the universities to bottom of the accredited universities in the world (Ebuara, Udida, Ekpiken and Bassey, 2009). While Charlie (2013) asserted a negative oriented university administrator (leader) will not bother to mobilize the management and staff, as he/she 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. The university administrator runs the institution as his personal estate, and offends the sensibility of the managers, who want to resort to subtle sabotage of his efforts and negate the realization of the university goal.

### **Statement of the problem**

Education in general and higher education in particular, are fundamental to the construction of a knowledge economy and society in all nations. Yet the potential of higher education systems in developing countries to fulfill this responsibility is frequently thwarted by long-standing problems of finance, efficiency, equity, quality and governance (William, Teresa and Erich, 2003). Thus, by transforming the university education system to perform better, it starts from revisiting the leadership style. The principal challenge that has made the achievement of university education vision frustrating and pointing toward failure. According to some scholars, this has been leadership and corruption which bedevils the Nigerian society. One question that runs across the minds of the public is; what is actually wrong with the ways Nigerian University education system has been managed by university administrators in terms of motivation, teamwork, training, capacity building and welcoming of new innovation into the system? What will be the consequences of their negligence? And the possible ways forward? This study seeks to investigate towards transformation of university education in Rivers state.

### **Aim and objectives of the study**

The broad aim of the study is to investigate towards transformation of university education in Rivers state. Specifically, the study sought:

1. To find out the attributes of university leaders towards transformation of university education in Rivers state.
2. To examine the consequences of university leaders negligence towards transformation of university education in Rivers state.

### **Research Questions**

Based on the objectives of the study, the following research questions are designed:

1. What are the attributes of university leaders towards transformation of university education in Rivers state?
2. What would be the consequences of university leaders' negligence towards transformation of university education in Rivers state?

### **Research Hypotheses**

Based on the research questions for the study, the following research hypotheses are tested at 0.05 level of significance.

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of Academic and non-academic staff on the attributes of university leaders towards transformation of university education in Rivers state.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of Academic and non-academic staff on the consequences of university leaders' negligence towards transformation of university education in Rivers state.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

The design for the study is descriptive survey.

#### **Population of the study**

The population of this study consisted of three (3) universities in Rivers state. The universities in this study are University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University of Science and Technology and Ignatius Ajuru State University of Education Rivers State. The respondents was 2,956 academic staff both in Federal and State Universities and 6,645 non-academic staff both in Federal and State Universities from 2003-2013. The total population was therefore 9,601.

**Source:** Pay roll unit of the bursary department of the Federal and State Universities, 2013.

#### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

The sample size of this study was one thousand, four hundred and forty respondents (1440) that represented 15% of the population for both academic and non-academic staff. The study employed stratified random sampling technique for the selection of the respondents. The strata comprised of federal and state universities in Rivers state. The study adopted a balloting system without replacement for the selection by giving the respondents equal chance of selection for the study. The total sample size of this study was 1,440.

#### **Instrumentation**

The instrument for the study was a questionnaire schedule. The instrument for the data collection employed in this study was a structured questionnaire titled: Towards Transformation of University Education Questionnaire (TTUEQ). The questionnaire dealt with the extent to which the respondents agreed or disagreed in the Towards Transformation of University Education in Rivers State. This section is structured on a modified likert-type four-point rating scale; that is:

Strongly Agree (SA) - 4 points

Agree (A) - 3 points

Disagree (D) - 2 points

Strongly Disagree (SD) - 1 point

To get the criterion mean for scoring the questionnaire, all the points of the alternative responses was added up and divided by 4, that is  $(4+3+2+1)/4 = 10/4 = 2.50$ . Therefore any mean value that is 2.50 and above was accepted and anyone below it (2.50) was rejected.

### **Validity**

To validate the research instrument, the researcher presented the questionnaire to the two experts in the faculty of education especially Department of Educational Management. The observations, views, opinions and comments were used to modify the instrument before administering to the respondents. All these processes were geared towards proper determination of validation. To ascertain whether the instrument actually set out to meet what it was expected to test. The study used construct validity.

### **Reliability**

To ensure the reliability, the instrument was administered to 10 respondents outside the study area. After two weeks, the same instrument was administered to the same respondents. The scores obtained were collated and computed using the statistical method known as Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. The reliability coefficient index for the study was determined at 0.90.

### **Administration of Instrument**

The questionnaire for this study was administered by the researcher with the help of six research assistants. The researcher administered 1,440 copies of the instrument to the respondents. A maximum of three weeks was used for administration and collection of the instrument from the various respondents. The researcher was able to retrieve 1,200 questionnaires from the respondent. This represents 83% return.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The data collected for the study was coded according to the response sets on the questionnaire schedule. The research questions were answered with mean ( $\bar{x}$ ), standard deviation (SD) and rank order statistics, while the hypotheses of no significant difference were tested with z-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance.

### **Presentation and Analysis of data**

The research questions were answered by analyzing the responses to the questionnaire items.

**Research Question 1:** What are the attributes of university leaders towards transformation of university education in Rivers State?

**Table 1: Mean ( $\bar{x}$ ), SD and rank order of respondents' scores on the attributes of university leaders towards transformation of university education in Rivers state**

| S/N | Items   | Academic Staff<br>N=500 | Non-academic staff<br>N= 700 | Weighted mean | Rank Order | Remark |
|-----|---|-------------------------|------------------------------|---------------|------------|--------|
|     |   | $\bar{x}$               | $\bar{x}$                    |               |            |        |
| 1   | University administrators encourage rethinking of ideas and question old ways of doing things.                            | 2.84                    | 2.80                         | 2.82          | 5th        | Agree  |
| 2   | University administrators listen attentively and express courage and support in other abilities to achieve good result.   | 3.15                    | 2.64                         | 2.89          | 4th        | Agree  |
| 3   | University administrators invest trust and self-confidence in teamwork by sharing information and handling of challenges. | 2.78                    | 3.02                         | 2.90          | 3rd        | Agree  |
| 4   | University administrators organizing training workshops for update and upgrade of staff for high productivity             | 3.18                    | 2.63                         | 2.91          | 2nd        | Agree  |
| 5   | University administrators encourage high quality research and development for capacity building.                          | 2.98                    | 3.13                         | 3.06          | 1st        | Agree  |

From table 1, the high mean scores ranging from 3.06 to 2.82 indicated that all the items identified were accepted as attributes of university leaders towards transformation of university education in Rivers state. Hence, the mean scores were above the criterion mean. It is evident that, university administrators encourage high quality

research and development for capacity building, organizing training workshops for update and upgrade of staff for high productivity, and sharing information and handling of challenges. In summary, the positive attributes of university administrator gears toward national goal must be designed and start from university education through high quality research and development for capacity building and eliminating brain drain.

**Research Question 2:** What would be the consequences of university leaders' negligence towards transformation of university education in Rivers state?

**Table 2: Mean ( $\bar{x}$ ), SD and rank order of respondents' scores on the consequences of university leaders' negligence towards transformation of university education in Rivers state**

| S/N | Items  | Academic Staff<br>N=500 | Non-academic staff<br>N= 700 | Weighted mean | Rank Order      | Remark |
|-----|--|-------------------------|------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|--------|
|     |  | $\bar{x}$               | $\bar{x}$                    |               |                 |        |
| 6   | It will lead to brain drain as a result of inadequate funding for high quality research.                     | 3.19                    | 3.18                         | 3.19          | 1 <sup>st</sup> | Agree  |
| 7   | It will lead to strike action by both students and staff which affect academic calendar.                     | 3.13                    | 3.13                         | 3.13          | 2 <sup>nd</sup> | Agree  |
| 8   | Inadequate staffing and training, poor motivation and low staff morale.                                      | 2.72                    | 2.64                         | 2.68          | 5 <sup>th</sup> | Agree  |
| 9.  | It will lead poor management of infrastructure for teaching.   | 3.08                    | 3.09                         | 3.09          | 3 <sup>rd</sup> | Agree  |
| 10  | Wrong decision or counsel can affect the economic activities in universities thereby discouraging investors. | 3.13                    | 2.94                         | 3.04          | 4 <sup>th</sup> | Agree  |



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From table 2, the high mean scores ranging from 3.19 to 2.68 indicated that all the items identified were accepted as consequences of university leaders' negligence towards transformation of university education in Rivers state. Hence, the mean scores were above the criterion mean. It is evident that, university administrators' negligence would result to brain drain as a result of inadequate funding, strike action by both students and staff which affect academic calendar and poor management of infrastructure for teaching.

**Test of Hypotheses**

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of Academic and non-academic staff on the attributes of university leaders towards transformation of university education in Rivers State.

**Table 3: Mean, standard deviation and z-statistic on the attributes of university leaders towards transformation of university education**

| CATEGORY           | N   | $\bar{x}$ | SD   | z-cal | z-cri      | DF   | DECISION                    |
|--------------------|-----|-----------|------|-------|------------|------|-----------------------------|
| Academic Staff     | 500 | 2.96      | 0.72 | 1.71  | $\pm 1.96$ | 1198 | H <sub>01</sub> is Accepted |
| Non-Academic staff | 700 | 2.89      | 0.68 |       |            |      |                             |

**N = 1,200; level of significance = 0.05**

The data in table 3, showed that the z-calculated value of 1.71 is less than z-critical value of  $\pm 1.96$  at 0.05 level of significance with 1,198 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis (H<sub>01</sub>) is accepted. There is no significance difference between the mean rating of academic and non-academic staff on the attributes of university administrators towards transformation of university education in Rivers state.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of Academic and non-academic staff on the consequences of university leaders' negligence towards transformation of university education in Rivers state.

**Table 4: Mean, standard deviation and z-statistic on the consequences of university leaders' negligence towards transformation of university education**

| CATEGORY           | N   | $\bar{x}$ | SD   | z-cal | z-cri      | DF   | DECISION                    |
|--------------------|-----|-----------|------|-------|------------|------|-----------------------------|
| Academic Staff     | 500 | 3.05      | 0.69 | 1.58  | $\pm 1.96$ | 1198 | H <sub>02</sub> is Accepted |
| Non-Academic staff | 700 | 2.99      | 0.60 |       |            |      |                             |

**N = 1,200; level of significance = 0.05**

The data in table 4, showed that the z-calculated value of 1.58 is less than z-critical value of  $\pm 1.96$  at 0.05 level of significance with 1,198 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis ( $H_{01}$ ) is accepted.

This means that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of academic and non-academic staff on the consequences of university leaders negligence towards transformation of university education in Rivers state.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The finding revealed that university administrators encourage high quality research and development for capacity building, organizing training workshops for update and upgrade of staff for high productivity, and sharing information and handling of challenges. The truth is, no nation in the world can develop beyond the university education level. The transformation of university education is dependent upon the vision of the university administrators (leaders) for education towards the community, the state and the nation at large. The quality and quantity of research and development for capacity building of a university are determined by the ability of the university administrators to mobilize human and material resources of the university. Based on this, the study had hypothesis which stated that there is no significance difference between the mean rating of academic and non-academic staff on the attributes of university administrators towards transformation of university education in Rivers State. This shows that the vision of university administrator gears toward national goal must be designed and start from university education through high quality research and development for capacity building and eliminating brain drain. This will not only contribute positively to university education but the achievement of national goals.

The second finding revealed that university administrators' negligence would result to brain drain as a result of inadequate funding, strike action by both students and staff which affect academic calendar and poor management of infrastructure for teaching. Nigerian universities leaders run the universities with the assumption that the system cannot be sustained without continue government assistance (Ebuara, Udida, Ekpiken and Bassey, 2009). In the same vein, Yusuf and Ghalib (2014) asserted that the method by which the management of the universities manage crisis is indeed poor. The style being adopted in running the universities is "we are against them". Thus constructive criticism is seen as an affront against the university management by 'enemies' of the system. Based on this, the study had hypothesis which stated that there is no significance difference between the mean rating of academic and non-academic staff on the consequences of university administrators negligence towards transformation of university education in Rivers State. This negligence from university administrators will result to brain drain as a result of inadequate funding, strike action by both students and staff which affect academic calendar and poor management of infrastructure for teaching and among others.

### **Conclusion**

The task of transforming the university education to address and achieve national goals requires university administrators (leadership skills) to drive the vision in the university. The national and university goal attainment may be viewed as a destination, where university management represents the vehicle, leadership style represents the fuel and people (government and university administrators) are the drivers. For actualization, university education through high quality research and development for capacity building will eliminate brain drain. This will not only contribute positively to university education but the achievement of national goals. The negligence of the university administrators towards transformation of university education is unhealthy for the university system which the long-run affect national growth and development negatively.

### **Recommendations**

1. For university education transformation to be visible, University administrators should encourage high quality research and development for capacity building by creating avenue for proper funding. This funding can be in form of loan, grants and the university funding high quality research met for international and world class publications.
2. University administrators should organize training workshops for update and upgrade of staff for high productivity. This will serve as a motivation to the staff on new innovation.
3. It is important for university administrators to be trained and re-trained by professional on acceptable democratic and international standard of run the university education with national oriented goals. This would make university administrators avoid running the university system as their private estate. Also, this will help avoid all the challenges faced by university education such as strike action by both students and staff which affect academic calendar, brain drain, inadequate training for staff, low staff morale and motivation and others.

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