

Leadership Quality and Performance of Nigerian Polytechnics

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Abstract

This study was set out to review the relationship between leadership quality and performance of Nigerian Polytechnics, using Auchu Polytechnic, Auchu, as a case study. The spearman rank correlation statistics was used to test the relationship between the variables. The value of the correlation coefficient ($r = -0.99$) revealed a strong inverse relationship between the variables, implying that an increase in leadership quality leads to decrease in the rank value of the Polytechnic and increase in performance. The study concludes that a proactive and visionary leadership is needed in Nigerian Polytechnics to help meet their mandates. The study recommended, among others, an individual with the requisite qualifications (academic and professional); and management skills to occupy the 'Rector' position in all Polytechnics across Nigeria, at any point in time.

Keywords: leadership quality, institutional performance, polytechnic.

Introduction

It is no longer news that the Nigerian economy has continued to dwindle. This is not surprising because education, as a major pillar of the economy, is on the decline in terms of quality. George (2018) lamented that the quality of learning is pitiable and the standard of education offered in Nigeria disgraceful. This stance was supported by Olamide and Tobiloba (2020) who said "the quality of tertiary education in Nigeria is disgracefully low and Nigerian graduates are no match for their counterparts in other parts of the world".

Higher education plays a consequential role in sustainable development as it equips the "next generation of sustainability leaders with knowledge and essential skills" needed for proactive

leadership (France, Saito, Vanghter, Whereat, Kaine & Takemoto, 2018). Unfortunately, Nigerian higher educational institutions especially Polytechnics face a lot of challenges which have hindered development in the country. One of these challenges as noted by Asiyai (2017) is poor leadership; she cited “injudicious utilization of funds by implementation agencies” such as Government and Management as examples of how poor leadership has negatively affected development in Nigeria. Polytechnics have been treated as second fiddle in the Nigerian higher educational system. This is due to their poor performance (Chiemeké, Longe, Long & Shaib, 2019). This is disturbing, and especially so, since Polytechnics were set up to fill the technological needs of the country through self-dependence and self-sustainability.

There are many local and international studies on the effect of quality leadership on higher institutional performance. However, no known study has addressed this effect with respect to Polytechnics, using Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi as a case study; and covering the years 2011 to 2022. Thus, the purpose of this work was to show the relationship between quality leadership and Polytechnic performance in Nigerian using Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi as a case study.

The study covers a period of ten (10) years from 2011 – 2022. The hypothesis of the study is hereby stated as:

H₀: There is no relationship between leadership quality and institutional performance of Auchi, Polytechnic, Auchi.

Literature Review

Institutional Performance

Performance is the management of progress which ranges from measuring to reporting as to improve outcome at the individual and corporate levels (Marr, 2020). It is therefore a measure of value created by a group, individually or collectively to achieve stated objectives and gain competitive advantage.

Institutional performance is the actual results of an institution’s performance in achieving its goals and objectives (Bashaer, Anigh & Sherine, 2016; and Kangal, 2021, 2021). It is an ideology viewing an organization or an institution as a “variety association of productive assets” (Carton, 2004), including all forms of resources whether human, capital or physical, with the aim of

achieving a shared purpose. The essence is value creation. Gavrea, (2011) listed leadership as one of the determinants of organizational/institutional performance. This is note worthy, as Asiyai (2017) later emphasized poor leadership as one of the major actors facing Polytechnics in Nigeria and hindering national development.

Leadership Quality

Hackman and Wageman (1995) viewed quality as the responsibility of top management. This implies that the achievement of management is based on the quality of leadership of the organization. McNair et al (2011) in Bashaer et al (2016) viewed leadership as the “art of motivating team or group of people so that they act appropriately to achieve a given common goal”. Leadership includes strategic orientation which according to Deshpande et al (2013) in Ahmed, Khuwaja, Brohi and Othman (2018), “represents the direction of an organization to create the proper organizational behavior which can achieve its shared goals”. Leadership, especially transformational leadership, has been viewed as a key element or success factor in organizational performance (Papanthymou & Darra, 2017; Edo, Chukwusa, & Uzoma, 2018). In an earlier work, Modanchian, Hussein, Noordin and Taherdoost (2016) had argued that transformational leadership could be categorized by “optimistic, trusted and positive leaders who emotionally encourage teamwork and set support innovations”. They felt that “transformational leaders create a strategic vision, communicate that vision through enclosing and use of symbol, model the vision by walking and acting consistently at building commitment toward the vision”. Therefore, one could agree that the performance of any organization depends in large, on the level of skills and competencies its leaders possess when it comes to implementing strategies (Bashaer et al, 2016).

Leadership competencies represent means of creating followers through skills and knowledge. Such competencies include monitoring and coaching, leading and motivating, problem solving and decision-making, proper communication, influencing and negotiating (Lee et al, 2015 in Bashaer et al, 2016; Tomal and Jones, 2015). The competencies of a leader also involve his or her abilities to persuade other people on behalf of the organization, to complete the task required to accomplish the objectives of the organization and to communicate its vision to others. A good leader must be inspirational, motivational, display honesty, have

integrity, visionary, possess good communication skills and have a good sense of humor. (Meraku, 2017)

Meraku (2017) emphasized top-down communication as a means a leader uses to communicate the policies, procedures and new offers that a company provides. He also described bottom-up communication as a means to communicate subscriber complaints, to present ideas and to express the problems faced by employees at work. Hence, the role of communication in leadership cannot be underscored.

Effectiveness is another critical function of a leader which determines, to a great extent, the performance of an organization. An organization is said to be effective if it meets the needs of all its stakeholders and strikes a balance in doing so (Meraku, 2017). Effectiveness of an organization depends on its efficiency and process reliability, human resources and relations, innovation and adaptation to environment (Yuki, 2016 in Karamat, 2013). In all of these, leadership plays a key role. According to Karamat (2013), the effective leader is one with an effective leadership style. In modern times, transformational, visionary leader is the focus. Effective leadership is essential not only in organizations that deliver products, but in institutions of higher learning which provides service delivery such as Polytechnics. Below are few empirical works on the effect of leadership on organizational /Institutional Performance.

Madanchian, Hussein, Noordin & Taherdoost (2016) explained the effect of leadership styles, with particular reference to transformational leadership, on increase in organizational performance using a qualitative approach. The study concluded that there is a positive relationship between the transformational leadership style and the performance of the organization. They recommended the analysis of the nature of the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational performance for future studies.

Papantymou and Darra (2017) presented a summary of 52 studies from 2006 to 2016 of quality management in higher educational institutions in developing countries such as Arabic Countries. The aim of the study was to submit evidence regarding the level of quality management in these institutions with a view to enhancing research in the field of TQM. The findings revealed that from 2013 onward, there has been an increased interest in items of TQM

such as the age and type of the university, transformational leadership, integration, respect of a person character, constructive conflict, orientation of employees and faculty as well as resource allocation. The study identified both obstacles and benefits of quality management in these institutions. The study recommended further study on comparison between Western developed countries and other developing countries of the world.

Edo, Chukwusa and Uzoma (2018) theoretically reviewed quality management strategies and students' academic performance in Nigerian Universities. The purpose of the study was to examine the population of quality management (quality of academic staff, quality of physical facilities, quality of students assessment, quality of teaching methods and quality of curriculum content) on the performance of these institutions. The study concluded that quality management reflected on monitoring, appraisal, supervision and evaluation of the various instructional programmes for the enhancement of students' academic performance in the universities. The study recommended constant monitoring of programmes, persistent supervision of physical facilities and personnel for the realization of the pre-determined objectives as well as accreditation of the available facilities and programmes for the determination of the strength and weaknesses of these institutions.

Mahamda (2019), in a research work titled: implementing total quality management in Palestine higher education institutions and its relationship to the institutional performance, carried out a survey using questionnaires from faculty deans of the institutions surveyed. The questionnaires were analyzed by SPSS to assess the level of TQM implementation and its relationship to the performance of these universities. The study found that there was strong positive linear relationship between information and analysis implementation and performance; a moderate positive relationship between performance and each of strategic planning and leadership, and finally a weak positive relationship between performance and process management.

Methods

This is a survey study of the descriptive research design. The study covered a period of ten years (2011 – 2020), showing whether there was a significant relationship between leadership quality and performance of Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi for the years

in question. Performance of the Polytechnic was gotten online from ranking of Auchu Polytechnic for the relevant years by Webometrics and other agencies responsible for the ranking of higher institutions of learning. The ranking of the Polytechnic shows its relative position (in terms of overall performance) to other higher institutions of learning in Nigeria (the lower its position, the better its performance in relation to others).

Questionnaire was administered to 323 staff of the Polytechnic, to assess the leadership quality of the institution for the relevant years. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section A covered the bio-data of respondents; while Section B covered the questions designed using 5 point Likert scale, for hypothesis testing. For leadership quality, the questionnaire was analyzed using weighted average to get a single figure for a particular year, in all the relevant years of study.

Questionnaire

Section A (Biodata of Respondents)

Kindly tick the appropriate option

1. Sex: Male () Female ()
2. Age:
30 – 40 years ()
41 – 50 years ()
51 – 60 years ()
61 years & above ()
3. Marital Status:
Single () Married () Separated () Divorced ()
Widow/Widower ()
4. Qualification:
OND/NCE ()
HND/BSc ()
Master Degree ()
PhD ()
Professional ()
Others ()
5. Length of Service:
10 – 20 years ()
21 – 30 years ()
31 years & above ()

Analysis of background characteristics of respondents

Simple percentages were used to analyze the background characteristics of the respondents such as age, sex, level of experience and qualification.

Table 1: Sex Distribution of Respondents

Option	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Male	206	64
Female	117	36
Total	323	100

Table 1 above shows that 206 (64%) of the respondents are males while 117 (36%) are females. Though there were more male respondents than female, the sex distribution is fair enough.

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Option	No. of Respondents	Percentage
30 – 40 years	60	18
41 – 50 years	249	54
51 – 60 years	77	24
61 years and above	12	4
Total	323	100

Table 2 above shows that the majority of the respondents (54%) are between 41 – 50 years of age. This age range is the most active of service years because it usually combines maturity and general experience in life and service in viewing and handling issues. Thus any response on the impact of leadership on the performance of Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi, from the respondents of this age bracket can be generally relied upon.

Table 3: Marital Status of Respondents

Option	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Single	54	17
Married	249	77
Separated	5	2
Divorced	2	-
Widow(er)	13	4
Total	323	100

Table 3 above shows that the majority of the respondents 249 (77%) are married with their spouses living with them. One could reasonably conclude that the respondents are psychologically stable enough to give reliable answers to the questions raised.

Table 4: Qualification of Respondents

Option	No. of Respondents	Percentage
OND/NCE only	15	7
HND/BSc only	122	37
Master Degree	155	47
PhD	27	8
Others	4	1
Total	323	100

Table 4 above shows that 92% of respondents have at least a first degree or its equivalent. In addition, 208 (64%) respondents have professional qualifications in their respective fields of study. Therefore, the respondents are both academically and professional qualified to contribute to issues of institutional performance especially as they relate to Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi where they work.

Table 5: Length of Service

Option	No. of Respondents	Percentage
10 – 20 years	96	30
21 – 30 years	206	64
31 years and above	21	6
Total	323	100

Table 5 above shows that most of the respondents have worked long enough in Auchi Polytechnic (about 70% of respondents have spent at least 21 years in service) to contribute meaningfully to the issue of leadership raised in this study.

Section B

Please tick the appropriate option.

NOTE: VG = Very Good, GD = Good, FR = Fair, PR = Poor, VP = Very Poor.

SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, U = Undecided,

D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree.

1. The Management of Auchu Polytechnic, Auchu, diligently monitors its staff performance for enhanced quality delivery. SA [] A [] U [] D [] SD []
2. Management encourages good communication and teamwork among staff as a way of achieving the broad objective of the Polytechnic. SA [] A [] U [] D [] SD []
3. Management persistently supervises physical facilities as a means of ensuring ambient environment. SA [] A [] U [] D [] SD []
4. Management considers employees' contributions in reaching certain decisions. SA [] A [] U [] D [] SD []
5. Management anticipates public concerns about its services and puts in place mechanism that will help in reasonably meeting the demands of all its stakeholders. SA [] A [] U [] D [] SD []
6. The leadership style of the Rector at any point in time determines the leadership quality of the Institution. SA [] A [] U [] D [] SD []
7. In view of the above, how would you rate the leadership quality of Polytechnic Management as it relates to performance for the following years:
 - 2011 VG [] GD [] FR [] PR [] VP []
 - 2012 VG [] GD [] FR [] PR [] VP []
 - 2013 VG [] GD [] FR [] PR [] VP []
 - 2014 VG [] GD [] FR [] PR [] VP []
 - 2015 VG [] GD [] FR [] PR [] VP []
 - 2016 VG [] GD [] FR [] PR [] VP []
 - 2017 VG [] GD [] FR [] PR [] VP []
 - 2018 VG [] GD [] FR [] PR [] VP []
 - 2019 VG [] GD [] FR [] PR [] VP []
 - 2020 VG [] GD [] FR [] PR [] VP []

For the purpose of this study, the model is specified as:

$$IP = F(LQ) \dots\dots\dots (i)$$

where: *IP = Institutional Performance*

LQ = Leadership Quality

Based on the study objective, the spearman rank correlation coefficient (r) was used to estimate the statistical dependence between the ranking of the Polytechnic’s performance for the years under study and the rating of its leadership quality (from respondents) as seen in questionnaire above, for the same years. The spearman rank correlation statistics was used because the data for the study are ordinal and are based on ranking and ratings. The ‘r’ is expected to have a negative value showing an inverse relationship. This means that an increase in leadership quality (LQ) will lead to a decrease in the numerical value (ranking) of the Institutional Performance, suggesting an increased level of performance.

The spearman rank correlation coefficient is given by:

$$r = 1 - \frac{6\sum d^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

where: r = the rank correlation coefficient

d = difference between the ranks of the paired observations

n = number of paired observations

Year	Y (IP)	X (LQ)	Ranking of X	Ranking of Y	d(x – y)	d ²
2011	11	94.53	7.0	3.5	3.5	12.25
2012	10	98.67	9.0	2.0	7.0	49.00
2013	8	101.73	10.0	1.0	9.0	81.00
2014	11	94.60	8.0	3.5	4.5	20.25
2015	21	91.73	6.0	5.0	1.0	1.00
2016	31	88.33	5.0	6.0	-1.0	1.00
2017	38	83.27	4.0	7.0	-3.0	9.00
2018	48	80.07	3.0	8.0	-5.0	25.00
2019	58	61.87	2.0	9.0	-7.0	49.00
2020	60	56.53	1.0	10.0	-9.0	<u>81.00</u>
						<u>328.50</u>

$$\text{Spearman rank correlation coefficient } (r) = \frac{1 - \frac{6\sum d^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

where $\sum d^2 = 328.50$; $n = 10$

$$r = \frac{1 - \frac{6(328.50)}{10(10^2 - 1)}}{10(10^2 - 1)}$$

$$r = \frac{1 - \frac{1971}{990}}{990}$$

$$r = 1 - 1.9909$$

$$r = -0.9909$$

$$r \approx -0.99$$

The hypothesis of the study is again stated as:

H₀: There is no relationship between LQ and IP of Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi.

The value of the spearman rank correlation coefficient ($r \approx -0.99$) shows a strong statistical relationship between leadership quality and institutional performance of Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi, in the period under study. An increase in the value of leadership quality leads to a decrease in the ranking position of the Polytechnic. The meaning of a low ranking position is actually an improvement in performance in relation to other institutions. The implication of this is that a positive change in leadership quality will lead to a positive change in performance of the Polytechnic. This is consistent with previous studies such by Bashaer et al 2016; Papanthymou and Daira 2017, who argued that leadership is a critical instrument of achieving effective and efficient organizational performance.

Summary

The leadership skills and competencies of any organization is a major determinant of its performance. In the Polytechnic setting, leadership theoretically lies with the management team. However, the case of Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi shows that leadership is majorly a function of the Chief Executive – The Rector. A Rector who is proactive, pragmatic, visionary and believes in team work often drives the institution to a greater height as was felt in the period 2008 – 2012. During this period, the Rector (Dr. Mrs. Idogho, Philipa) spelt out her vision to make Auchi Polytechnic the best in Africa. To achieve this, she encouraged employees to engage in further studies. Different kinds of academic training, workshops, conferences were made available for man power development. Both teaching and non-teaching staff were given the opportunity to engage in all forms of training and development locally and internationally. Approval for part time studies was never denied any staff.

In the period 2008 – 2012 different Professional bodies were invited to the Polytechnic to train staff and help them qualify professionally. Within this period, the increase in the level and quality of academic activities of Auchi Polytechnic could be felt within and outside the Polytechnic. Staff were encouraged to carryout innovative research and publish such in recognized and reputable journals. The level of ICT also increased as Auchi Polytechnic, thus ranking it high in webometrics. In fact, the per capital academic performance of the Polytechnic was the highest during this period. Sadly, the leaders after her (in the period under review) could not maintain the status quo. Thus, the Polytechnic suffered a setback between 2016 and 2020 as could be seen in its ranking for those years.

In view of the above, the importance of proactive and visionary leadership who can drive, push or compel Nigerian Polytechnics from their current position to the desired position, making them an instrument for change and national development through innovation and modern technology, cannot be over emphasized.

Conclusion

The study concludes as follows:

1. The questionnaire analysis of leadership quality revealed a decreased level in: supervision of resources by Management; good communication between Management and staff; teamwork among staff; and staff's involvement in decision making.
2. The leadership style of the Rector at any point plays a major role in the leadership quality of a Polytechnic as seen in the case of Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi.
3. Leadership quality is highly associated with the performance of Polytechnics in Nigeria as seen in the case of Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi.

Recommendations

The study recommends as follows:

1. The Federal Government, through the Federal Ministry of Education and other relevant regulatory bodies of the Nigerian Polytechnics, should ensure that the best suitable candidate at any point in time occupies the position of the Rector in any Polytechnic in the federation. This is very key, as the Rector of any Polytechnic is the symbol of

leadership in that institution. The Rector is charged with the general responsibility for matters relating to the day-to-day management of the Polytechnic and no doubt influences general performance.

2. Grant should be offered, on a yearly basis, to Polytechnic lecturers to improve their academic prowess through publication of scholarly articles in reputable local, national and International Journals.
3. Management of the various Polytechnics in Nigeria should train employees of their respective Polytechnics to acquire skills requiring the use of the fourth industrial revolution to enable them compete successfully with World renowned higher educational institutions.

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