

A DISCOURSE OF FUNCTIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE APPROACHES THAT CAN INITIATE COMPETITIVE AND AUTONOMOUS TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The discourse focuses on importance of creating robust leadership approaches to manage human and academic segments in Nigerian tertiary institutions with the aim of making education business at tertiary institutions competitive, autonomous, advancing and productive. The authors emphasize administration of tertiary institutions as social rudiment of growth that needs not be too strict and not flexible if the institutions must achieve growth and relevance in society. Drawing on sociological perspectives, the discourse elucidates various types of school leadership styles that can make tertiary institutions functional in 21st Century and be ready to become autonomous; free from undue influences and regulations that can undermine institutional attainments. In addition to this, the authors explain the various attributes of an effective tertiary institution leader, laying emphasis on those that can make institutions of higher learning become productively competitive in Nigerian society. The discourse concludes that to create competitive and advancing systems of tertiary institution, the leadership must be transformational and not transactional. Administrators of tertiary institutions must be motivators and mentors. Beyond these, the entire school system must be operated to become competitive and not to remain stagnant and overtly traditional.

Introduction

Innovations and advancements in human societies have brought more challenges for education sector, particularly the tertiary education sector. Part of the challenges most tertiary institutions face now is the need to advance, become autonomous, functional and resourceful to be able to deliver in accordance to the ever-dynamic needs of people and societies in this 21st century. Tertiary institutions have always expressed desires to be autonomous. They have always wanted to have little or no external influence on designs of their course contents, teaching methodologies, appointments, remunerations, certifications and community services (Faruq & Muhammed, 2021). The belief is that a tertiary institution can only deliver standard education if it is free from illogical social variables that do emanate from religious, cultural, economic and political interests in the larger society (Abubakar & Junaidu, 2022; Arikewuyo, 2012). Gone are the days

whentertiary institutions wanted to remain traditional and unyielding to societal advancements. Higher institutions of learning now need logical and encompassing self-made templates with which to govern, utilize available resources, manage human characters and deliver for the good of their societies. The need for this keeps growing in this present 21st century, as schools of all levels are expected to evolve for the betterment of staff, students and society (Gorge & Maxwell, 2022).

Beyond all these craving for autonomy and development, is the need for tertiary institutions to evolve and operate on functional leadership approaches. No doubt, institutional leadership style is one of the core prongs upon which a school can develop and become impactful (Ayorinde, 2022). A functional leadership is leadership that functions and not retarded or overtly unfree from undue external social-cultural policies and practices. Functional leadership is one that comprises structured policies and personnel that are effective, advancing and useable. It must be a leadership that can develop school and make it compete favorably as indispensable sector of the society. The school leadership must manifest relational styles among its units so as to be able to maximize productivity and ensure accountability to itself and to the society that establishes it. As opined by Harallambo and Heald (2020), leadership is the most important determinant of organizational effectiveness in school. This is because without adequate and positive leadership practices, it is very unlikely that the available human and non-human resources can be put to judicious use. This position informed structuring of Nigerian system of education into manageable layers for proper coordination and results.

Structure of Educational Administration in Nigeria

Administration of Nigerian system of Education is structured to cover the four levels of Education in the country. Thus, we have different administrative policies and personnel for each of the levels, namely:

- 1) Early Childhood Education
- 2) Basic Education comprising primary and Junior Secondary Education
- 3) Senior Secondary Education
- 4) Tertiary Education

While the first level of education is still not clearly defined in the Nigerian National Policy of Education (NPE), other levels are; and are structured for administrative conveniences as may be related to the peculiarities of each concerned level. More specifically, the second level of education is compulsory, universal and free in Nigeria (NPE, 2000). Generally, though, the administrations of the four levels of education are segmented under private personnel – as in privately owned schools- or under public personnel as in government owned schools. This does not remove the power of central-control of education from the Federal Government. Either private or public, the government of the federation has executive power to coordinate education in the country. In line with the needs of the entire society; private schools are compelled to adjust to government's control through enactments of educational policies and administrative personnel.

The principles and practices relating to administration of education in Nigeria are enacted and coordinated through the activities of the Legislative and Executive arms of government. The Judiciary arm only functions in the capacity of interpreting policies and/or mediating within the stakeholders of education, particularly in time of crisis. The functions of the three arms of government and other stakeholders are in accordance with the general philosophy of Nigeria system of education and the stipulations in the official document called the *Legislative Lists*. There are three Legislative Lists in Nigerian governance. These are:

- 1) Executive List: This contains items of duties which only the Federal Government can adjudicate on.
- 2) Residual Legislative List: This includes item of duties within the exclusive legislative power of the state governments.
- 3) Concurrent Legislative List: This contains item of duties that both Federal and State governments can legislate and adjudicate on.

No doubt, the power of the Federal government supersedes that of the State government in education designs and control. The Executive arm of government either at states or federal levels carry out its educational responsibilities through bodies, ministries and commissions such as the Civil Service Commission, Ministries of Education, Institutes, and agencies of education. Duties and responsibilities of these segments begin with and manifest into the pattern of leadership style prevalent in tertiary institutions. Giddens, (2001) argued that achievements in schools are the products of the leadership styles that is put to work. This suggests the need for stakeholders in education to understand the various school leadership styles and their dynamics for effective advancement in education sector.

Rubrics of Leadership Styles in Tertiary Institutions

While administration is all about structure of authorities in an organization, *leadership style* is the strategy that is employed at each structure of the organization to guide, direct and influence human and non-human resources towards achieving the goals for which the organization is established. A sociological perspective named Functionalism emphasizes the need for all institutional structures (segments) to work effectively and collectively towards attaining the goals of the institution. Functional theorists believe that the leadership and followership segments of an organization, be it educational, economic, political, or social organization, must collaborate to function; otherwise, a situation of laxity in one segment will render the whole of other segments faulty (Giddens, 2000; Daft, 2005; Ayorinde, 2022). This implies that the leadership segment of a tertiary institution cannot isolate itself from the followership or subordinate segments.

Many authors (Haralambos & Heald, 2018; Roberg, Novak, Corder & Smith, 2012) have written about leadership styles and have categorized the styles in many ways. Some have talked about autocratic, democratic and charismatic leadership styles. Others have talked about normative and participatory leadership styles. These categorizations are quite okay. However, in this discourse, leadership styles in tertiary institutions would be categorized into two, namely:

- 1) Transactional leadership style
- 2) Transformational leadership style

The above categorization is done on the premise of sociological perspective that sees leadership as a process; as a means of utilizing the resources for the common goal of the organization. In this perspective, leadership is seen as the activities of the leader rather than the leader himself. It is seen as pattern of interactions among organizational resources. The two categories are explained as follows:

Transactional Leadership style: This is a traditional, bureaucratic leadership style. It is a rigid form of school leadership that accepts the status quo. It is characterized by personnel who hardly initiate new ideology and procedures to replace the old ways of doing things in tertiary institutions system. Bernard Bass, quoted in Luthans, (2005) describes transactional leaders as those who lack collaborative initiatives. Transactional leaders manage by exception, they watch for lapses from their employees or watch for employees' intent or action to deviate from the rules. This is why transactional leadership is said to be what easily kills initiatives or organizational member's effort at being creative and advancing (Luthans, 2005; Schein, 2020). With transactional leadership style, academic staffs in universities can not operate with academic freedom and neither can the institution be autonomous. This is because, transactional leadership is nothing but gaged working experience.

Academic freedom is the moral and legal freedoms that grant university lecturers freedom of inquiry and teaching. It is a subset of university autonomy. University believes that maintaining its academic freedom is essential if it must achieve its core academic and human development goals (Abubakar & Junaidu, 2016). Academic freedom allows faculty members to teach or communicate ideas or facts even when such may be repulsive to external religious and political groups. It is believed that universities should be able to do this without fear of repression, job loss or imprisonment or being restricted by law and beliefs. Unfortunately, transactional leadership style could hinder actualization of academic freedom and the subsequent autonomy of tertiary institutions.

Transactional leadership is not the best for tertiary institutions organization. Generally, schools are avenue for academic and social interactions. Being human, behaviours of school members cannot be constant or static. Thus, to manage the dynamics of the behaviours of members of school organization, there is need for flexibility and creativity. Members of tertiary institutions should be able to think and act without necessarily being rigid. Other leadership styles such as autocratic and normative leadership styles are subsets of the transactional leadership style. Functional perspective of Sociology believes these styles cannot be productive. The employees govern using them cannot be productive. Such styles hardly develop sense of progressive competition among segments of institutions (Eric & Hassan, 2020). Transactional leaders fall short of the improvements that transformational leaders can initiate.

Transformational Leadership style: This leadership style is modern and progressive. It is a leadership approach that utilizes opinions and skills of every organizational member to transform both human and non-human resources in school system. It is a style that can make all segments of tertiary institution effective as they contribute to or are utilized for the purpose of school development. Transformational school leaders are charismatic; they provide their subordinates

with vision and sense of mission. Leaders in this category reinforce subordinate's emotion and commitment to job delivery. Because transformational leaders encourage participatory governance, they tend to awake the goodwill of their subordinates and encourage creativity. Transformational leadership is open for improvement. It is participatory and collaborative (Drake, 2019). It is a school leadership style that recognizes the contributions of individual staff. It encourages staff and tailors their efforts towards school successes. Other leadership styles such as collaborative, participatory, and democratic leadership styles are subset of the transformational leadership style.

Transformational leadership in tertiary institution can promote the idea of autonomy and academic freedom. It is a style that allows innovation and self-governance. With this leadership style, tertiary institutions can grow as members can be given ample opportunities to make inputs into the development of teaching and learning in the system.

Understanding school leadership styles also requires having an insight into the personalities of the leaders who will affect the leadership styles. In the next subsection of this discourse, we will focus on those attributes a school leader can have to become effective in school governance.

Attributes of effective Administrators of Tertiary Institution

Certain attributes depict an effective leader of tertiary institution. Most of the following characteristics should be the inherent traits or personalities of a tertiary leader before he can be adjudged as effective or seen as a leader that would encourage tertiary autonomy and academic freedom. If the characteristics are not in the leader's personality, manifesting them in his leadership style may be difficult. The characteristics are:

Vision and Mission: Effective leaders of tertiary institutions tend to have vision of what they want their school to be. They tend to envision or foresee a great school where things work and where moral and academic successes are achieved. Practically, they see the success ahead and strive to get there. It is just like the common saying that where there is vision, there is going to be mission. It is when a tertiary leader has positive vision that he can be propelled to consistently pursue or work towards achieving it for his institution. To a visionary leader, the vision becomes an end of a sort. A school leader without a vision cannot have a guided mission; his approaches to school governance will be disorganized and inconsistent. Articulating such vision can be an added advantage. An articulated vision tends to become a reminder of standards and expectations.

Confidence, Self-Efficacy and Diligence: Having confidence in oneself, believing that one is on the right part and capable of achieving success are good attributes of effective leaders (Roediger, Capaldi, Paris, Polivy & Herman, (1996). A leader of tertiary institution that doubts his vision, or that believes the vision is unachievable cannot lead self nor make others work towards achieving the vision. Self-efficacy has to do with believing in one's ability to achieve or carry out a specific function. A confident school leader who is also diligent (hardworking) will endure possible failure knowing well that such failure is temporary and can be turned to success with more planning and administrative focus. Certainly, confidence builds trust and dissuades fear in the followers of a leader.

Mentoring and Role Modeling: Effective tertiary leaders lead by example. They ensure their organizational behaviours are open and good enough to be emulated by other school members. Effective school leaders do not work by paper instructions, they work by action. They do not sit in the office giving instructions. They rather stay on the field acting out what others will willingly emulate. Role modeling is all about setting a value, maintaining it or be consistent on acting out the values and inspiring others to emulate. An effective leader of tertiary institution who appreciates autonomy and academic freedom should be exceptionally agile to inspire others. Without able to do this, the concept of tertiary autonomy will amount to nothing.

Motivator and Arousal of Goodness: Effective leaders of tertiary institution must be vigilant enough to identify good organizational behaviours of his followers and motivate the behaviour to multiply for the good of the school. A leader that cannot see or sense when his followers contribute positively to the success of the school will find it difficult to motivate repetition of such positive contribution in the follower. This is because a behaviour that is not recognized and reinforced will reach extinction- it will fade out (Roediger, Capaldi, Paris, Polivy & Herman, 1996). Thus, effective school leaders should be able to identify the contributions of each tertiary staff and motivate those that are relevant to the success of the school while at the same time discourage those that work contrary to the success of the school.

Communicator and Delegator of Mission: Effective school leaders communicate the mission of the school. They logically make every school member (staff and student) become aware of what the school is envisioned to be. Knowing this will guide school members away from actions that are incongruent with the school mission. In addition to this, the leader must be willing to collaborate with other school members towards achieving school effectiveness. He must be willing to annex his skill with those of others. An effective school leader cannot be the one who claims to know all and able to do all. He must be ready to delegate, share responsibilities and trust others' capabilities. A school head that want to be the janitor, the school bursar, the mail disperser and at the same time the secretary of the institution's board will end up doing nothing and will scare other school members' efforts or contributions.

Factors That Make tertiary Institutions Competitive and Functional

Until recent time, organization and administration of formal education in Nigeria have been traditional and bureaucratic. Unlike in modern business-oriented organizations such as bank and telecommunication outfits, school activities were designed and carried out as social services that are devoid of profit and flexible social engagements and orientations. School members, particularly teachers, were expected to be modest, unassuming, moderately enthusiastic, and not unnecessarily competitive or business minded in their job delivery (Lauder, Brown, Dillabough & Halsey, 2006; Haralambos & Holborn, 2019). They were the diplomats that must absolve and endure all, irrespective of their feelings.

Unlike in the 21st Century, school environments in the past were designed subtly just as the services for which they were built to render. Before now, walls of classrooms were devoid of complex architectural designs. They were just four walls occupying an open land at the corner of the community. Students were enrolled and teachers recruited following rigid procedures that

were not profit driven. On daily bases, the students and staff met to operate on hierarchical principles of authority and relationship. School heads gave orders that teachers and students must obey. The teachers may not have input into the rules governing the school neither can students contribute to the rules and curriculum they were subjected to. Those were the scenarios in traditional school settings.

Presently, however, with the advent of private tertiary institutions organizational cultures are evolving in schools. Schools are getting organized and business like. In some modern private tertiary institutions, the emerging trends are presenting competitive scenarios that could prompt more advancement (Gorge, 2020). The new order of schools is evolving an organizational culture that is shifting from rigid to flexible approaches. Their approaches are becoming more open and competitive in school business. Social and academic activities among school members, parents and stakeholders are now open to innovations. Many schools are now run like modern business organization (Maxwell, 2021). The structures of school buildings are changing to allow some flexibility. Architectural designs are now incorporated in some to beautify school premises and allow freer academic and social interactions across teachers' and students' groups. Some now have standard recreational centers that include swimming pool and mini marts. E-learning now makes the social media aspects of academic activities and students-teachers relationship seems to be less bossy.

No doubt, a 21st Century, school should be student and staff-friendly—it should be a sort of home at school. School walls should become more welcoming. The old prison-like fence that characterized traditional school environments should give way to more attractive and lucrative ones. In many modern schools, staffs may be designated to meet and welcome pupils at school gate, thereby friendly usher them into the school compound. Using of cane for behavioural modification is prohibited and students have free access to interact with their colleagues and teachers via telecommunication devices. These changes manifest in and moderate school organizational culture. The changes constitute a new way of conducting school business. It makes school competitive and advancing.

The concept of *organizational culture* is important in the discourse of pattern of work-oriented relationships among members of an organization. ***Organizational culture*** is defined as the persistent collective attitude and behaviour of members of an organization towards one another and their job. Organizational culture is simply organizational members' total ways of carrying out their duties. It includes the values, norms and beliefs they attach to their work. Organizational culture is related to school sub-culture. The only slight difference between the two concepts is that *school organizational culture* emphasizes staff behaviour in relation to their work. Whereas, *school sub-culture* is broader, it encompasses staff and students' peculiar behaviours. A school that undermines these two or that fail to advance them to be up to date cannot develop in the present century.

Interactive Cultures in Tertiary Institutions

The following two types of organizational culture are identifiable in tertiary institutions. One of them advances development, autonomy and academic freedom the other retards all these. Reading through them will illustrate the strength and weakness of the two sides.

- 1) Passive and defensive Leadership cultures
- 2) Liberal and constructive Leadership culture

Passive and Defensive School Leadership Culture:

This is typical of traditional school setting where bureaucracy is central and limited social interaction is encouraged among school hierarchy and groups. In a school with this kind of culture, staff members interact with superiors and clients (parents for example) with all sense of consciousness and routine. The interaction is official and strictly formal. The staff may see fault in the school system of operation but keep quiet because making correction is not part of his responsibilities. He may also keep quiet to avoid being in the bad book of the authority. Every staff member keeps to the line of his action, mind his own business.

In a school where passive and defensive school culture evolves, activities are too straight and passive. There, everybody has learnt to defend his work jurisdiction, tightly. For example, a teacher may see a way of increasing enrolment in the school but refuse to advise the management because he thinks he is not the admission officer. In a school organization where passive and defensive culture prevails, school members are expected to obey higher authority, please them and avoid interpersonal conflicts. Creatz (2009) writes that in a passive and defensive organization, rules, procedures and orders are more important than personal beliefs, ideas and judgment. Researches and scholastic write-ups are pointing to the fact that passive and defensive organizational cultures do not encourage competition and productivity. Staff and student bodies can be conflict prone, and with poor motivation and job satisfaction experiences (Luthans, 2005; Creatz, 2009). This culture certainly derails academic collaboration and advancement.

Liberal and Constructive School Leadership Culture: This is modern, liberal and open to new ideas and creativity. Staffs interact freely and students and other stakeholders see themselves as a team collaboratively working to achieve a common goal. The culture is typical of relaxed working atmospheres where staff members are encouraged to achieve success through innovation, skills and diligence. Individual efforts and creativities are encouraged, recognized, and commended. Staffs are free to develop and apply talents and potentials that will move the school forward. Orders and hierarchy are replaced with advice and collaboration. Dignity and self-esteem of staff members are highly placed.

Consequently, school staffs tend to be more committed and productive. Since they are emotionally and professionally motivated, they tend to give and do more for the success of the school system that have made them feel sense of belongingness. Evolving liberal and constructive rather than passive and defensive school organizational cultures is important in modern schools. In the 21st Century, as patterns and focus of social interactions change in society, organization of school should also change advance. The following discussion presents strategies for evolving liberal and constructive organization culture that can make school become competitive and advancing.

Strategies That Initiate competitive And Progressive School Culture

The process of evolving liberal and constructive school organizational culture that will make an institution compete favorably tends to be gradual, focused and holistic. The following strategies could lead to the desired involvement.

Framework of Action: To evolve a liberal constructive culture in tertiary organization, there is need to design a framework of action that will specifically lead to the desired culture. School organizational culture can evolve positively if it is conscientiously planned and pursued. Organizational culture does not change easily (George, 2020). Thus, it is important that the managerial team of a tertiary institution has a blue print of the desired transformation. The blue print will include the mission and the vision of the school and how they want to achieve these through liberal leadership. Having the preplanned framework of actions for a changed leadership style will prevent unfavorable deviation. With good framework, the school has the pathway to bring about the desired style of leadership.

Socialization: There is also need to iconize and socialize every school member on the content of the framework. The mission and vision for the cultural change become more visible and real when iconize and strategically built into the facilities and systems of the school. *Icon* in this case does not mean just pictures or symbols that are generally recognized to be representative of the mission. Icon here implies depicting the new intending organizational culture in every aspect of the school activities. This could manifest in the school anthem, staff and students' dress code, body comportment, duty schedules and even in the structure and arrangement of school buildings and/or office spaces. When the desired culture become symbolic, it is important every member of the organization is socialized to know, appreciate and practice the change.

Mentoring: Change in leadership style also requires creation of mentorship, particularly at the helm of leadership. Since organizational change is a phenomenon that is either rejected or accepted by the managerial team (Luthans, 2005), it is important that members of the managerial team lead by example towards the change. For example, the school Head will have to first start to tilt his administrative style towards liberal and constructive culture- away from closed and restricted leadership style that is peculiar to passive and defensive culture- if he wants the subordinates to become active, developed and innovative. This will create an avenue for mentoring. In a situation of an old school moving away from traditional hierarchical culture to the constructive culture, it is important the leaders initiate the movement so as to allay the fear of intimidation from the minds of the subordinates, for inspiring a change.

Legalization: Developing and legalizing school ethics can lead to change in leadership style. School staffs particularly teachers are trained to obey school rules (Biehler & Snowman, 1982). Having directives leading to the desired leadership style codified, written and official in the relevant school books is important. When the procedures and behaviours relating to the change become legal, the school staff will have backups upon which to insure their job and new behaviours within the school system. The school managerial team will also benefit as the document will become a reference point for melting disciplinary actions on deviants.

Projection and Publicizing: The managerial team of a school that desire change in leadership style need to make the desire public, beyond the school premises. The motives of the desired change should also be publicized. The motive may include achieving improved job delivery, student enrolment and academic achievement. Being a change that is hoped to give the school a friendlier outlook in society, it is important that outsiders are able to see the transformation in all aspects of the school. Right from the school building to the pattern of interactions put up by staffs when dealing with clients. People should be able to see the transformation. Doing this will attract attention to the school and eventually boost the school enrolment and societal trust.

Conclusion:

Administration of tertiary institution cannot remain traditional if the institutions must become autonomous and if the academic staff must enjoy some elements of academic freedom. Experiences and discussions have shown that when rigidity pervades an institution, sense of creativity and commitment to duties will drop. Nigerian tertiary institutions need to evolve standard administrative structure and relational schemes that can make them become productive and supportive to the developmental agenda of the societies within which they are created to serve.

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