

# Encouragement of Academic Advancement Leadership Practice and Productivity of Lecturers in Public Universities in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between the encouragement of academic advancement and the productivity of academics in universities. Academic advancement plays a pivotal role in the professional development of educators, encompassing aspects such as career progression, research output, and scholarly contributions. Productivity, on the other hand, is crucial for the attainment of individual and institutional goals, including knowledge generation, student engagement, and academic excellence. Understanding the relationship between these two aspects is vital for fostering a supportive and conducive environment for academic growth and institutional success. Two questions and a hypothesis were raised to guide the study. The result from the analysis showed that there was a moderate level of encouragement of academic advancement leadership practice exhibited in public universities in Delta and Edo States and the academics showed a low level of productivity in research. Generally, the result showed that there was a positive but no significant relationship between the Encouragement of academic advancement leadership practice and productivity in public universities in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria.

**Keywords:** academic advancement, career progression, academics, leadership, productivity, training.

## INTRODUCTION

Encouraging career progression through effective academic leadership practices is essential for the growth and productivity of lecturers within public universities in Nigeria. Encouraging career progression is one of the practices of academic leadership. A major area for young lecturer encouragement is advising professional advancement while assisting them attains balance between their individual and professional duties. Academic leaders usually promote academic advancement by assisting young lecturers set career goals, mapping out their career plans, and establishing clear career landmarks. Also, academic leaders can assist young lecturers in identifying opportunities for academic advancement that they may be unable to find or are not aware of. According to studies, young lecturers who are not under the guidance of academic leaders often tussle or struggle with scholarships throughout their whole careers (Ekpoh & Ukot, 2019; Anafarta & Apaydin, 2016; Okoro, Akpotu & Asiyai, 2023). This implies that younger lecturers must be aware of the university's position on academic productivity. Conversely, trying to achieve academic productivity in a university that fails to ensure its academic leaders properly guide the younger lecturers may show that there is no sufficient well-established structure for productivity. To effectively encourage young lecturers to advance academically, academic leaders are to show examples, give support, and

encourage the training and development of faculty members (Okoro & Akpotu, 2023).

The academic leader must first be able to develop and advance academically setting the pace or showing the way for others to follow. To show the way implies being willing to take the first step and demonstrating the behaviour or actions that others are expected to follow before asking them to do the same. The reason is that, what the academic leader says may not be believed but rather what the academic leader is seen doing consistently. It also implies that the academic leader must show examples ethically and inspire others as well as use his or her position to promote the goals of the university rather than his or her own goals. An exceptional academic leader should act as a model for others and walk the talk (Asiyai R.I., 2017; Akpotu & Nwadiani, 2003). In this regard, their behaviour should be consistent with the values they have stated and they should be able to lead by example. According to Dibessa and Bekele (2017), for academic leaders of institutions of higher learning to be able to operate effectively and meaningfully in complex environments, there is a need for them to transform and develop themselves before they attempt to cause a change in people and their environment. Academic leaders can be instructors to the younger lecturers, as the instructor will aid the younger lecturers in accomplishing their tasks by supervising them on the operative process specifically concerning a new functioning process.

The research conducted by Ai et al. (2019) suggests that competence plays a significant and positive role in lecturers' job satisfaction and performance. Their study utilized structural equation modelling to analyze the factors influencing the work motivation of lecturers in non-public universities in Ho Chi Minh City. The findings indicate that several factors, including advancement opportunities, institutional culture, recognition of individual contribution, lecturer qualifications, wages and benefits, and working environment, have a positive impact on lecturers' work motivation. Institutions that place high value on their staff and invest in them are seen as successful. When institutions of higher learning begin to fail to ensure the satisfaction, drive, and retention of lecturers, then they are heading for serious problems that may lead to low productivity and closure (Arifin, 2015). What encourages a lecturer's job satisfaction and attitude to work in general differ from one institution to another and from one country to another. Understanding these dynamics is key to the success of any institution in a constantly changing environment. Compensation and rewards, training, development, job safety, job environment, support from superiors, and institutions' fairness may help to reduce absenteeism, lecturer attrition, and dissatisfaction and improve better quality work (Gbenu et al., 2014).

Adiele's (2017) study was carried out to investigate the connection between staff training and productivity in Nigeria. One hundred and seventy local government staff was used as the sample for the study out of the population of five hundred and forty-eight staff. The findings showed a significant connection between staff training and their productivity. Based on the findings, the knowledge, abilities, and skills of staff should constantly be enhanced to keep them productive. Paul and Audu (2019) investigated the impact of lecturers' advancement on their productivity at Nigerian Federal Polytechnics. The population of the study comprises four hundred and ten lecturers and two hundred and twenty lecturers were randomly sampled. The questionnaire was the major instrument used for data gathering. Paul and Audu's findings indicated that staff training has a positive effect on the productivity of lecturers, improved quick delivery of service, and job quality. Academic leaders are to encourage and be involved in the training and development of younger academics for maximum output. Ntadom, Atueyi and Chineze (2021) carried out a study on the effect of career advancement on the productivity of employees in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. The population of fifty-seven thousand, seven hundred and ten students from five States in Southern Nigeria was used for the study. Three hundred and ninety-nine students were sampled. It was discovered through the study that career advancement positively affects employees' performance. Ntadom et al commended based on their findings that employees' training should be carried out based on shared decisions and the

prevailing environmental situation.

The study by Abdulmumini (2021) was carried out in Borno State institutions of higher learning on how the promotion of lecturers influences their academic advancement. Using a sample of nine hundred and thirty-eight out of the population of thousand, four hundred and ten, and lecturers, the study elicited information from the respondents with the use of a questionnaire. The findings revealed that from the year 2015 to the time of the study; the state government has been giving lecturers promotions without financial benefits such as salary increments. They also discovered that lecturers generally improve when they are being promoted. This promotion can only come when lecturers advance through the development of their careers which may as well impact the level of productivity. Okolocha, Akam and Uchehara (2021) carried out a study to ascertain the impact of career advancement on the productivity of lecturers in government-owned universities in South-East Nigeria. The study uses a sample of 1,780 lecturers from a population of nine thousand, two hundred and sixty-nine teaching staff. The results of the study showed that accountability and professional advancement positively and significantly impact lecturers' productivity in government-owned universities in South-East Nigeria. Okolocha et al thus suggested that there is a need for lecturers to be empowered via job broadening and job enhancement. This is to improve their job satisfaction which is likely to enhance their productivity. Jian, Mei, Tee, Rahman and Wei (2012) study the results of training on lecturers' performance in Malaysia. The study uses the questionnaire to elicit information from a sample of one hundred lecturers. The findings revealed that lecturers' commitment, drive, and job gratification are tied to training and it impacts their job productivity.

Training may likely enhance productivity if it is made up of abilities and skills relating to the institutions. Messmer (2000) argues that training is likely to enhance output if it consists of skills related to the university which will eventually lead to job morale and commitment. For example, there are some specific training met for academic staff that can boost their morale and enhance their productivity. The greater the productivity of the institution, the more likely upsurge in lecturers' pay will be beyond expectation. This as a result will help increase lecturers' commitment to their job. To accomplish this task, Messmer (2000) argued that it will be essential for institutions to invest huge resources to equip their staff with the skills, information, and competencies needed to effectively work in a multifaceted and fast-varying environment. In short, training helps to increase the professional development of lecturers and leads to job commitment and a lower attrition rate and it is considered an important factor in retaining staff (Messmer, 2000). Training offers lecturers a particular skill or helps to correct limitations in their presentation. Therefore, training of academic staff in higher institutions is of great importance.

However, despite the importance of academic advancement in the enhancement of job c productivity, lecturers often face constraints in accessing opportunities for academic advancement, such as research grants, fellowships, and conferences. The absence of a robust support system may hinder their ability to stay current in their respective fields and contribute significantly to the academic community

Public universities in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria, play a crucial role in shaping the academic landscape and contributing to the development of the region. However, there exists a pressing concern regarding the practice of academic leadership in encouraging career advancement for the enhancement of the job productivity of lecturers within these institutions. Lecturers often face constraints in accessing opportunities for academic advancement, such as research grants, fellowships, and conferences. The absence of a robust support system may hinder their ability to stay current in their respective fields and contribute significantly to the academic community. Assessing the productivity levels of junior academics will shed light on how the absence of a robust support system affects their job productivity and contribution to the academic community. Therefore, the study aimed to find the relationship between the encouragement of academic advancement leadership practice and the productivity of junior academics in public universities in Delta and

Edo States, Nigeria.

### Research Question

1. What is the level of encouragement of academic advancement leadership practice in state and federal universities in Delta and Edo States?
2. What is the level of productivity of junior academics in public universities in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria?

### Hypothesis

1. There is no significant relationship between encouragement of academic advancement leadership practice and the productivity of junior academics in public universities in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria.

## METHODOLOGY

The research design employed the ex-post-facto with a population of 1,957 academic staff. The stratified random sampling technique was used to determine the sample size of 375 academics. The questionnaire titled “Encouragement of Academic Leadership Practices and Productivity Questionnaire (EALPPQ)” was used as the main instrument for data collection. The research instrument had face and content validity with a reliability coefficient of 0.97. A total of 375 questionnaires were distributed to the participants, and 276 were successfully retrieved. **The data collated from the instrument were analyzed using the SPSS.**

## RESULTS

Encouraging academic advancement through effective leadership practices is paramount for fostering the growth and development of lecturers and bolstering productivity within public universities. In this study, the results obtained from the analysis, are subsequently presented in tables to provide clear insights into the current state of academic advancement leadership practices in public universities.

Table 1: The level of encouragement of academic advancement leadership practice in state and federal universities in Delta and Edo States

Encouragement of Academic Advancement Leadership Practice						
Federal-owned Universities		State-owned Universities		Public Universities in Delta & Edo States		Remark
Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
2.8354	.64983	2.8414	.48877	2.8387	.56541	Agree

Fieldwork, 2022

Table 1 presents the level of encouragement of academic advancement leadership practice in state and federal universities in Delta and Edo States. The mean scores indicate a moderate level of encouragement across all categories.

In federal-owned universities, the mean score was found to be 2.8354 with a standard deviation of 0.64983. State-owned universities exhibited a slightly higher mean score of 2.8414 with a standard deviation of 0.48877. Public universities in Delta and Edo States combined showed a mean score of 2.8387 with a standard deviation of 0.56541. These results suggest a generally positive outlook regarding academic advancement leadership practices in both state and federal universities within the region. The findings indicate a moderate level of encouragement of academic advancement leadership practice in state and federal universities in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria. While the existing support systems show promise, there is a need for continuous efforts to strengthen leadership practices and provide better opportunities for career advancement among lecturers.

Table 2: The level of the productivity of lecturers in public universities in Delta and Edo States?

level of the productivity of academics	Federal government owned Universities		State government-owned Universities		Federal & State Universities	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Teaching	3.1647	1.03086	2.9148	.39335	3.0108	.71772
Research	1.9396	.91213	2.3652	1.68505	2.1671	1.39403
Community Service	2.7197	.46786	2.6153	.37334	2.6554	.41431

Fieldwork, 2022

The result in Table 2 showed that the productivity of academics in federal universities in Delta and Edo States was 3.1647 for teaching, 2.7197 for community service, and 1.9396 for research. This meant that the productivity of academics in federal-owned universities in Delta and Edo States was highest in teaching, higher in community service, and low in research.

On the other hand, the productivity of academics in state universities in Delta and Edo States was 2.3652 for research, 2.9148 for teaching, and 2.6153 for community service. The result revealed that academics in state-owned universities in Delta and Edo were very productive in teaching followed by community service and then in research (Table 2). The productivity of junior academics was low in research in both state and federal universities in Delta and Edo states respectively.

Table 3: Significant relationship between encouragement of academic advancement leadership practice and productivity in public universities in Delta and Edo States

Variables	N	r	r <sup>2</sup>	r <sup>2</sup> %	P-Value	Remark
Encouragement of academic advancement leadership practice		1				
Productivity	276	-0.016	0.0003	0.03	0.184	Not significant

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). Source: Fieldwork, 2022.

Table 3 shows the result of the relationship between encouragement of academic advancement leadership practice and productivity:  $r = \text{value} - 0.016$ ,  $r^2 = 0.0003$ ,  $r^2 \% = 0.03$ , and  $P\text{-Value} = 0.184 > 0.05$ . This result implied that a positive but no significant relationship existed between encouragement of academic advancement leadership practice and productivity. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the encouragement of academic advancement leadership practice and productivity in public universities in Delta and Edo States was accepted.

## DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The report from the fieldwork showed that encouragement of academic advancement leadership practice was exhibited in both federal and state-owned universities in Delta and Edo (Table 1). The total mean obtained was 2.8387 (2.8456 for the Federal and 2.8359 for State) respectively (Table 1). It was evidenced from the result that the majority of the academic leaders in the various universities were there when needed to assist the junior academics to advance academically. The level of this assistance was moderate as revealed from the result expressed in Table 1. The findings from Table 2 indicate that among junior academics in federal universities in Delta and Edo States, the productivity scores were 3.01647 for teaching, 2.7197 for community service, and 1.9396 for research. This suggests that their productivity was highest in teaching, followed by moderate levels in community service, and lowest in research. Conversely, junior academics in state universities in the same region demonstrated productivity scores of 2.3652 for research, 2.9148 for teaching, and 2.6153 for community service. This highlights a lack of productivity in research but higher levels in teaching and moderate levels in community service. When considering all public universities in the region, the overall mean scores for junior academics' productivity were 3.0108 for teaching, 2.6554 for community service, and 2.1671 for research. This implies that junior academics in both state and federal universities exhibited high levels of productivity in teaching, moderate productivity in community service, and notably low productivity in research.

The study's hypothesis aimed to explore the correlation between leadership practices promoting academic advancement encouragement and productivity in public universities located in Delta and Edo States. The outcome of the analysis yielded the following results: correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was found to be  $-0.016$ , the coefficient of determination ( $r^2$ ) was  $0.0003$ , representing  $0.03\%$  of the variance, and the  $P$ -value was  $0.184$ , which was greater than the significance level of  $0.05$ . These findings indicated a positive correlation, albeit not statistically significant, between encouragement of academic advancement leadership practices and productivity. Thus, the null hypothesis, stating no significant relationship between these variables, was accepted, while the alternative hypothesis was rejected. In conclusion, it was determined that although there was a positive correlation, it was not significant, with academic advancement leadership practices contributing only  $0.03\%$  to the relationship according to Table 3.

The above finding was related to Ojeaga (2019) that academic leaders promote academic advancement by assisting junior academics to set career goals and establish clear career landmarks. Similarly, other studies establish that junior academics who were not under the tutelage of senior academics struggled with scholarships throughout their whole career (Ekpoh & Ukot, 2019; Anafarta & Apaydin, 2016). Also, Gbenu et al. (2014) revealed that support from academic leaders and the institution towards encouraging academic advancement through training and self-development leads to better output. Adiele (2017) revealed that staff are more productive when they advance academically and that staff member should build up their skills and abilities through self-development. Paul and Audu (2019) stated that staff training positively impacts their productivity and service delivery. Ntadom et al. (2021) stated that career advancement positively affects the productivity of lecturers while Abdulmumini (2021) and Patience (2023) believed that there is an

improvement in lecturers' output when they are promoted and this promotion was a result of career advancement. Okolocha et al. (2021) revealed that accountability and professional advancement positively impact productivity and encourage the empowerment of lecturers through training and development. Jian et al. (2012) revealed that lecturers' commitment is connected to training which in turn affects their productivity.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Fostering academic progression stands as a crucial responsibility within university leadership. This entails offering guidance, resources, and avenues for scholars to pursue and accomplish their academic aspirations. Academic leaders play a pivotal role in nurturing talent, fostering innovation, and enhancing the overall academic environment through their encouragement and dedication to academic advancement. It is incumbent upon them to ensure ongoing growth by facilitating career advancements and participation in seminars and workshops. In summary, the decline in academic standards underscores the significance of academic leaders in steering Nigerian universities toward achieving their objectives. Thus, academic leaders should prioritize the advancement of scholars' careers by providing scholarships and opportunities for training.

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