

Improving Leadership and Functional University Education Delivery in Universities for Sustainable Development.

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined the enhancement of leadership and delivery of functional education in Rivers State's public universities to foster sustainable development. Utilizing a descriptive survey design, we aimed to answer Two research questions; What are the ways leadership in public universities in Rivers State can be improved to foster sustainable development of the State?, What are the ways functional university education delivery can be improved to foster sustainable development in Rivers State?, and two hypotheses were tested; There is no significant difference between the mean scores of teaching and non-teaching staff, on ways leadership can be improved in public universities in Rivers State to foster sustainable development. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female lecturers on ways functional university education delivery can be improved in public universities in Rivers State to foster sustainable development. 724 teaching and non-teaching staff were selected for the study through stratified random sampling technique. Data were collected using the Sustainable Development Questionnaire, which achieved a good reliability score of 0.84 via the test-retest method. Data analysis included various descriptive statistics, and rank order for the research questions, and z-test at a 0.05 significance level for the hypotheses. The study showed that to enhance leadership in Rivers State's public universities for lasting progression, it's important to boost leadership skills, establish clear criteria for choosing leaders, and create a supportive environment for leaders to excel. Based on the findings, recommendations were made that the government need to reconsider the effect of politicizing leadership selection and staff recruitment in Rivers State.

Keywords: Leadership, Improving Leadership, Functional University Education, Sustainable Development, and University Education

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on the role of leadership in enhancing the quality of education in public universities. Effective leadership is crucial in creating an environment that supports functional education delivery, which in turn fosters sustainable development. It may be difficult to discuss sustainable development in any human society without having an effective and functional university education system. University education as the highest level of education is anticipated to produce optimum improvement to state and national development through the training and growth of high-level relevant manpower needed for economic expansion and enduring progress. The roles of universities in developing physical and intellectual skills, inculcating proper values, promoting scholarship, and community service cannot be overemphasized. Some years back, individuals who acquired university education in any community were quite outstanding, they were well refined skilled people, role models, diligent, articulate and law-abiding people. Such people were envied by those who desired university education but for one reason for the other could not have it.

The rhetoric questions one may ask are as follows: Are those universities that produced the university graduates 30 to 40 years ago no longer in existence in Nigeria? Is the quality of university graduates today the same as those of 30-40 years ago? Why is graduate unemployment escalating every year? Providing answers to these questions may not be unconnected to lack of effective leadership and functional university education delivery in public universities in Nigeria. It appears a lot of things have turned the other way round. So many graduates from our universities appear to be lacking in character and training, they are not diligent and articulate enough.

Many people are confused and find it difficult to comprehend what is going on. We are in the era that people will finish university and after years of unemployment, they will go and learn a trade from artisans and other businesspeople to earn a living. Some have turned to internet fraudsters. So many university graduates in Nigeria are under employed and their productivity rate is very low. All these culminate in a high rate of wastage of human resources which negatively impacts on sustainable development. Improving leadership in our public universities will enhance quality education delivery and sustainable national development. Without effective leadership and functional university education delivery, the attainment of university education goals will be a mirage.

The term leadership has been extensively defined by many scholars because of the vital roles they play in the administration and accomplishment of school policies, programs, and the attainment of educational goals. Leadership simply means encouraging and directing people to do their best to achieve desired results (Luedi, 2022). Leadership involves guiding individuals by offering purpose, direction, and motivation, all while working toward achieving goals and enhancing organizational performance (Marisyia et al., 2023). Assessing leadership effectiveness in university management may involve evaluating factors such as managerial efficiency, infrastructure quality, staff morale and attitudes, academic standards, incidences of misconduct, and community perception of the institution. These factors affect academic programs and the quality of graduates produced by universities.

In this study, leaders are those who can influence others and possess managerial authority. Functional university education delivery could be seen from different angles depending on circumstances. Dust and Winthrop (2019) believe that functional education consists of all the skills a student needs to acquire to live independently (van, 2020). Functional university education delivery is the provision of higher education institutions that will prepare students with the necessary knowledge, skills, and ethical values required for independent living, self-improvement, and the sustainable advancement of society (Taimur & Sattar, 2020). It enhances the performance of productive tasks and the ability of society to meet their sustainable development needs.

Sustainable development is concerned about the welfare of human beings both presently and in the future. It implies meeting the learning needs of the current generation while safeguarding the ability of future generations to fulfill their own educational needs. Sustainable development is concerned with the creation and sustenance of the conditions for which both the present and future generations of human are interested in the means and processes by which sustainability can be achieved, of which provision of functional education is one of them. Hence, it is important that a balance be created both economically, socially, and environmentally, in an integrated manner.

The role of university graduates in sustainable growth of society depends on the quality of training, skills, and moral development they received while in school. This is because a well-educated member of society is a great asset (Fafunwa, 2018). He uses his acquired knowledge and skills to improve the quality of life, thus adding value to the sustainable development of society.

In Rivers State, the need for improved leadership and educational practices is more pressing than ever. Despite the recognized importance of leadership, many public universities in Rivers State face challenges related to inadequate leadership and ineffective educational delivery. These issues hinder the universities' ability to contribute to sustainable development. Problems such as lack of professional development for leaders, insufficient resources, and outdated educational practices are prevalent. Hence, the primary objective of this study is to identify and analyze ways to improve leadership and functional education delivery in public universities in Rivers State to promote sustainable development. This study aims to provide actionable insights and recommendations for policymakers and educational leaders.

By addressing the challenges in leadership and educational delivery, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge and offers practical solutions for enhancing the effectiveness of public universities in Rivers State. The findings can inform policy decisions and drive improvements in educational practices, ultimately supporting sustainable development. Therefore, improving leadership and functional university education delivery will enhance sustainable development in Rivers State. This paper examined ways of improving leadership in public

universities in Rivers State; and ways of enhancing functional university education delivery in these institutions for sustainable development.

Statement of the Problem

A visit to most public universities in Rivers State reveals that there is inadequacy of infrastructure, equipment, academic staff and information, communication, and technology facilities. Academic activities in these institutions are often affected by strikes from the labor unions, cult activities by students, poor attitude, and low work moral of teaching and non-teaching staff (Jacob & Ndayebom, 2022). Some of the students do not take their studies seriously and they rely on examination malpractice. These issues negatively affect the perception of these institutions within the community, leading some parents to prefer sending their children/wards to private universities, despite financial constraints. Consequently, these factors have affected academic programs and the quality of graduates produced by these universities, many of whom lack character, employability skills and self-reliance. This situation impacts negatively on sustainable development of the state. These problems may have resulted from leadership challenges within the universities. It appears that the leadership of these institutions faces numerous challenges which impede the delivery of functional university education necessary for fostering the sustainable development of the state. Hence, leadership in university education is now an issue of primary concern since the person in leadership position is charged with the responsibility of addressing the basic needs and challenges confronting the academic success of the institutions. Therefore, improving the quality of leadership is essential for fostering the delivery of functional university education in public universities in Rivers State. Therefore, the problem this study seeks to address is to investigate the ways of improving leadership for functional university education delivery for sustainable development in Rivers State. Specifically, this study aims to answer the following questions: what are the ways leadership in public universities in Rivers State can be improved to foster sustainable development of the State among teaching and non-teaching staff? and what are the ways to enhance functional university education delivery for sustainable development in Rivers State among male and female genders? By addressing these questions, the study intends to provide actionable insights into how leadership and educational delivery can be enhanced to support the sustainable development of Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine ways of improving leadership and functional university education delivery in public universities in Rivers State for sustainable development. Specifically, the objectives of the study are as follows:

1. to determine ways leadership in public universities in Rivers State can be improved to foster sustainable development in the state among teaching and non-teaching staff.
2. to identify ways to enhance functional university education delivery for sustainable development in Rivers State among male and female genders.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in this study:

1. What are the ways leadership in public universities in Rivers State can be improved to foster sustainable development of the State among teaching and non-teaching staff?
2. What are the ways to enhance functional university education delivery for sustainable development in Rivers State among male and female genders?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of teaching and non-teaching staff, on ways leadership can be improved in public universities in Rivers State for sustainable development.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female lecturers on ways functional university education delivery can be improved in public universities in Rivers State for sustainable development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Leadership

Leadership as a concept has been discussed and defined by many scholars across board based on their different understanding, contexts, and backgrounds. Mohammed, et al (2024), define leadership as a process that involves the ability of a higher-ranking individual to motivate and direct subordinates toward achieving the objective and goal of the institution. In this context, leadership could be seen as a way by which individuals guide and influence others to achieve educational goals. The different definitions of leadership, however, appear to share certain things in common. According to Northouse in Ogunode and Abubakar (2020), various leadership definitions reveal that:

- i. Leadership is a process of interaction and transaction available to everyone but may only be exercised by a few people.
- ii. It is neither an inborn preserve of any group nor characteristic trait of any individual.
- iii. it involves influence that affects or informs followers to engage more effectively or strive more vigorously for the greater or higher value or cause.
- iv. It exists or occurs only in group or relationships, and
- v. that leadership involves inspiring and influencing the pursuit and attainment of set goals or articulated vision.

It is based on these shared important components of leadership conceptualization that informed the definition of leadership by Qin, Yang, & Li (2024) as an individual who holds a managerial position who can influence others, which involves guiding a team to accomplish the set goals of an organization. Leadership is often associated to formal positions or offices such that whenever people or persons assume these positions or offices, they are assigned the title, a leader or considered to assume leadership platform, and they are perceived to be playing leadership roles (Imhangbe, 2022; Kezar & Holcombe, 2017). In tertiary institutions, it appears that leadership is the duty of top, mid-level, and lower-tier management members; university education governance naturally devolves on governing council and top management team.

In the university system, the Vice chancellor is the chief executive officer. He/she is appointed through the instrument of the council and ratified by the visitor (President or Governor) from a crop of seasoned academics usually professors. The Vice Chancellor (V.C) is the head in-charge of administrative duties of the university and all principal officers are answerable to him (Akwegwu, 2016). The V.C. performs the following functions:

1. Academic head of the institution
2. Chairs the Senate/Academic Board
3. Responsible for the administrative tasks of the institution.
4. Maintains the efficiency and good order of the institution
5. Coordinates the activities of the other principal officers, reminds them constantly of the short and long-term objectives of the institution, always secures their commitment and loyalty.

6. Prepares and submits quarterly financial report to the council.

The Vice Chancellor as the chief executive officer of the university is expected to have impeccable leadership qualities. Much is expected from him/her with respect to the successful administration of the institution and the delivery of high-quality education. according to Ogunode and Abubakar (2020); Ogunode, Yirolokun and Akeredolu (2019), part of the major challenges facing public universities in Nigeria is the ineffective leadership approach exhibited by the vice chancellors. Many Nigerian university leaders assume their positions without following proper procedures, often being appointed by politicians. Many lack the necessary skills, competence, leadership, and managerial qualities essential for effectively managing academic institutions like universities, hindering their ability to drive sustainable transformation within these institutions. The appointment of weak administrators in public universities in Nigeria and the corresponding challenges associated with it buttresses the need for improving leadership for the sustainable development of these institutions.

Leadership within an educational institution is seen as a crucial element that shapes the organization, aiming to guide its members in achieving shared goals by initiating, motivating, directing, and coordinating their activities. The effectiveness of any formal organization hinges on the quality of administrative leadership it receives. This calls for leadership development which according to Nwakudu and Okata (2016), it involves enhancing the leader's ability to perform effectively in various leadership roles and procedures. The tri-dimensional concept is another means of improving leadership in higher educational institutions. It is a unifying concept which looked at leadership in terms of concern for people as well as the task and on effective dimension of the social setting in which the job functions Peretomode (2014). Hence, the need to set specific standards in the selection and tracing of the leader. Recent studies have highlighted the importance of leadership in educational settings. Mohammed (2024), noted that a leader collaborates with employees to create necessary changes, develop a vision to direct these changes, and implement them to positively impact students' outcomes by creating a conducive environment.

Apart from his major tasks of curriculum development, instructional supervision, provision and maintenance of facilities/ equipment, and record keeping the leader should have the capacity of both body, mind, emotional and spirit. He must possess energy, intellect, emotional stability, as well as spiritual qualities and a positive pattern of behavior (Jack, 2016). He/she should have the capacity to link the job with meeting other challenges in his/her environment. For improvement, he/she should have regular check-ups, attitude of taking time out for recreation, game plan and quality to foresee challenges as well as proffering solution to them. He/she needs to always be effective. Improvement in leadership requires constant training, retraining and development Peretomode (2014). This will help the leadership to rob minds with other experts in the same field. His/her derivations would be brought home and shared with the other leaders/subordinates for improved administration.

Strategic planning is another area the leadership requires improvement to create change in the organization. The steering group of a university's strategic planning process is usually chaired by the vice chancellor. To improve leadership performance during the strategic planning process, the university leadership should participate in every stage of the strategic planning process, since his/her main duty starts at the implementation level. The issue of action plan and implementation must be taken into consideration in strategic planning because leaders in most cases have the capacity of creating change and restructuring through involvement in strategic planning, which also helps to clearly define leadership areas of authority to avoid conflict at any stage of implementation Kezar (2018, p.136). Babalola (2009) further stressed that implementation of a university's strategic plan requires re-engineering of the structures, staffing and provision of leadership. Improvement of leadership would therefore demand that leadership is adequately guided and provided for.

Leadership in public universities in Nigeria could be enhanced through the provision of enabling environment to function. An environment that is peaceful with all that the leader needs to function such as adequate provision of funding, infrastructure, prompt training of staff, well-stocked library and laboratories, adequate information technology facilities etc. These would enable educational leaders to execute educational policies effectively (Ojedele and Fadokun, 2005). University leadership should be encouraged to key into change and innovation; make contacts; linkages, exchanges within and outside their environment. This will expose them to administrative issues in focus and to improve their policy implementation.

There is equally the need to balance the nomothetic and idiographic dimensions of the organization, to achieve set goals. By this, the institutional roles and expectations could be collapsed to ensure that the roles are not in conflict with that of the organization, the leader needs to merge the organizations and member's needs with trust and respect. The leader needs to carry everybody along because the success of any leader rests on leadership that revolves around all and sundry (Ajienka, 2015). This will help to reduce agitations from different corners and encourage harmonious relationships between the leader and the followers.

Functional university education implies the development and applicability of appropriate knowledge, skills, and experiences for individual and societal well-being, preservation, and growth. It is a system that effectively meets the needs of students and society, preparing graduates for the workforce and contributing to societal development. According to Asaju and Adagba (2014) functional university education is that system of education that empowers the recipients with the knowledge and skills needed for the performance of productive tasks. It is that university education which promotes moral values, knowledge acquisition, technical abilities, and skills for the development of its recipients and society. The need for functional university education according to Akpa (2019) arose from the absurdity of continuing the same old practices, methods and strategies of educational service delivery but expecting different and persistently appropriate results. Improving functional university education is necessary because despite the numerous universities and other higher educational institutions in Nigeria, they have not yielded the anticipated results in terms of knowledge, skills, and technological advancement. Our higher education system portrays indices of failure to perform as expected which further threatens to disrupt some or all the other sectors of society. A system that is not adequately functional is associated with poverty, inadequate provision of infrastructure, teaching facilities/equipment, inadequate lecturers, and inefficient leadership.

Functional education, as defined by the (FRN, 2000, p.9), extends beyond mere skill acquisition. It encompasses the impartation of fundamental values, particularly to the youth, emphasizing devotion to the nation's welfare, adherence to the constitution and democratic principles, recognition of the value of labor and moral integrity, and respect for the rights of fellow citizens.

These values are fast eroding away in our university education system. Improving functional university education delivery will require improved provision of infrastructure, policies and curriculum, personnel, funding, and quality/dedicated students (Isyaku, 2019). According to Enaowho (2013) in Adegoke and Onaji (2013), human capital is the catalyst for the socio-economic transformation and sustainable development of any society, therefore there must be a match between man-power needs of the society and the products of the educational system. In agreement with this, Isyaku (2019), identified lack of enough and motivated staff, poor funding, lack of good students, inadequate facilities and faulty admission policies as factors limiting functional university education delivery in Nigeria.

Improving functional university education delivery will enhance sustainable development. According to Ogbonnaya (2013) our educational programs should emphasize the acquisition of sound values. Academics and university administrators should encourage and inculcate love, patriotism, and respect for the dignity of labor, moral and spiritual values, and commitment to all causes in the national interest. This issue is very important, especially at this time of indiscipline and moral decadence in our society. However, there are significant gaps in the existing literature reviewed. Many studies have focused on leadership in general educational settings without specifically examining public universities in Rivers State. Moreover, there is limited research on the direct impact of leadership practices on functional education delivery and sustainable development in this context. In addressing this gap, the study aims to focus on public universities in Rivers State and using transformational leadership theory as a guiding framework. By addressing the specific challenges and opportunities in this context, the study provides a nuanced understanding of how leadership can enhance educational delivery and promote sustainable development. Hence, effective functional university education delivery will equip its recipients for gainful living in society. It should teach students specific skills to equip them for work. Universities should inculcate knowledge that is useful to its recipients. For instance, those in music should be taught how to compose songs, play piano and band for people's enjoyment. Those in drama should be taught how to act plays that are interesting and stimulating. Those in engineering should be taught the art, science, technology, and practice of engineering etc. More emphasis should be laid on entrepreneurship education. Universities should

equip their students with entrepreneurial skills to enable them to take risks and start their own business after their graduation.

Theoretical Framework:

This study is guided by transformational leadership theory, which emphasizes the role of leaders in inspiring and motivating followers to achieve higher levels of performance. According to Pani (2017), Transformational leadership Theory was introduced by Burns (1978), who noted that this type of leadership is based on the idea that when a job or the environment fails to motivate or satisfy employees, the leader steps in to clarify and explain goals by creating a shared vision. Transformational leaders are characterized by their ability to bring about significant changes by fostering a shared vision, encouraging innovation, and nurturing individual development. This framework is particularly relevant for examining how leadership practices can enhance functional education delivery and contribute to sustainable development in public universities.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher adopted descriptive survey design. The population of the study consisted of 3,620 teaching and non-teaching staff in the three public universities in Rivers State. The sample size of 724 teaching and non-teaching staff was drawn from the population through stratified random sampling technique. The rationale for the selection was Taro Yemane’s minimum sample size determination technique. 694 copies of the questionnaire were properly completed and retrieved, which indicated 96% rate of retrieval. The instrument for data collection was a self-structured 16 item questionnaire entitled, “Improving Leadership and Functional University Education Delivery in Public Universities in Rivers State for Sustainable Development Questionnaire (ILFUEDSDQ)”. The instrument was well validated. Test- retest associated with Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient was used to establish the reliability index at 0.84. Mean, standard deviation and rank order were used to answer the research questions using criterion mean of 2.50 for decision making, while z-test of difference was used for the test of hypotheses.

Research Question One: What are the ways leadership in public universities in Rivers State can be improved to foster sustainable development of the State among teaching and non-teaching staff?

Table 1: Mean, standard deviation and rank order analysis of the responses of teaching and non-teaching staff on ways leadership in public universities in Rivers State can be improved to foster sustainable development of the state.

S/N	Ways leadership can be improved in public universities in Rivers State for Sustainable Development of the State.	Teaching Staff N= 450		Non-Teaching Staff N = 244		Mean Set	Rank Order	Decision
		\bar{x}	STD	\bar{x}	STD			
1.	Enhancing leadership capacity through organization of leadership training programs.	3.18	0.61	3.20	0.60	3.19	1 st	Agree
2.	Setting specific standards for the selection of leaders in the universities in Rivers State.	3.14	0.62	3.16	0.61	3.15	2 nd	Agree
3.	Involvement/active participation of leaders in strategic planning	3.06	0.68	3.04	0.69	3.05	7 th	Agree

4.	Provision of enabling environment for leaders to perform.	3.12	0.63	3.14	0.62	3.13	3 rd	Agree
5.	Maintaining a balance between the nomothetic and ideography dimensions of an organization	3.10	0.65	3.08	0.68	3.09	5 th	Agree
6.	Linking up/collaborating with other leaders within and outside their environments.	3.02	0.70	3.00	0.71	3.01	8 th	Agree
7.	Ensuring that there is effective communication mechanism in the organization.	3.08	0.66	3.10	0.67	3.09	5 th	Agree
8.	Involvement of relevant members of staff/stakeholders in decision making.	3.12	0.63	3.12	0.64	3.12	4 th	Agree
	Aggregate mean and standard deviation	3.10	0.65	3.11	0.65			

Table 1 shows that all the items in the rank order of 1st to 8th had weighted mean scores that are greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. They were accepted as ways leadership can be improved in public universities in Rivers State for sustainable development. The aggregate weighted mean score of 3.10 and 3.11 for teaching and non-teaching staff respectively, which are above the criterion mean indicated that the respondents shared a similar opinion on ways leadership can be improved in public universities in Rivers State for sustainable development.

Therefore, the ways leadership can be improved in public universities in Rivers State for sustainable development include: improving leadership capacity through organization of leadership training programs; setting specific standards for the selection of leaders in public universities; provision of enabling environment for leaders to perform; involvement/active participation of leaders in strategic planning; maintaining a balance between the nomothetic and idiographic dimensions of the organization; linking up/collaborating with other leaders within and outside their environment; ensuring that there is effective communication mechanism in the organization; and involvement of relevant members of staff/stakeholders in decision making.

Research Question Two: What are the ways to enhance functional university education delivery to foster sustainable development in Rivers State among male and female genders?

Table 2: Mean, standard deviation and rank order analysis of the response of male and female lecturers on ways functional university education delivery can be improved to foster sustainable development in Rivers State.

S/N	Ways functional university education delivery can be improved to foster sustainable development.	Male Lecturers N= 300		Female Lecturers N = 150		Mean Set	Rank Order	Decision
		\bar{x}	STD	\bar{x}	STD			
1.	Recruitment of adequate quality/quantity of lecturers	3.46	0.58	3.42	0.60	3.44	1 st	Agree
2.	Adequate provision of teaching/learning facilities such as libraries, laboratories, workshops, computer laboratories etc.	3.40	0.61	3.44	0.59	3.42	2 nd	Agree
3.	Inadequate funding of university education	2.28	0.75	2.24	0.79	2.26	8 th	Disagree

4.	Inculcating adequate entrepreneurial skills in the students	3.36	0.64	3.38	0.63	3.37	3 rd	Agree
5.	Ensuring adequate quality assurance management in public universities in Rivers State.	3.30	0.67	3.20	0.72	3.25	5 th	Agree
6.	Ensuring that students acquire enough practical skills and knowledge for useful living and contribution to sustainable development.	3.34	0.65	3.30	0.66	3.32	4 th	Agree
7.	Maintaining peaceful learning environment and uninterrupted academic calendar	3.22	0.71	3.20	0.72	3.21	6 th	Agree
8.	Providing inadequate motivation to both staff and students in public universities in Rivers State.	2.36	0.76	2.38	0.75	2.27	7 th	Disagree
	Aggregate mean and standard deviation	3.09	0.67	3.07	0.68			

Table 2 shows that items 1, 2,4,5,6 and 7 in the rank order of 1st to 6th had weighted mean scores that are greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. They were accepted as ways functional university education delivery can be improved for sustainable development in Rivers State. Items number 3 and 8 in the rank order of 7th and 8th had weighted mean scores which are less than the criterion mean of 2.50. They were rejected by the respondents as ways functional university education delivery can be improved for sustainable development.

The aggregate weighted mean scores of 3.09 and 3.07 for male and female lecturers respectively which are above the criterion mean reveal that the respondents shared a common view on ways functional university education delivery can be improved for sustainable development in Rivers State. Therefore, ways functional university education can be improved include: recruitment of adequate quality/quantity of lecturers; adequate provision of teaching/learning facilities; inculcating adequate entrepreneurial skills in students; ensuring adequate quality assurance management; ensuring that students acquire enough practical skills and knowledge for useful living and contribution to sustainable development; and maintaining a peaceful learning environment/uninterrupted academic calendar.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of teaching and non-teaching staff, on ways leadership can be improved in public universities in Rivers State to foster sustainable development of the state.

Table 3: z-test of difference between the mean scores of teaching and non-teaching staff on ways leadership can be improved in public universities in Rivers State to foster sustainable development.

Status	N	\bar{X}	STD	Df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Level of sign.	Decision
Teaching staff	450	3.10	0.65	692	0.194	± 1.960	0.05	Ho ₁ not significant
Non-teaching staff	244	3.11	0.65					

Results in table 3 show that the mean scores of teaching and non-teaching staff stood at 3.10 and 3.11 respectively. A close observation shows that the mean scores are closely related. Furthermore, at 692 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of significance, the calculated z-score of 0.194 was by far less than the z-critical table value of ± 1.960 . Based on this, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis and therefore upholds that, there was no significant difference between the mean scores of teaching and non-teaching staff on ways leadership can be improved in public universities in Rivers State for sustainable development.

Hypothesis two: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female lecturers on ways functional university education delivery can be improved in public universities in Rivers State to foster Sustainable Development.

Table 4: z-test of difference between the mean scores of male and female lecturers on ways functional university education delivery can be improved in public universities in Rivers State for sustainable development.

Status	N	\bar{X}	STD	Df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Level of sign.	Decision
Male lecturers	300	3.09	0.67	448	0.296	± 1.960	0.05	Ho ₂ not significant
Female lecturers	150	3.07	0.68					

Data displayed in table 4 indicates that the mean scores of male and female lecturers stood at 3.09 and 3.07 respectively. The mean scores appear closely related. Furthermore, at 448 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of significance, the calculated z-value of 0.296 was by far less than the z-critical table value of ± 1.960 . Hence, the researcher did not reject the null hypothesis but rather maintains that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female lecturers on ways functional university education delivery can be improved in public universities in Rivers State for sustainable development.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results of the study showed that ways leadership can be improved in public universities in Rivers State to foster sustainable development include: improving leadership capacity through leadership trainings; setting specific standards for the selection of leaders in public universities; provision of enabling environment for leaders to perform; involvement/active participation of leaders in strategic planning; maintaining a balance between the nomothetic and idiographic dimensions of the organization; linking up/collaborating with other leaders within and outside their environment; ensuring there is effective communication mechanism; and involvement of relevant members of staff/stakeholders in decision making. Leadership requires constant improvement due to the dynamic nature of our society, technological and economic changes and more importantly, the link between leadership and productivity in every organization. The findings of this study agree with Nwakudu and Okata (2016) who called for the expansion of leadership capacity to enhance leaders, effectiveness in their leadership tasks. Improving the capacity of leaders calls for organization of capacity training programs from time to time based on skills and knowledge gaps as well as technological advancement that will enhance best leadership practices in public universities in Rivers State. This makes it necessary for leaders to have constant training and retraining as supported by Peretomode (2014).

The process of selecting leaders in public universities in Rivers State should be less politicized, merit in terms of qualification, experience, professionalism, personality, and other criteria should be used in the selection of leaders in public universities in Rivers State. This will help to improve leadership since the people who meet the criteria are likely going to be selected after due process. Supporting this view Ogunode, et al (2019) stated that part of the challenges facing public universities in Nigeria is the poor leadership style of vice chancellor as many of them emerged without due process. They were appointed by their political good fathers even when some of them are less qualified for such positions.

The provision of enabling environment is very important in the success of leaders. There should be adequate provision of staff personnel, teaching/learning facilities, infrastructure and above all peaceful environments. These, according to Ojedele and Fadokun (2005), will create a way for adequate implementation of educational policies and improved leadership. Maintaining effective communication is very necessary for improving leadership in an organization. This will increase productivity and reduce misunderstanding, quarrelling and wastage of resources in an organization.

The participation of leaders in strategic planning is very important in improving leadership because according to Babalola (2009), it clearly helps to define leadership's area of jurisdiction and it also helps to avoid conflict at various stages of implementation of educational plans. It is equally important for leaders to recognize that both organizational goals and the welfare of employees need adequate attention. Without employees feeding well, being in good health and having good moral disposition to execute their tasks, it may be difficult to achieve set goals. Ensuring that there is a balance between organizational goal achievement and employee's welfare will help to improve leadership in an organization as employees will feel recognized and have a sense of belonging.

Involvement of relevant members of staff/stakeholders in decision making will also help in the improvement of leadership. This will provide an opportunity to carry people along and create room for them to contribute their opinion during decision making thus resulting in quality decisions and improved leadership. Linking up and collaborating with other leaders within and outside the leader's environment will assist in the improvement of leadership in public universities in Rivers State. This will encourage leaders to understudy other leaders, find out why they succeeded and copy relevant things from them. This will encourage them to adopt changes and innovations within and outside their environment for improved leadership.

The study equally revealed that ways functional university education delivery can be improved to foster sustainable development in Rivers State include: recruitment of adequate quality/quantity of lecturers; adequate provision of teaching/learning resources; inculcation of adequate entrepreneurial skills; ensuring adequate quality assurance management; inculcation of adequate practical skills/knowledge in the students; and maintaining a peaceful learning environment/uninterrupted academic calendar. There is no educational system that can rise above the quality of the teachers. Recruiting adequate quality and quantity of teachers in public universities in Rivers State is very necessary. This will help the universities to inculcate adequate knowledge and skills in their students for better living and performance of productive tasks which is the hallmark of functional education according to Asaju and Adagba (2014). Some of the lecturers in public universities in Rivers State are not well experienced and adequately qualified. Moreover, the process of recruitment of lecturers in public universities in the state has been taken over by politicians who use such jobs to settle their friends and party supporters. This has given room for mediocre and unqualified people to be employed as lecturers in these institutions. The student/lecturer ratio is quite high, and the workload of these lecturers is so much that most of them look stressed up and are not efficient and effective in the performance of their duties.

Providing adequate teaching/learning facilities will improve the delivery of functional university education for sustainable development in Rivers State. There is a lack of some teaching/learning facilities for the delivery of functional university education in public universities in Rivers State. The engineering faculties, colleges of medicine, Information, Communication Technology (ICT) departments and many other fields of study are suffering from gross inadequate provision of teaching/learning facilities. This results in graduation of students without adequate knowledge and skills which contradicts the desire for functional education. Supporting this, Akpa (2019) states that the need for functional education arose from the absurdity of continuing to use the same old method of educational service delivery but expecting different and persistently appropriate results. This cannot work. It cannot give us the right results. We need to do the right thing and inculcate appropriate knowledge/skills in our students to enable them to perform well and compete adequately with their counterparts from other parts of the world.

Inculcation of appropriate entrepreneurial skills is equally necessary now to enhance functional education delivery. Entrepreneurial skills will help university graduates to set up their own businesses to become self-employed. This is necessary because people should be able to practice what they learnt in the school and generate income from it. They should be able to explore opportunities in their field of study. Government cannot employ

everybody moreover; it appears government's employment capacity is reducing every year. There is the need for students to begin to aim at being self-employed upon their graduation from university.

Public universities' management, National Universities Commission (NUC) and stakeholders in public universities in Rivers State should ensure that adequate quality assurance management is maintained in public universities in Rivers State. From the curriculum to the teaching staff, the teaching methods, the class size, the practical classes, infrastructure, facilities, conduct of examinations, quality of students, assessment methods, grading patterns, time management etc. should be standardized in line with best practices in other universities in various parts of the world. Short cuts should not be allowed. Lecturers and students should be closely monitored in terms of attending classes to meet the minimum requirements set for each of them. Examinations should be strictly and decently conducted without room for various forms of infractions.

Lastly, the study revealed that maintaining a peaceful learning environment/uninterrupted academic calendar will improve functional university education delivery in Rivers State. This is necessary because effective teaching/learning cannot take place in an unsafe environment. In recent times, we have experienced security treats in some of these universities in form of cult clashes; sexual harassment, kidnapping etc. The frequent strike by various labor unions in the universities especially the academic staff union of universities (ASUU) has adverse effect on functional university education delivery. The last strike by ASUU lasted for the complete eight months of non-academic activities in our public universities. The universities are still suffering the negative impacts of that strike till today. Maintaining a peaceful environment and harmonious relationship with the labor unions will enhance functional university education delivery for sustainable development of the state.

CONCLUSION

Improving leadership and functional university education delivery in public universities in Rivers State is very necessary to foster sustainable development. It will enhance the quality of leadership and university education delivery in the state. It will restore the inculcation of sound values, patriotism, dignity of labor, appropriate skills/knowledge that will reduce the high rate of graduate unemployment in the state. Government, parents, and all stakeholders on university education should join hands to ensure an improved leadership in public universities and functional university education delivery that will improve the well-being of the recipients and the sustainable development of the state.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the researcher made the following recommendations:

1. Government needs to minimize politicizing the selection of leaders and ensure well trained, skillful, and experienced individuals are recruited in public universities in Rivers State.
2. University management in collaboration with government and other stakeholders should ensure that there is adequate provision of infrastructure and other teaching/learning resources required for effective delivery of functional education in public universities in Rivers State to foster sustainable development.
3. Government should honor the agreements reached with labor union leaders in public universities to promote harmonious relationships and a peaceful teaching/learning environment to foster sustainable development.

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