

## EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF TERTIARY EDUCATION FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Afeez Adehsina SHITTU<sup>1\*</sup>, Adeseko Sunday OLAIFA<sup>2</sup>, Amudalatu Abiodun SAGAYA<sup>3</sup>, Abiodun Johnson MEDUPIN<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1, 2, 3 &4</sup> Department of Educational Management & Counselling, Faculty of Education, Al-Hikmah University Ilorin, Nigeria

\*Corresponding Email: [aashittu@alhikmah.edu.ng](mailto:aashittu@alhikmah.edu.ng)

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Received [14 February 2025]

Revised [12 March 2025]

Accepted [16 April 2025]

### ABSTRACT

This paper discussed the inadequacy of effective governance and management in tertiary education institutions in West African countries, specifically focusing on Nigeria. It argued that while these institutions had produced programs to meet the labour market's needs, educational policies and curriculum reforms had not kept pace with economic and political development. This resulted in a brain drain as university professionals sought better opportunities elsewhere. The paper aimed to address the role of university stakeholders in Nigeria's social and economic development in line with sustainable development goals. The authors suggested that university elites and professionals should be allowed to participate in political and financial contributions towards national development without political affiliation or intimidation. This would improve and increase Nigeria's socio-economic development. The authors highlighted the importance of effective governance and management in tertiary education institutions, as seen in developed countries where they contributed significantly to socio-economic development. University professionals' current denial of political and economic contributions has hindered progress in Nigeria. In conclusion, the authors emphasised the need for a national policy that allowed professionals from tertiary institutions to participate in political and economic roles to contribute to the country's national development. This would improve Nigeria's socio-economic development and address the brain drain issue.

### KEYWORDS

Effective Governance, Tertiary Institution, Socio-Economic Development

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### INTRODUCTION

It is worrisome to note that Nigeria has existed for over fifty years with little or no record of such socio-economic and political development. This ugly trend is connected with the pervasive corruption noted in the country (Imoloame, 2021). Although various administrative reforms have been carried out to ensure sustainable good governance, the gains have not materialised due to corruption, among other factors. Over the years, billions and now trillions of naira have been budgeted yearly to improve the living standard of the citizenry through an increase in output. These dreams were elusive, perhaps due to the failure of the government to appoint technocrats and academic university staff to run its government. Universities across the world are forging new paths to sustainability. In many private and public institutions, sustainability has become integral to higher education governance structure, policy articulations, curricula reforms and programme implementation. Nigeria's changing economic, social and political situations have combined to create a need for constant innovations and reforms in tertiary education. To achieve sustainable transformation in higher education in Nigeria, its educational system must be highly responsive regarding access, teaching/learning, financing, and governance.

Policymakers must prioritize effective governance and management of tertiary education systems to ensure a nation's ability to produce human capital for economic, social, and political development, as it is crucial for a nation's overall growth (Uddin et al., 2023). Over the past few years, tertiary education has undergone significant changes and reforms, focusing on new methods of higher education, expanding system capacity, and continuous internationalization of higher education (De Wit & Altbach, 2021). Tertiary institutions are an inevitable tool for good governance and transforming every nation's socio-economic development. Effective governance and management of tertiary education systems worldwide also occurred. However, some Commonwealth African countries, such as Nigeria, Rwanda, Uganda, and the like, are still facing issues concerning tertiary education for good governance and socio-economic development (Muriisa & Rwabyoma, 2019). For example, in Nigeria, the academic staff in the tertiary institutions remained steadfast without being engaged and appointed to effectively govern this country's social, economic, cultural, technological, and political development. Management and good governance practices regarding the quality of a nation's development play a very germane role in the development of every nation (Towah, 2019).

Given such a relationship among commonwealth members, it raises some questions about why some member countries lag in national development through adequate research and policies from tertiary education for better socio-economic development, especially for good governance. A key element of quality tertiary education is good governance and management of university members towards the national development of a nation (Abdelaziz, 2022). Good governance is a set of principles, practices, and processes that ensure tertiary education institutions' effective, responsible, and ethical management (Barry & Goedegebuure, 2020). It encompasses the mechanisms through which decisions are made, policies are formulated, resources are allocated, and institutional goals are pursued towards the national development of a nation. Every country's good governance indicators include transparency and accountability, stakeholder participation, ethical and responsible leadership, continuous improvement, and equity and inclusivity (John-Eke & Gabriel, 2023).

## Theoretical Framework

This paper was on effective governance and management of tertiary education for socio-economic development in Nigeria, which was hinged on the theory of social contract. Social contract theory was introduced by early modern thinkers Hugo Grotius, Thomas Hobbes, Samuel Pufendorf, and John Locke. According to social contract theory, individuals exist in society by agreeing on moral and political standards of conduct (Sasan, 2021). It is a general belief that if we live according to a social contract, we can live morally by our own choice, not because a divine being requires it. The most well-known among them is an analysis of two things: the historical roots of sovereign power and the moral origins of the principles that make sovereign authority suitable and/or legal. It is often associated with the liberal tradition in political theory because it presupposes the fundamental freedom and equality of all those entering into a political arrangement and the associated rights that follow the principles of fundamental freedom and equality. Social contract theory talks about surrendering people's power over their lives and properties to others in the same society who are responsible for providing for and protecting the people and the society at large (Mansell, 2013).

Thus, relating this theory to this study, the government should be concerned with the provisions of the people's most general and fundamental needs and, likewise, the dynamics of the society's political, economic and security needs. Those optimistic about the profits of good and effective governance argue, for instance, that quality in budgetary and financial management, corruption control and effective public administration offers better prospects to actualise the developmental aspirations of the citizenry through effective participation of university technocrats in Nigerian institutions.

### **Dimensions of Effective Governance and Management of Tertiary Education for Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria**

Governance is a familiar concept within the public sector and social sciences, and several empirical and theoretical studies have explored it. However, governance and management can be complex, often abstruse, and vary depending on the field of knowledge it applies to (Raadschelders, 2011). Typically, governance can pertain to the interactions among the governments, stakeholders and non-government and non-profit institutions through which the policy decision-making process, planning, and financing are governed and executed through effective management (Tugyetwena, 2023). The political process of a nation encompasses goal setting and executing actions for achieving such goals through socio-economic development (Hariram et al., 2023). In the context of tertiary education, governance in tertiary education involves organizing institutions to serve the common good and strengthen public interests, ensuring they operate internally and externally for national development (Denters et al., 2023). In this regard, the dimensions of effective governance and management of tertiary education for socio-economic development in Nigeria, according to Balogun et al. (2022), as a global standard to be adopted by governments has eight significant characteristics include;

1. **Participatory in Governance by University Members:** Participatory governance is a method in which university academic staff participate in the decision-making process at all levels of government in Nigeria, whether with primary or delegated authority and are committed to involving affected constituencies in decisions as much as possible. Participatory in governance by university members is based upon individuals having a voice in decisions that affect them. Good governance allows everyone in the university system to voice their opinions through institutions or representations.
2. **Consensus-oriented:** This is the cornerstone of any agreement among university academic staff. This can be done through the association ASUU. An effective consensus process (consensus-building) is inclusive and engages all participants. Consensus-oriented among university academic staff can lead to better-quality outcomes that empower Nigerian citizens to move forward and create their future together through socio-economic development.
3. **Accountable:** the acceptance and willingness to accept the official responsibility by university academic staff for honest and ethical conduct towards effective governance and management of socio-economic development in Nigeria.
4. **Transparent:** Government officials appointed from the university environment must act openly, with citizens' knowledge of the decisions. Transparency is a government obligation for university academic staff to be open, accountable, and honest with citizens regarding how socio-economics could be developed for the betterment of every individual in Nigeria. This can be done by proactive

communication, soliciting citizens' feedback, providing easy access to public consultation, and effortless self-service of information through digital channels.

5. Responsive: University academic staff needs to be responsive to the needs of people by ensuring that their concerns are addressed holistically.
6. Effective and efficient: The ability of the university academic staff to deliver by ensuring the level of efficiency and effectiveness is attained holistically towards the socio-economic development of Nigeria.
7. Equitable and inclusive: In an equitable and inclusive society, every university academic staff member should be appointed to hold a political position to serve humanity through the in-depth knowledge acquired from the university system. This will also enable them to foster a society where socio-economic opportunities are accessible, regardless of social and economic background.
8. Follows the rule of law" "the mechanism, process, institution, practice, or norm that supports the equality of all citizens before the law secures a nonarbitrary form of government, and more generally prevents the arbitrary use of power (Winter, 2022). These criteria will be adopted by university academic staff to assess how governments are achieving better governance (Twizeyimana & Andersson, 2019).

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research used a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method to explore the effectiveness of higher education governance and management in supporting socio-economic development in Nigeria. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with higher education stakeholders, participatory observation of institutional activities, and analysis of policy documents and institutional reports. Respondents included university leaders, lecturers, students, as well as government officials and relevant industry players. Data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns in transparency, accountability, managerial efficiency, and higher education's contribution to community development. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, informant confirmation (member checking), and systematic documentation of the research process.

### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Socio-economic Development in Nigeria

Sub-Saharan African countries have had a checkered past regarding socio-economic development through effective governance and management of tertiary education. Economists and policymakers in tertiary education increasingly recognise the importance of governance and management for socio-economic growth and development in a country. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) has four main goals: eradicating poverty, promoting sustainable socio-economic growth and development, integrating Africa into the world's economy, and accelerating women's empowerment. Socio-economic development refers to the policy and regulatory settings that governments adopt to manage the economy with the assistance of technocrats from the university system, where real economics is taught. Socio-economic development includes the system and procedures established by institutions to achieve union objectives in the economic field, namely the coordination of economic policies to promote economic and social progress for the citizens. In addition, socio-economic

development through effective governance and management of tertiary education refers to the policy and regulatory settings that governments adopt to manage the economy (Amaral et al., 2013). Socio-economic development encompasses two broad areas of public policy: macroeconomic (including aggregate fiscal) management and microeconomic management (relating to the policies that determine the private-sector operating environment, including business licensing procedures and contract enforcement processes). Effective governance and socio-economic development management involve high-quality federal government services, competent policy formulation, and policy implementation with tertiary education system experts (Aithal & Aithal, 2019). Socio-economic development is a product of development and can be defined as the social and economic transformation process in a society (Dudin et al., 2013). Socio-economic development embraces changes in the social sphere, mainly economic (Nnubia et al., 2021). Thus, socio-economic development is made up of processes caused by exogenous and endogenous factors that determine the course and direction of development (Nazarkevych, 2019). Socio-economic development is measured with indicators, such as gross domestic product (GDP), which is the total of all the goods and services produced in the country within a specific period, usually one year, by both citizens and foreigners in the country alike, life expectancy, literacy and levels of employment. Changes in less-tangible factors are also considered, such as personal dignity, freedom of association, personal safety and freedom from fear of physical harm, and the extent of participation in civil society. Moreover, causes of socio-economic impacts are, for example, new technologies, changes in laws, changes in the physical environment and ecological changes. Identified strong links between security and development since the Cold War ended (Ewetan & Urhie, 2014). However, Lower development indicators, such as corruption, poor budgetary and financial management, weak state institutions and limited regulatory capacity, among others, have impaired the rule of law, allowed resources to be diverted and illegal acts to thrive, thereby undermining the integrity of institutions (Nnubia et al., 2022).

## Effective Governance

Political science and public administration researchers have discussed the concept of effective governance for years in tertiary education. According to Kettl (2015), effective governance describes the overall manner in which public officials and institutions acquire and exercise their authority to shape public policy and provide public goods and services. Similarly, governance can also be seen as the decision-making process and the process by which decisions are implemented or not implemented (Alles & Piechocki, 2012). Although consensus exists in defining effective governance, a common theme among scholars is that effective governance means more participation in the political and decision-making process by nongovernmental institutions. Thus, under governance, many educational stakeholders manage the nation's needs, and the government is one of them. The United Nations also introduced characteristics of good governance practices as a global standard to be adopted by governments that receive their aid (Thomas, 2012).

## Corruption on Socio-economic Development in Nigeria

Despite her long years of independence, Nigeria is still battling with the problem of good governance. Above all, the country's leadership is known for a gross lack of vision and gross corruption, among many others, which has become a threat to the nation's survival (Ivungu et al., 2020). Corruption has eaten deep into every segment of

Nigerian society. This is why Ogundiya (2009), in his opinion, said that corruption is a massive challenge in the Nigerian public administration. This statement can be confirmed by the revelations of many probe panels set up at different regimes in the country. Corruption has indeed robbed Nigerians of the benefit of good governance. Nwozor and Afolabi (2023) asserted that Nigeria had lost some US\$380 billion to corruption between independence in 1960 and the end of military rule in 1999. In addition, some Western diplomats estimated that Nigeria had lost a minimum average of \$4 billion to \$8 billion per year to corruption over the eight years of the Obasanjo administration (Uddoh, 2016). This reckless drainage of the commonwealth has been responsible for the socio-economic stagnation and bad governance witnessed in all the sectors of the national life. Indeed, Corruption is the primary reason for the insolvable problems of hunger, poverty, diseases, and the general acute development tragedy in Nigeria (Mercy, 2015). Seriously, corruption has hindered the growth and effective budgeting, control and utilisation of resources to ensure sound public administration in the country. Furthermore, Bankole and Olaniyi (2014) gave other effects of corruption, such as lack of development, infrastructural decay, and mediocrity in leadership. Other visible signs are fuel scarcity in an oil-producing nation, falling standards of education and work output, high rates of unemployment, and the ever-widening gaps between the rich and poor, among other factors. At the international level, corruption tarnishes the country's image, and the caution foreign nationals exercise in business transactions with Nigerians, thereby weakening the economic sector. Bureaucratic corruption, in particular, has been responsible for the mismanagement of public resources, economic setbacks as a national heritage (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016). Institutionalised corruption has become a barrier to development in every area of the political and socio-economic life of the nation since it was aggravated during the many years of military misrule. The outcome has been the contradiction of widespread poverty among affluent natural resources.

## CONCLUSION

The paper concludes that there is a need for a national policy that would allow professionals from tertiary institutions to participate in political and economic roles in order to contribute to the country's national development. This would improve Nigeria's socio-economic development and address the brain drain issues. Effective governance and management by university members will translate to improved formulation and implementation of sound micro and macroeconomic policies for socio-economic development in Nigeria. University members should, directly and indirectly, participate in politics to access political appointments for better socio-economic delivery. The corruption problem must be addressed by checkmating the excesses of and enforcing the legal restraints on the authority of government officials and increasing the principle of accountability in governance. The socio-economic index for effective governance and management should be carried out by university academic staff in Nigeria's public and private tertiary institutions.

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