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ACADEMIC STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIAN POLYTECHNICS: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

In Nigeria, Polytechnics have played relatively vital role in the growth of industries and local technology. However, the full potential of Polytechnics as the seed crop of industrial development and socio-economic growth had not been fully harnessed. Even though there are numerous Polytechnic institutions in Nigeria, the capacity to deliver has been constrained by a number of challenges to academic staff development. This paper discusses eleven challenges to achieving and sustaining academic staff development in Nigerian Polytechnics: (1) Improper Assessment of Needs ; (2) Policy; (3) Funding; (4) Lack of training infrastructure and problems of capacity building; (5) Lack of administrative willingness and capacity to drive academic staff development; (6) Ethnicity; (7) Funding; (8) Corruption and Nepotism; (9) Strikes; (10) Technology/ Energy problems; and (11) Low Level of interest in research/development of local initiatives. The paper recommends that a strategic framework for academic staff development should be put in place with a view to enhancing continuous improvement of teaching and learning processes of academic staff in line with global trends.

Keywords: Academic staff, Development, polytechnics, challenges and issues

INTRODUCTION

Academic staff development has an important role to play in Nigerian Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) which includes Polytechnics, Colleges of Education, and Universities. Generally, HEI's in Nigeria have Human Resource Development (HRD) policy under the general rubric of Public Service Rules and Regulation that are designed to enhance, with varying degrees of emphasis, organisational and individual effectiveness. These policies share the common goal of improving higher education and aim to influence the knowledge, skills and aptitudes of academic staff.

However, despite these policy provisions and regulation for academic staff development, its situation which entails the availability, quality and adequacy appears to be critical in many Nigerian Polytechnics with claims that resource meant for HRD of academic staff are not adequate, activities marginal, and goals not met (Giwa, 2000). Specifically, scholars (Adeyemi and Uko-Aviomoh, 2004; Olukoju, 2004; Solanke, 2014) suggest that the critical state of Polytechnic education in Nigeria stems from a lack of administrative willingness and capacity to drive academic staff development, a fact corroborated by the Nigerian Education Sector Report (2010) which chronicled the challenges in Nigeria's education sector in the following words:

> *The education sector has historically suffered from years of neglect and mismanagement and inadequacy of resources commensurate with national needs, population growth and demand. As a result, education as a strategic priority of the government has not been well positioned as a transformational tool and a formidable instrument for socio-economic development (The Nigerian Education Sector Report 2010:7)*

The Report (2010) noted the challenges in Nigeria's higher education system to include:
- Low carrying capacity of Nigerian tertiary institutions
- Inequality of education across the states
- Academic staff shortages across the board and the absence of a system to produce teaching staff for the Polytechnics

- Divided interest by academics (with Moonlighting and the taking up of additional jobs to supplement salary)
- Illegal institutions/satellite campuses/external campuses

For more than two decades, these challenges and the need to address them has been a major cause of industrial disputes between the academic staff of Nigerian Polytechnics under the aegis of Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP) and the Federal government of Nigeria (FGN) in most cases leading to strike actions. Several issues of importance to the union include welfare of staff, provision of infrastructure, Polytechnic autonomy, funding, and academic staff training and development which appears to be limiting the quality of teaching, research, scholarship and innovation.

Even though recently, the Federal government of Nigeria as a way forward towards addressing these challenges came up with its reform/transformation agenda which set out well defined priorities that reflect policy pronouncements, yet, expected results have not been achieved (Okoroma, 2006; Gyong, 2012; Imam, 2012).

While there may seem to be no general consensus on what has led to the apparent poor state of affairs in Nigeria's educational system, all concerned stakeholders seem to agree that higher education institutions in the country need to consciously create an enabling environment that will stimulate and expose its human resources to opportunities for learning and the acquisition of a new knowledge base in other to cope with the challenges linked to globalization and technological advancement (Obijiofor, 2005).

With the need for an update of knowledge, skills and aptitude of staff in higher education institutions duly recognised, the fundamental question that may arise is how well Nigerian Polytechnics are prepared to equip their academic staff with capacities to comprehend and play active roles within this globalised society. In the light of the tensions and ambiguities associated with academic staff development and the slip and twist expectations and actualities, the idea of investigating the critical issues and challenges in academic staff development in Nigerian Polytechnics become timely and relevant.

THE NEED FOR ACADEMIC STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Volbrecht and Boughey (2004:58) defined academic staff development "as an open set of practices concerned with improving the quality of teaching and learning in higher education". Based on the above, in the context of Nigerian Polytechnic education, academic staff development refers to a process whereby some sets of practices are put in place that will enhance the knowledge and skills of academic staff in directions that will leverage their role in their respective Polytechnic institutions.

The need for academic staff development in Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) is becoming increasingly important for obvious reasons. Higher education at the dawn of the 21st century is confronted with a plethora of challenges which necessitate that academic staff strive towards improving their skills, knowledge and aptitude. The trend in the HEI environment shows that the demands of society, organisation and students are changing. The societal change, for instance, is such that there is now an increasing change of direction from teaching to learning and from learning in a specific society to a global society. Writers (Smith, 2004, Patrick et al., 2008) note that because of the changes in the HEI environment, academic staff development should offer relevant and up to date learning opportunities.

Within HEI's as organisations, the trend reveals that accountability has become a very important issue. Academic staff are expected to be more accountable to students learning more than ever before, with their responsibility linked to the overall aims and objectives of the institution. Fulton, Licklider and Schnelker (1998) noted that since accountability, productivity, and efficiency have become the key demands of the day, HEI's should find ways in which academic staff can adequately develop themselves in order to adapt to these changes.

McGuire and Williams (2002) highlighted another changing trend in HEI's. They maintained that the HEI's have become more diverse with students joining HEI's at different ages, motivations, level of experience and educational backgrounds. In the face of these obvious diversities, they assert that HEI's should put in place programmes that will enable academic staff acquire skills that will improve on their ability to manage students with diverse needs and interest.

Also, Burton-Jones (2001:225) emphasised that individuals and institutions must focus on maintaining and enhancing their biggest asset: the knowledge capital in the new knowledge-based economy. He asserts that the demand for education and training is burgeoning and set to be the biggest growth industry in the knowledge economy (Burton-Jones, 2001:231). What this means is that when Higher Education Institutions like Polytechnics are "working" with knowledge, the very people who are involved in the transmission and creation of knowledge (academic staff) must of necessity go through a process of training and development that will enable them acquire the skills, aptitude and knowledge that will help them perform their task effectively and efficiently and also assist them in adapting to new roles.

Many countries have acknowledged the cardinal role of academic staff development in the promotion of learning and scholarship in tertiary institutions. For example, in the United Kingdom, a committee known as the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (NCIHE) was established in 1996 to make recommendations on how the purposes, shapes, structure, size and funding of Higher Education, including support for learners, should develop to meet the needs of the UK over the following 20 years (Dearing 1997a: chapter 1, pg 1)

The vision for Higher Education in the UK outlined unequivocally sees the need for a society that is committed to learning throughout life (Dearing 1997a: chapter 1, pg 1). In fact, the report recognised that the realisation of the vision for a transformed higher education in the UK is a function of the enhancement of the professional skills of people in higher institutions. Higher education in the UK should be able to recruit, retain and motivate staff to the appropriate calibre (Dearing 1997a: chapter 14, pg 1). One of the high points of the recommendations was for institutions of higher education to begin to develop or seek access to programmes for teacher training of their staff if they do not have them (Dearing 1997b: par 8.61).

Similarly, in New Zealand, the Quality Assurance Authority of New Zealand (QAANZ) was established in 1999 to advise government on how to implement the new quality regime for tertiary education. The QAANZ Report (1999:24) emphasised the need for higher institutions to maintain a staff compliment with the necessary knowledge, skills and cultural background through staff selection, appraisal and development. The report equally recommended that for higher institutions to meet the challenges of the knowledge society, a supportive and effective learning environment that would foster research and scholarship in line with international standards should be provided.

In Singapore, a Report by the National Institute of Education, Singapore (2009) titled "A Teacher Education Model for the 21St Century" emphasised that faculty (academic staff) require the injection of new learning, skills and knowledge. The report noted that a structured professional development would be a necessary right step in ensuring that faculty are continually refreshed and updated in their teaching and research skills. The report recommended the adoption of the Harvard Medical School Academy; a training and development programme which addresses three levels of capacity building: basic, refresher, and advanced, as a model for faculty professional development in Singapore. Also, the report explored the need for the provision of the necessary 'white space' in the form of mini-sabbaticals (lasting three months or so), which can be a means of giving academic staff opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge in research work or improving teaching skills.

The growing awareness of the need and role of academic staff development in higher education institutions highlights the importance of HRD for the present challenges and future growth in line with global trends for the less developed countries. Therefore, for the less developed countries to attain the desired level of competitiveness in the global socio-economic, political and economic arena, there must be put in place policies and practices that will facilitate the learning and development of academic staff which at the moment lie at the heart of current debates in human resource development.

HISTORY OF NIGERIA POLYTECHNICS

The Polytechnic system was established by the Federal Government of Nigeria via decree No 33 of 25th July, 1979 when it became apparent that Nigeria cannot compete favourably with other countries in high technology as the level of manpower required for driving and growing technology is lacking. Therefore, for the country to thrive in a techno-dominant global economy, technically oriented institutions like Polytechnics needed to be established to produce the technical manpower that will drive technological advancement. Specifically itemized, the following are the aims of establishing Polytechnic education in Nigeria:

a) The production of high level and middle-level manpower as appropriate in areas necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development
b) The identification and solution of the technological problems and needs of industry: and
c) The production of technicians and technologist and similar business related personnel for direct employment in industry (NPE, 2014).

However, the actualization of these aims can be said to be under threat because of the human resource problems that have plagued Nigerian Polytechnics. Empirical studies conducted by researchers (Isyaku 2002, Okebukola 2002) on higher education in Africa, Nigerian Polytechnics inclusive, make some interesting revelation about HRD in higher education institution. It is on record that in Nigeria, many Polytechnics are confronted with the problems of qualified staff particularly academic staff of the right quantity and quality (National Board for Technical Education Digest of Statistics, 1999).

Writers (Ephraim, 2004; Okoro and Ibiam, 2014) commenting on the human resource challenges facing Nigeria polytechnics, note that the situation is so bad that many Polytechnics largely depend on part-time lecturers drawn from neighbouring institutions to teach mostly technically oriented courses. They further reiterate that Nigerian public institutions have high enrolments without enough qualified instructors noting that staff/student ratios have worsened to the detriment of student learning and academic research.

The problem of inadequate qualified staff has equally captured the attention of UNESCO. The UNESCO policy paper (2014) published on World Teachers day 2014 identified the Sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria inclusive, as the worst in terms of the quantum of teachers available for the third level education of which the Polytechnic is a part. In fact, the Report of the Vision 20: 2020 (NPC, 2009) acknowledges the deficit in academic staffing and states specifically that the Polytechnics in Nigeria are in academic staff deficit with a staff shortfall of 14,858 (57%) of the total number required.

Although it is clear from research that academic staff development is key to the survival of HEI's in the changing global environment, it seems that appropriate strategies to grapple with the challenges of academic staff development in Nigerian Polytechnics is urgently needed. Although it can be said that the calibre of research and teaching in some Polytechnics compares to international best practice and standards, overall effectiveness and efficiency reflects a range of systemic challenges which this paper intends to address below.

CHALLENGES OF ACADEMIC STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIAN POLYTECHNICS

Academic Staff development in Nigerian Polytechnics currently faces many questions and challenges which stems out of the organisational need for continuous learning and change. Among the many challenges faced in Academic Staff development include but not limited to the following:

Improper Assessment of Needs

The manpower need for Polytechnic education in terms of teaching staff is perhaps either being wrongly estimated or not assessed at all. There is a glaring gap in student – teacher ratio, UNESCO (2000) attests to this assertion. Yet, for the Polytechnics as for any other organization, human resource is recognized as the hub around which other resources revolve (Adeyemi and Uko-Aviomoh, 2004). Many factors had contributed to the misbalance between the quantity of teaching staff and student population over the years most of which are not isolated from each other. Apart from increasing enrolment figures of students, there has been noted, issues around underfunding, brain drain, poor working conditions and down fall in the economy as a whole (Adeyemi and Uko-Aviomoh, 2004). Severe shortage of teaching staff and rapid annual expansions in student admissions make the issues of staff requirement assessment a big planning enigma, the riddle of which seems yet to be resolved.

Policy

Even though the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2014) made mention of the need to attend to the issue of inadequacy of quality and quantitative teaching staff for Polytechnic education thus; "government is aware that only limited facilities exist for technical teachers' education... a conscious effort to expand the facilities for the training of technical teachers shall be made..." (Section 6, paragraph 50). However, the question of what "conscious effort" interprets and how is yet not clear as there seem not to be any streamlined programme or

strategy of academic staff development policy framework for Nigerian Polytechnics. Thus, many decades since the coming into place of the NPE, there had remained a severe shortage of teaching staff in the Nigerian Polytechnic system because of ineffective policy implementation leading to the wide gap in teaching staff – student ratio being experienced over the years (Omoregie and Hartnett, 1995; UNESCO, 2000).

Funding

Finance is a critical aspect in the administration of Polytechnics and serves as a major driver in the actualisation of their various policies. The National Policy on Education which is the document for the effective administration, management and implementation of education at all tiers of government states that since education is an expensive social service, there is need for adequate provision from government for successful implementation of government projects, programmes and policies (NPE, 2014). About 90 per cent of the funds available to Federal Polytechnics are from allocation from the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) with other individuals and the Polytechnics themselves providing the 10 per cent balance. The Federal Government policy stance on tuition fees is such that undergraduates do not pay tuition fees as yet in higher education institutions. Although the Federal Government, as the proprietor of Polytechnics appears set to tackle the challenges of funding its numerous higher education institutions, however, in concrete terms, the real value of the funding as it stands is lower than expected for optimum performance of Polytechnics in Nigeria.

Adeyemi and Uko-Aviomoh (2004) identified the under-funding of the Polytechnics as one of the challenges of academic staff development in Nigeria Polytechnics. Inadequate or poor allocation of funds affects the conditions of service of Polytechnic staff determining how much development opportunities that is open for them. Thus, poor conditions of service lead to high teaching staff attrition in the phenomenal trend of brain-drain as Giwa (2000) reported. The implication of this trend had been the lack of sustainability and consistency in a systematised transmission of knowledge and training culture for the Polytechnic staff.

Lack of training infrastructure and problems of capacity building

Adequacy of training infrastructure is necessary to achieve a learning environment for academic staff development. Stressing on the need to improve on, and develop enough teachers for the Polytechnics, Yakubu (2000), commented that the demand for qualified and experienced professionals of the right calibre that are required to teach in the Polytechnics and technical colleges is very high. However, the short supply of the right calibre of teaching staff requirement is partly owing to the lack of infrastructure for training. Yakubu (2000) thus urged that institutions must have aggressive staff development programmes not only to enhance the number of staff but as well to achieve a level of capacity.

Lack of administrative willingness and capacity to drive academic staff development

Nigeria has enormous resources to attain an appreciable level of technological development, however, Rondinelli, (1998) noted poor managerial and administrative capacity to drive the development of the vast human resources as the major challenge for staff development in Africa in general. Rondinelli concludes that in countries where the education and training systems are not geared to the development of national capability as in Nigeria; attaining productive technology will remain elusive. What this means is that for higher institutions to survive the global economy that is constantly advancing technologically, academic staff development in HEI's must be strengthened through appropriate strategy for technological capacity building.

Ethnicity

Nigeria as a country is made up of over 250 ethnic groups that are socially, culturally, and historically distinctive (Ogunnika, 2013).The heterogeneity of Nigeria has been a major challenge to national development in the sense that rather than pursuing national development with a sense of unity, the numerous ethnic groups are constantly in competition to outwit the other. Unfortunately, the Polytechnic education sub-sector which is meant to be catalyst for national development appears to be at the mercy of state's internal intricacies with issues of nepotism, corruption and ethnicity taking centre stage in the development of academic staff. Duruji et al., (2014) noted that the issue of ethnicity has fuelled distrust and suspicion among the various ethnic groups and nowhere is the destructive effect of ethnicity more evident than in the nation's higher education institutions with national development remaining at the receiving end. It reflects in the appointment of Polytechnic management staff, appointment of faculty as well as the training and development of academic staff. The

negative effect of ethnicity has brought about the displacement of brilliant academics and the eventual loss of those who through teaching, research and community development would have contributed meaningfully to national development. In order to address the challenge of ethnicity, a number of policies have been put in place by the Federal Government of Nigeria such as quota system and the federal character principle (Obielumani, 2008).

The federal character principle rather than addressing the issue of ethnicity has rather created more challenges to the Polytechnic education sub-sector. Gberevbie and Ibietan, (2013: 55) noted that the implementation of the federal character principle "not only led to poor appointments but also enhanced mediocrity rather than merit". Adesoji and Alao (2009: 159) on the other hand submit that the principle runs at cross-purpose in the sense that it promotes mediocrity rather than merit especially in the appointment and promotion of staff. Today, certain position (academic and non-academic) are reserved for the Polytechnic host communities without which the process of institutional administration becomes difficult. Commenting further on the federal character principle, Gberevbie & Ibietan (2013: 56) were quick to add that "the principle and its application have brought about the unintended effect of creating situations of 'elimination by substitution' which makes it counter-productive. This it does through discrimination in appointment and promotion".

With such flawed staffing, training and development process based on ethnicity, it becomes problematic for the Polytechnic education sub-sector to set the pace for the efficient and effective management of human and material resources that will bring about the much-needed technological development of Nigeria.

Corruption and Nepotism

Transparency International (TI), the global coalition against corruption in its 2014 ranking rated Nigeria as the 136th most corrupt country in the world. In as much as one would agree that corruption is a global phenomenon with public notables and bureaucrats abusing their offices for personal gain, the incidence of corruption in all sectors of Nigeria and regrettably, the higher education sector has assumed a worrisome dimension. The quality of education has been sacrificed in higher education institutions in Nigeria including Polytechnics because of the insatiable desires of some educational bureaucrats to find the easiest means of accumulating wealth. Today, HEI's in Nigeria are losing focus because HEI managers are busy pursuing their overall interest rather than the interest of their respective higher education institutions. Yizengaw (2008) noted that leadership and management in Sub-Saharan Africa face many challenges, as expressed in the incidence of uneconomical procurement through contract over-invoicing and large allocation of scarce finances to non-instructional expenditures leaving little or nothing for academic staff development. Yinzengaw (2008) argued that academic leaders have little preparation, orientation and training in skills for the positions they occupy.

Another leadership challenge evident in higher education in Nigeria is the issue of nepotism; which is the tendency of leadership to favor their friends or loyalist in staff recruitment, staff placement on the job roles, promotion and selection for training and development. Anyebe (2014:88) noted that when people in leadership position subject themselves to the canker worms of parochialism, nepotism and ethnic chauvinism, then the boat of HEI's will be rocked irretrievably to destruction. The incidence of corruption and nepotism in the training and development of academic staff in the Polytechnic education sub-sector as it exists is capable of undermining teaching, research and community development and perhaps account for the existing parlous state of Nigerian Polytechnics in the areas of research, innovation, teaching and learning.

Strikes

According to Akume and Abdullahi (2013) there is hardly a full academic session that student and staff crises will not disrupt academic calendar in higher education institutions in Nigeria. The major issue usually identified as a cause for these recurring strike actions is funding leaving scholars (Olukoju, 2002; Ezekwesili, 2006; Kpolovie and Obilor, 2013) to wonder why despite the country's oil wealth, Nigeria has not been able to fund HEI's adequately. Corroborating, the World Bank Nigeria Economic Report (World Bank, 2013) notes that despite the high economic growth reported in official statistics; Nigeria has yet to find a formula for translating its resource wealth into significant welfare improvements for the population.

The low level of budgetary allocation to the education sector affects the implementation of government policy on the higher education sub-sector and Polytechnics in particular and has been a source of conflict over the years. To ensure that Polytechnics are adequately funded, there was an agreement between the Federal Government and Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP) in the year 2001, which was reviewed later in

2009. Government however failed to keep up with its side of the bargain hence a renegotiation was called for in 2012 to consider the accumulated challenges confronting the Polytechnics.

The Publicity Secretary of the Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP), Clement Chirman listed the following as the critical challenges facing the Polytechnics for which the Union needed to enter into negotiations with the Federal Government.

1.   The need for a re-constitution of the Governing Councils of Federal Polytechnics which were dissolved in 2010.

2.   The Migration of the lower cadres on the CONTISS 15 salary scale. Government had approved the migration in 2009 and had actually begun its implementation for the senior cadres with strong assurances that those of the lower cadres would follow without delay.

3.   The release of the White Paper on the Visitations to Federal Polytechnics.

4.   The need for the commencement of the Needs Assessment of Nigerian Polytechnics.

5.   The worrisome state of state-owned polytechnics in the country. The argument to government here hitched on the rot and comatose state of most state polytechnics.

6.   The continued appointment of unqualified persons as Rectors and Provosts of Polytechnics, Monotechnics and Colleges of Technologies by some by state governments.

7.   The refusal of most State governments to implement the approved salary packages (CONPCASS) for their Polytechnics, Monotechnics and Colleges of Technologies and the 65-year retirement age even though both states and federal polytechnics are regulated by the National Board for Technical Education, NBTE, and they operate the same scheme of service.

8.   The insistence of the office of the Accountant General of the Federation to include Federal Polytechnics in the IPPIS module as against the Union's protestations while other arms of the tertiary education sub-sector are allowed to maintain the status quo.

9.   The dichotomy between university and polytechnic graduates in job placements and career progression. The argument in this regard is anchored on the fact that graduates from these sectors should be measured on the strength of their competence on job delivery and not the environment that produces them.

10.   The continued recognition of the NBTE as the regulatory body of Nigerian Polytechnics as against the union's repeated call for the establishment of a National Polytechnics Commission, NPC. The strength of the argument here is relevant as the universities and colleges of education are regulated by the National Universities Commission, NUC, and the National Commission for Colleges of Education, NCCE, respectively.

11.   The snail speed pace of the review of the Federal Polytechnics Act at the National Assembly.

12.   The reluctance of the Office of the Head of Service to approve the Revised Scheme of Service for Polytechnics.

13.   The non-commencement of the re-negotiation of the FGN/ASUP agreement as contained in the signed agreement.

The failure of government to accede to these demands led to the 11 months protracted strike embarked upon by Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP) from 2013 to the later part of the year 2014. The Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP) had earlier in Nov 26, 2001- April 4, 2002 embarked on strike action to demand for better condition of service. In April 2007, another strike action was called over the proposal by the Federal Government of Nigeria to merge Polytechnics and Colleges of Education to Universities. In all, in between 2002 and 2015 which has perhaps been the most protracted Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP) strike for over a decade, there have been pockets of strike action embarked upon by local chapters of the Academic Staff Union of Polytechnic (ASUP) as a result of disagreement between ASUP and management/ governing councils. The spate of strike actions in the Polytechnics have seriously compromised internal efficiency and have serious negative implications for academic staff development in Polytechnics.

Technology/ Energy problems

Polytechnics in Nigeria face great challenges in the area of how to integrate ICT into educational practices. The apparent lack of access to information technology impedes success in academic pursuit, the skills necessary to work in knowledge driven society, and ability to prosper in modern society (Aduwa-Ogiegbaen and Uwameiye, 2006). Likewise, is the problem of electricity for the effective utilization of ICT equipment. For Nigerian Polytechnics to become relevant in this knowledge society therefore, the problems of effective integration of information technology and steady supply of electricity should be addressed. Solving these problems will give staff more access to the internet for e-books, journals and articles and other internet and virtual materials can easily be sourced.

Thus, Surray and Land (2000) acknowledge the value of technology and assert that the problems facing higher education such as increased competition, decaying facility and decreasing government funding can be changed by technology. Roger (2000) submits that if higher institutions are to remain relevant in the millennium, they must be able to integrate technology into the classroom.

Low Level of interest in research/development of local initiatives

Olukoju (2004) notes that academic publishing in Nigeria and scholarly research has declined in terms of output, quality and regularity of publications in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. He attributes this negative trend to a number of factors ranging from a general decline in the standards and funding of education, a consequence of prolonged military rule characterized by lack of accountability and a thinly veiled culture of obscurantism. Commenting further, Olukoju (2004) opined that academics got distracted from their primary assignments of teaching, research and supervision of students, and were made to dissipate energy confronting official neglect and wrong-headed policies. This trend he noted has serious implications for academic staff development in Nigeria Polytechnics as the recipe for continual existence in a knowledge driven society is to be able to adapt to a system that people can continually expand their capacity to create results they truly desire, and where people are constantly learning how to learn together (Senge 1990).

Lack of sustained links for partnership and fellowship

Perhaps, a major challenge facing tertiary institutions in Nigeria is the lack of sustained link for partnership and fellowship with other institutions. This problem was one of the issues on the agenda of the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education held in Paris from the 5th to the 8th of July 2009. The final communiqué adopted at the end of the conference emphasized the need for 'partner–ships,' as part of the solution to bridge the human resources development gap. Increasing the transfer of knowledge across borders, especially towards developing countries is a welcome idea that ideally should be sourced by the Polytechnics. Thus, the call for partnerships is meant to ensure the quality and sustainability of higher education systems worldwide (Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley, 2009). To ensure optimal utilization of human resources in Nigeria Polytechnics, there is the dire need to create an enabling environment that will foster partnership amongst institutions locally and globally.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has been able to highlight some of the challenges of academic staff development and advocates the need to revisit the policy framework for academic staff development of Nigeria Polytechnics as one of the measures that have to be taken to address this concern. The literature reviewed point to a revelation that changing times demand that present and future challenges of academic staff development of Nigeria Polytechnics be enhanced by appropriate policy framework and strict adherence to international best practices in academic staff development. Furthermore, the strengthening of administrative capacity to drive and implement policy and provide leadership with strategies that favour development oriented growth on the job for academic staff is equally observed as another measure to address the concern.

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