



# Policy Implementation and the Challenges of Leadership in Nigerian Universities

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## Abstract

This paper examined policy implementation and the challenges of leadership in Nigerian universities. From critical and relevant literature review, the paper presents the role of effective policy implementation in achieving the goals of Nigerian universities. It further examined policy implementation models and processes and suggests that university leadership should always choose appropriate model and design suitable whenever a new policy is to be introduced in the system. The paper highlighted likely challenges a policy implementer can face and supports the use of a four-media model in analyzing the challenges of policy implementation. It also highlighted that the leadership structure of Nigerian universities, the numerous challenges of the leadership of Nigerian universities exposed some similarities with the challenges of policy implementation. The paper suggests a four-dimension solution model addressing the challenges of the two variables. The paper also suggests further empirical research on the application of the suggested model in addressing the challenges of policy implementation and leadership in Nigerian universities.

**Keywords:** Policy, Policy Implementation, Leadership, Management, Policy implementation models, Policy Implementation Processes, Educational Management, Policymakers, Bureaucracy.

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## INTRODUCTION

Nigerian universities are established to mainly address manpower needs of the nation. These needs as well as goals and aspirations of universities are achieved through the implementation of formulated policies. Every policy of government is formulated with the aim of addressing certain issues and challenges of a sector in a nation. Policies are therefore the instruments for the actualization of specific goals and objectives. However, policy implementation has not been easy. Since the 1960s when Nigeria attained independence and started formulating and

implementing policies to achieve defined objectives, the process has not been free from challenges, neither has the system been able to totally achieve desired goals. Even university policies meant to facilitate growth and development of the nation are affected by diverse challenges in such a way that Senator Babafemi Ojudu in his presentation during the fifth Senior Staff Association of Nigerian universities, Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta Distinguished lecture series asked why higher education continues to suffer a precipitous fall (Ojudu, 2012).

Sadly, after over seventy (70) years into the establishment of the first higher educational institution in Nigeria, universities currently operate mostly like glorified secondary schools and have failed in producing the needed man power for the nation. Rather than make optimum contribution to national development through making professional course content reflect national requirements, intensifying and diversifying programmes for the development of high level manpower within the context of the needs of the nation and making all students to be part of a general programme of all-round improvement, Nigeria universities mostly continue to produce half-baked graduates. Employers of labour continue to complain about the quality of the graduates. Rather than be recognized as centres for learning which is characterized by constant quest for new ideas, knowledge and pragmatic solutions to societal problems, universities in Nigeria have engineering workshops without the needed Technology and Skills (Koko, 2015). Recent developments in the university system are not indicative of the expected high standards. This is buttressed by the recent decision of heads of tertiary institutions including JAMB, Vice Chancellors, Rectors and Provosts at the policy meeting in June 2018 which approved 140 as the cut off mark for entry into universities making it the lowest cut off score ever recorded (Olawole, 2018). Nigerian universities are paralyzed, denigrated and in deplorable condition.

Onyekakayah (2007) stated that the instruments for learning are lacking, teaching and learning are done in the most unconducive environment, the libraries have outdated books, new journals and publications cannot be acquired because there is no subsidy, the laboratories are a mockery of what they ought to be, there is no feeding on campus, many students literarily go hungry, the lecturers do not get commensurate pay like their counterparts elsewhere, the workload of most lecturers is enormous as brain drain has taken its toll on capable hands that would have been here.

Though the current condition of the universities are not as deplorable as described by Onyekakayah in 2007, the situation has still not met international best standards. There are some physical infrastructural improvements especially with the introduction of the policy on Tertiary Education Tax Fund (TETfund). However, the quality of education continues to fall below expectation.

The government is very clear on the goals and objectives the universities are expected to achieve as these were formulated and stated in the National Policy on Education (NPE). The summary of the goals and objectives of university education in Nigeria as expressed in the National Policy on Education (2013) include contribution to national development, cementing national unity, reduction of skill shortages, promotion of entrepreneurship and community service, and provision of accessible and affordable quality learning opportunities in response to the needs and interests of all Nigerians. To achieve these broad goals, several policies have been formulated and implemented and the government has embarked on several educational reforms. There has been policy changes from the time of the first generation universities of regionally-owned/ controlled universities, to the exclusive-ownership/control of universities by the Federal Government, to an era when universities are owned by both federal and state governments only,

to the current status of ownership by Federal Government, State Government and Private Individuals/Organizations. Not only has there being policy reforms in the control and ownership of universities, there has also been policy reforms in the funding, management and leadership of the universities.

According to Eneh and Owo (2009), policy reforms have become the way of life for government. This is done in order to continue to improve the university educational system so as to achieve the expected goals. However, despite these policy reforms and constant summersaults in Nigeria, which are done attempts at correcting the wrongs in the system, very little has been achieved. Nwankwaola (2018) and Daniel-Kalio (2018) highlighted that the problem is not so much about making sound policies but it is with poor policy implementation. According to Njodi (2005) Nigeria's education sector is facing many challenges mainly because successive governments failed to properly implement the various policies so far introduced. Each government introduced its new policy on education thereby abolishing an existing one. These acts of policy summersaults throw the universities and their leadership structure into confusion. On the other hand, the leadership of the universities is expected to facilitate the implementation of appropriate policies and ensure that the universities remain focused on achieving their goals and objectives. The question then is: with policy reforms and implementation of same at different times and the constitution of an appropriate leadership structure to enforce implementation, why are the policies not achieving the expected educational goals of the universities? This paper seeks to examine the challenges of policy implementation and leadership of Nigerian universities through reviewing policy implementation, understanding the policy implementation process, the possible challenges and solutions to effective policy implementation, understanding leadership in Nigeria universities, the possible leadership challenges in Nigeria universities and possible solutions to policy implementation and leadership challenges in Nigerian universities.

## **CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION**

This section clarifies the basic concepts in this paper such as policy implementation and leadership.

### **Policy Implementation**

Policy is a law, regulation, procedure, administrative action, incentive, or voluntary practice of governments and other institutions. Policy decisions are frequently reflected in resource allocations (Centers for Disease Control and Protection, 2015). According to Torjman (2005) policy is a broad concept that embodies several different dimensions. He further defined public policy as "a deliberate and (usually) careful decision that provides guidance for addressing selected public concerns". Policies guide organizations, institutions and the world at large. Without policies in a place, activities/programmes will be without direction and purpose. Okoroma (2006) argued that policy serves the purpose of ensuring that every official action of an organization/institution has a backing. It brings about a meaningful relationship between the objective of a business and the operations of the business and discourages deviations from planned courses of action. Accordingly, the formulation of the right policies and their effective implementation are very critical to the success of any organization. After the policy makers have gathered experts to plan and formulate good and flawless policies, the second stage of the policy

process is ensuring its proper implementation. Policy implementation therefore means the putting into action all the plans enunciated in a policy. The implementation gives life to the policy itself. No wonder implementation is considered by some scholars as the most active and important phase of the policy process. In Nigeria, policy implementation involves all of the activities designed to carry out the policies made by the legislative arm of government or any other authorized body (Daniel-Kalio, 2018). The implication of the above in Nigerian universities is that all the different types of policies formulated by the Federal Government, National Universities Commission (NUC), University Governing Council, University senate etc are implemented by the leadership of the universities at different levels to facilitate goal achievement (Atelhe & Akande 2018).

The success and/or failure of any policy are majorly determined by its implementation. The need for effective policy implementation and the likely factors that may constitute an obstacle is perhaps the reason Ikelegbe (2006) in Atelhe and Akande (2018) identified some crucial questions bordering on policy implementation to be answered by those involved which include questions like, how is the policy being implemented by the implementing institution and how is the target group responding to the implementation of the policy, etc? A policy is a mere statement on paper if not implemented. So these and many more questions should be considered always in policy implementation.

## **Leadership**

The leadership of any organization determines the extent to which goals and objectives are achieved. Leadership is a process of providing direction in group activities and influencing others to achieve group objectives. Anyone who is in a position of leadership must have the ability to influence other people and make them do what he/she wants them to do. Maxwell (1999) in Nwekeaku (2013 p.187) defined leadership “as the capacity and will to rally men and women to a common purpose and character which inspires confidence”. The interpretation of this definition and indeed others is that leadership inspires people in an organization to bring out their best for the attainment of the organization’s goals. Nwekeaku (2013) is of the view that “leadership is the catalyst that motivates, inspires and propels both the management and staff of an organization for the attainment of the organizational goals through efficient utilization of its (organization) resources. The leadership strength of any organization affects its success or failure. Good leadership is one of the basic needs of a university. A good leader is a problem solver or a solution provider and the university needs one.

## **Understanding the Policy Implementation Process**

Policy implementation is a purposeful and multidirectional change process in the educational system which aims at putting specific policies into action that may affect the system on several levels. When policies are implemented in the universities, it is expected that certain positive changes should occur. There is no need to formulate and implement a policy in futility. If resources are committed to formulate policies which are intended to achieve educational goals, then this same commitment should be made towards the implementation. Poor implementation of policies is not a new phenomenon in Nigerian universities, yet more and more new policies are being formulated. Nigerian universities have suffered poor implementation of various global, federal and state government policies. According to Ahmed and Dantata (2016 p.61),

“implementation has been described as one of the major problems confronting developing countries. It is more difficult in the third world, and may be most difficult in reform oriented governments in the third world such as Africa and Latin America and most usually it is the problem of widening gap between intentions and result”.

To overcome these difficulties a number of things need to be done. Considering the importance of policies to the university system, it is pertinent to critically analyze and understand the fundamental policy implementation processes for successful goal achievement of the entire process. It is important to also understand that there are different implementation models that can be used depending on the circumstances, the environment and the institutional leadership. In all these, the leadership of the process is very vital.

### **Policy implementation models**

The policy implementation models include the top-down, bottom up, policy-action relationship, inter-organizational interaction, a rational choice and synthesis of bottom-up and top-down implementation models (Egyankosh, n.d; Signe, 2017). These six (6) models are briefly described below:

**The Top-Down policy implementation model** depicts the cascading of policies from the national or Apex office down to the universities through to the various departments. In using this model, communication is also from the top to the actual implementers of the policy. Signe (2017) asserted that the top-down approach which is the first generation thinking is in line with how educational policies are implemented, even in the universities. The top-down model regularly neglects prior context and political aspects of policy as if the implementation were only a matter of administration, depending only on the availability of resources. The model focuses on the entity drafting the policy rather than those affected by it and ignore the role of policy opponents who make demand on the policy process. Top-down policy implementation model has largely fallen out of favour because the model assumes that policy makers can master control the policy implementation environment.

The next is the **bottom-up policy implementation model** founded by Lipsky (1980) in Signe (2017) which views policy from the perspective of the target population and the service deliverers. The model relies on the discretion of those who implement the policy in the field as a key factor in successful implementation. Egyankosh (n.d) suggested that the implementation process of bottom-up model involves policy-making by those who are involved in putting policy into effect. This model is based on the philosophy that control over people is not the mechanism for effective policy implementation and argues that the decisions of “street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures effectively become the public policies they carry out. This implies that beyond the issue of proper formulation of the policy content, there are realities to contend with which the street-level bureaucrats are privy to. It allows for practicing professionals like doctors, teachers and social workers to shape policies and play an important role in ensuring the performance of a policy.

The third model is **the synthesis of top-down and bottom-up models**. This model is a blend of contributions from the top-down and bottom-up models. This is as a result of the fact that researchers recognize the value of both models and they made a major attempt to combine them into a comprehensive explanatory model. Synthesizing models include a wide range of influential contribution. Cerna (2013) and Viennet and Pont (2017) recognized that change is an

organic process that needs to engage those who are on ground and advocates the use of networks and mutual dependences to analyze policy implementation. As seen in modern university education systems, where multiple actors must interact and co-ordinate with each other including government, the model emphasizes the use of networks in complex policy systems stating that actors do not yield resources to implement a policy by themselves.

**Policy-Action relationship model** developed by Lewis and Flynn viewed policy implementation as action by actors that is constrained by the world outside the organization. This model implies that the outside environment affects the activities of an organization and such influences should not be ignored. According to Egyankosh (n.d) emphasis on the interaction with the outside world and the organizations institutional context imply that policy goals are not the only guides to action. The implication of this model is a total dependence on each other signifying the importance of both the policy maker and those who have the resources. When in use, this model requires not only professionalism in policy formulation and implementation but also a good understanding of the other key factors external to the university like the environment, the economy and the politics of the time. Since every policy is to bring about a positive change in the university education system, the law making, the funding and administration are all critical components to be considered properly in the policy implementation process. The model places emphasis on issues of power and dependence, pursuits of interests, than in either the top-down or the bottom-up models.

The fifth is **the inter-organizational interaction model** which basically handles policy implementation between different organizations. It involves the interaction of multiplicity of organizations and this can be managed using either the Power-Dependency Approach or Organizational Exchange Approach. Considering that organizations differ in influence, power and size, the power-dependency approach is used when an organization depends on organizations resourcefulness for sustenance. The organization has to work in such a way as to secure and protect their interest and maintain their relative autonomy so that implementation does not suffer. The organizational exchange approach is used when organizations are relating with their counter parts like a university versus another university. Relationship between the organizations is mutual and not dominance and dependence as it is in the power-dependency approach. The university system operates at different levels at different times and engages in partnerships and collaboration. This model will always apply in these engagements.

There is also the **Rational Choice model** which is based on an assumption that policy implementation requires the clarification of goals, missions and objectives, detailed planning, appropriate job assignments, effective monitoring and evaluation, comprehensive and efficient operating procedures, and techniques required to assist implementers to define the scope of their responsibilities in line with policy objectives. This is a more scientific model and belongs to the third generation thinking. Khan and Khandakar (2016, p. 543) stated that “this is a policy implementation model that believes in clearer goals, targets and objectives. The more accurate and consistent the plan is, the greater the possibility of successful implementation”. Adequate standardization, detailed task assignment and greater level of monitoring, increase the potential for success using this model. The conceptual premise of these six (6) models agree with the five (5) policy implementation models advocated by Khan and Khandakar (2016) which is christened rational, management, organizational development, bureaucratic and political models. Khan and Khandakar (2016) emphasized that certain factors such as organizational structure, personnel and human resources, frontline implementers, equipment and technology, the level of coordination

and cooperation, the exercise of authority, political, organizational and other key factors should be given adequate consideration in the policy implementation process.

According to Egyankosh (n.d), there are scholars who regard public policy implementation as a political game. The game model was advocated by Bardach in 1977. Bardach stated that policy implementation is a game of bargaining, persuasion and maneuvering under conditions of uncertainties. The model sees organization as a structure composed of groups and individuals, all seeking to maximize their power and influence. From this perspective, policy implementation is about self- interested people who are playing policy games and implementers attempt to win as much control as possible and make moves in the game so as to achieve their objectives. Bardach’s model presents a view that successful implementation of policy using the top-down approach should have a comprehensive understanding of the political processes involved down the line.

The review of the different models of policy implementation reveals that there are various options available for university leaders to choose from when implementing policies. It also shows that the choice of a model is dependent on several factors like the organisation’s structure, value, purpose of the policy, action actors, etc. The decision of choice is oftentimes influenced by their interest, values, political inclinations, economic disposition etc. Irrespective of the adopted policy implementation model and process, Reynolds and Saunders (1987 in Trowlers, 2002) introduced a policy implementation staircase for policy implementation in universities. The staircase indicates the flow of the lines of authority and policy implementation applicable in the universities.

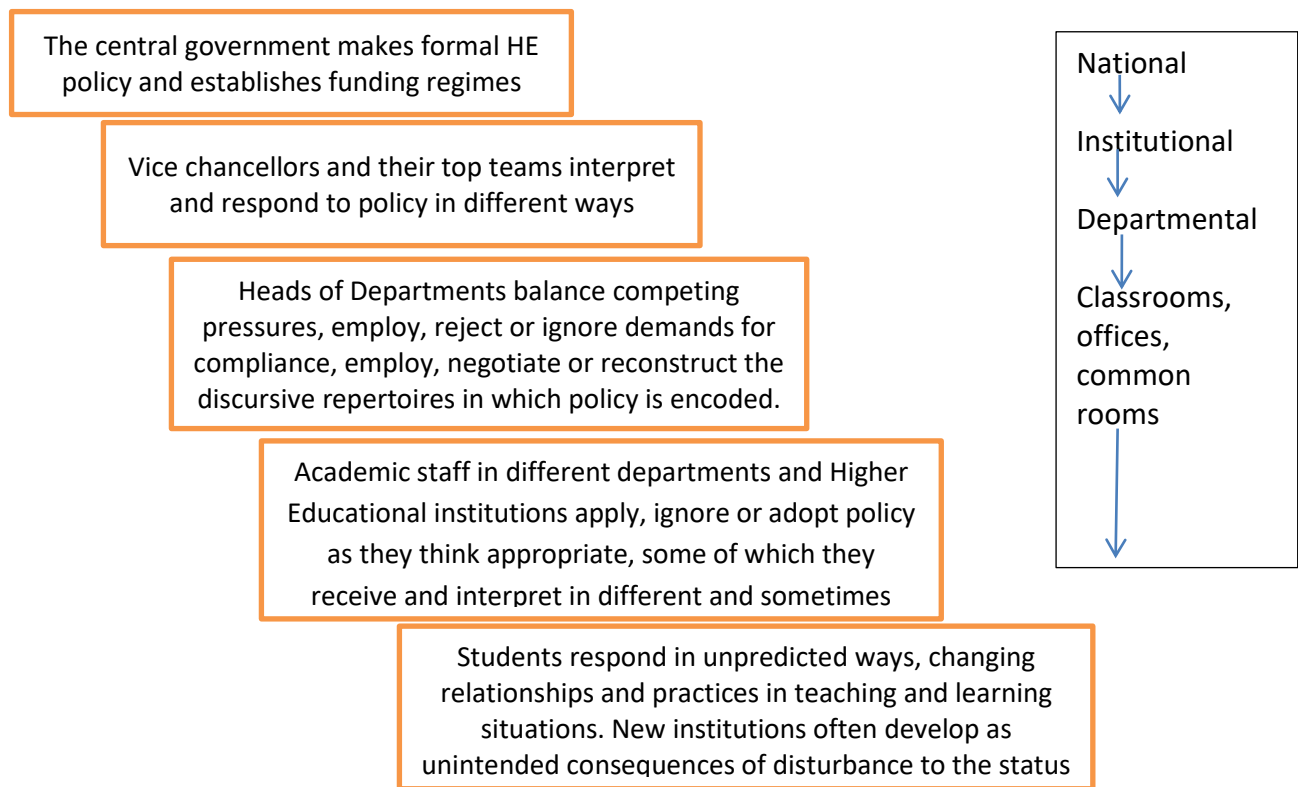


Figure 1: The Policy Implementation Staircase. Source: Adopted from Reynolds and Saunders 1987 in Trowlers (2002).

## Policy Implementation Process

The process of policy implementation begins with a policy decision expressed in statutory or other official terms. According to Daniel-Kalio (2018) these statutes/policies are then handed over to the appropriate administrative ministries, departments or agencies to issue rules and directives that will make the policy more specific for implementation. The agencies often times do routine and tedious activities in the process to ensure the success of the policy. The failure of any policy implementation implies failure of the entire policy process and waste of time and resources. This means that policy implementation is an administrative action and therefore fails in the domain of administrative agencies, departments and faculties often called the bureaucracy. Ugwuanyi and Chukwuemeka (2013) opined that bureaucracy in Nigeria is composed of the Federal Civil Service, the Civil Services of the 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, the Civil Services of the 774 Local Government Areas, the Federal and State Parastatals or Corporations, the Armed forces, Federal and State Agencies, Institutions and Commissions. The bureaucrats are those who work and operate within the public bureaucracy and determine the course and speed of policy implementation. Technically, it is the public bureaucracy that decides what should be done, how it should be done and who should actually benefit from the policies. They translate formulated policies into practical realities. Therefore the adequacy and efficiency of public bureaucracy is very important to the entire nation and to all areas of development process. If public bureaucracy is unable to effectively implement a policy, such a policy cannot achieve its goals and objectives.

The university leadership and management system is part of the bureaucracy and successful implementation of educational policies relating to universities is dependent on the efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness of the administrative system. According to Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980 in Signe, 2017), there are five (5) distinct stages in the policy implementation process. They are:

- Policy outputs and decisions of implementing agencies;
- The compliance of targeted groups with the decisions made;
- The realized impacts of policy decisions;
- The perceived impacts of policy decision;
- The political system's evaluation of statute in terms of major revision in its content.

Meyer, Durlak and Wandersman (2012 in Signe 2017) on the other hand, described a "quality implementation framework" incorporating four phases which are, initial considerations about the goal setting, creating an implementation structure, the ongoing structure post-start and improving future application. The implication of this process is that in the first phase, assessment of the various contextual factors such as organizational capacity should be done after which the ways of intervention should be considered. Viennet and Pont (2017) in an attempt to clarify what implementing policies involve in a complex education system such as the university, suggested how to think about policy implementation with the illustrative diagram below.



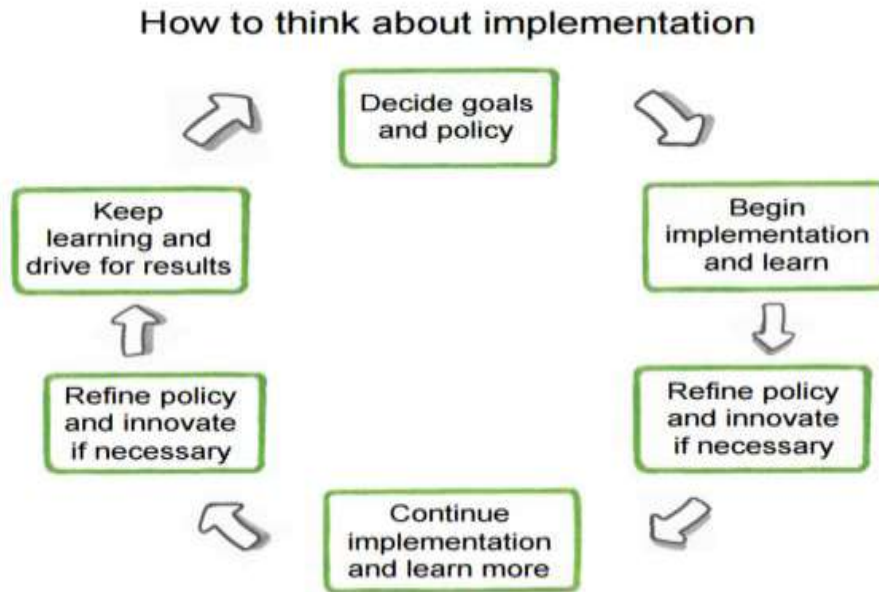


Figure 2: How to think about implementation

Also, Mthethwa, (n.d) in its work on current public policy implementation model in EMPANGEN Education District suggested a six-phased policy implementation process adapted from the Wissink’s stage model. The phases are; introduction of public policy, analysis and internalization of public policy, creation of public policy implementation environment, support, monitoring and reporting on public policy implementation, feedback of public policy implementation and re-submission of modified public policy implementation.

To have policies achieve the purposes for which they are formulated, Wikipedia (n. d) stated that it is pertinent to strictly follow the eight (8) step policy implementation process which are:

- The identification of the issue to be addressed by the policy
- The conduct of proper policy analysis
- Ensuring adequate consultation.
- Developing adequate policy instrument.
- Building coordination and coalition.
- Designing the programme by making necessary decisions.
- Effectively implementing policy according to plan.
- Evaluating policy performance after its implementation.

No policy can achieve the desired outcomes without following proper implementation processes and having understanding and knowledge of what is expected. This implies that those who are charged with the management of university education should have proper understanding of the goals of the universities, the changes expected, the appropriate policies necessary to achieve the goals, the operating environments of the university institutions, the policy implementation processes etc.

These processes and many more by different scholars imply that there is no single process that fits all purposes. The intent of the policy, organizational structure, the stakeholders involved, the political and social environment, the bureaucrats and administrative agencies etc

are all determinants of the appropriate process to adapt (Egonmwam, 1991 and Ikelegbe, 1994 in Okpata & Udofia, 2016).

### **The Challenges and Possible Solutions to Effective Policy Implementation**

Irrespective of the policy implementation model and processes chosen by the leadership of Nigerian universities, there are several factors that militate against effective policy implementation. Some of the challenging factors are unforeseen and sometimes unavoidable while others are preventable and avoidable. It is critical to be aware of these challenges and prepare to surmount them in order to be successful.

Viennet and Pont (2017, p.8) opined that “there is a difference between passing a policy bill and turning it into daily practices for lecturers, university administrators, students and local communities. Details of policy implementation are oftentimes left for administrators and educators to figure out, leaving the policy half-way through”. Governments, experts and international organizations have come to acknowledge the need to focus more on implementation processes. This fact has also attracted researchers to investigate and identify the factors militating against effective policy implementation in order to proffer solutions (Gurria, 2015; Wagstaff, 2013; Pont, 2008; OECD, 2016 in Viennet & Pont, 2017). Odukoya (2009, p.12) quoted professor Ajayi a one-time Provost of Federal College of Education (FCE) Osiele, Ogun State as saying that within the eight years (1991-1999) that he served as a provost, the nation passed through five (5) different regimes and stated that he operated under eight (8) ministers of education. The same thing happened at the state level. Each of the Presidents, Ministers, Governors and Commissioners had their own different conceptions and policies on education that they tried to implement during their tenures. With such instability in the system of governance coupled with constant changes in “Ministers for” and “Commissioner for” one should not be surprised at the level of the crises the nation's education system has witnessed over the years and the inconsistency and often times, contradictory nature of the educational policies and practices. It is one step forward and two steps backward.

Odukoya (2009) is of the view that there are contradictions between policy statements in the National Policy on Education and the reality on ground. For instance he stated that less than 50% of graduates of our tertiary institutions are products of sciences and technology institutions. Graduates of humanities and social sciences are far more than that of science and technology. This is contrary to the national policy on education which recommended 70% admission into science and technology programmes.

Considering the importance of policy implementation to educational goal achievement, scholars have done tremendous research work to continue to investigate factors that negatively affect the process. Some of the works reviewed in this area include Ugwuanyi and Chukwuemeka (2013) who in their work on the obstacles to effective policy implementation by the public bureaucracy in developing nations, with Nigeria as a case study, identified the followings as factors militating against policy implementation:

- Ineffective and corrupt leadership;
- Corruption in public bureaucracy and the pressure/influence of primordial demands and values in bureaucracy;
- Undue political influence on the bureaucrats;
- Overbearing selfish and egoistic interest of political leaders

- Over ambitious nature of some policies;
- Lack of adequate manpower and financial resources for implementation;
- The unfavorable disposition of the bureaucrats towards the policy and change;
- The abrogation of the policies by successive government.

Viennet and Pont (2017) also highlighted challenges to implementing education policy as including co-ordination issues, inadequate organizational resources, actors capacity or reactions against reforms, effect of technologies etc. Other factors include bureaucracy, poor funding, institution carrying capacity, poor understanding of the policy, political environment, inadequate facilities, shortage of teachers, insufficient training/retraining programmes, poor statistical records, employment of wrong professionals, poor communication, over dependence on external aids, insufficient focus on implementation, enacting change in a complex education system, lack of political will, ineffective leadership, sectionalism, ethnic biases, effects of historical antecedents, poor reading culture, elusive policies, lack of involvement of field staff and target groups in the process, incompatibility of organizational structure of government with functional requirement of development process, lack of adequate monitoring, shortage of time, the policy itself etc.(Ugwanyi & Chukwuemeka 2013; Adetunji & Ogunleye 2015; Nnajifor, Ifeakor & Ishola, 2018; Daniel-Kalio, 2018).

Daniel-Kalio (2018) in her work on the process of policy implementation in the management of change in the education sector summarized the challenges of policy implementation into a four- media model categorizing all the factors into four groups which are environmental, political, economy and the policy itself.

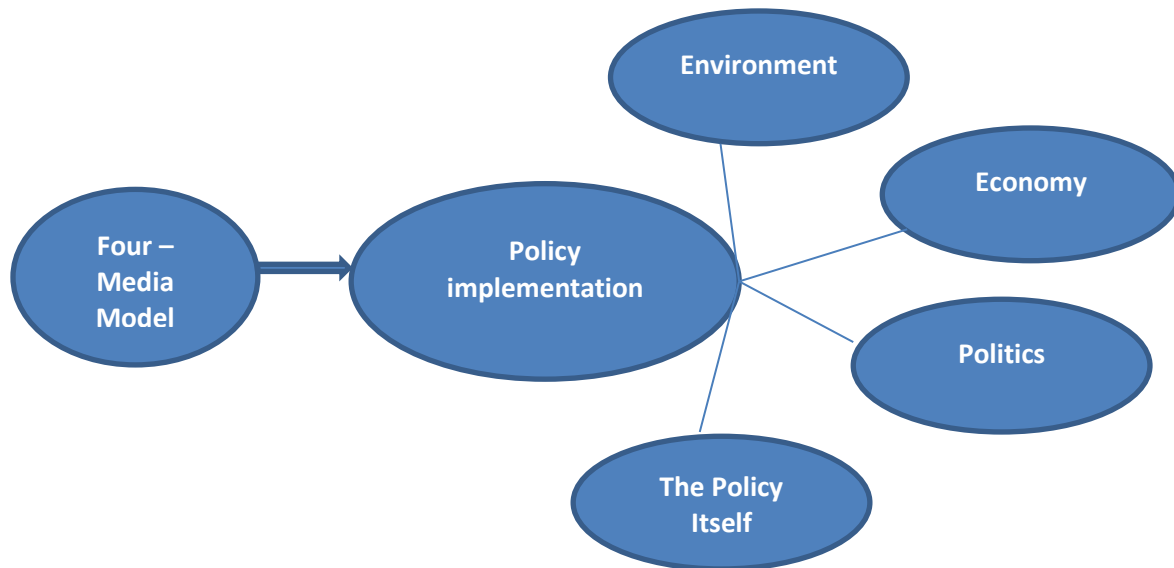


Figure 3: A diagram showing a Four- Media Model of Challenges facing Policy Implementation Source: Daniel-Kalio (2018). The Process of Policy Implementation in the Management of Change in the Education Sector

In an empirical research conducted by Adetunji and Ogunleye (2015) on implementing government policies in university education highlighting the challenges faced by Nigerian universities' principal officers, certain interesting views emanated. For instance, a dean of faculty of a university interviewed postulated that Nigerian universities simply implement government policies based on the documents (structure) sent to them by the government, while a Vice Chancellor of a private university stated that government policies are developed from the grassroots from parents to academics, from academics to NUC and so on. In the same work, while some principal officers are of the view that there are no problems in implementing government policies because government policies are reasonable, others are of the view that government makes unrealistic and problematic policies and make them in theory. For instance the policy of free education is ironical when in actual fact, universities are not funded enough to provide it. Some respondents were also of the view that government policies require revisiting in order to achieve purposes.

The analysis of the opinions of these principal officers in the university system portends dangerous controversies, non-uniformed practices in universities and projects a confused system. Adetunji's work highlighted the bureaucratic challenge mentioned earlier. It however exposed the fact that the bureaucratic process is less tedious in private universities than the public universities and the implication on the public universities can better be imagined. Adetunji and Ogunleye (2015) concluded by stating that it is evident that university management has also contributed their part to non- implementation of government policy through undue paper work, mismanagement of funds allocated to the university by the government, an approach which should be discouraged within the academic environment considering the fact that the principal officers in a university are expected to be role models. They further stated that all the challenges discussed can be controlled internally therefore principal officers need to assume their responsibilities squarely. I dare say that the challenges highlighted above can all be addressed with political will and proper management of resources in the universities.

### **Mitigation of the Challenges Affecting Effective Policy Implementation**

The challenges affecting policy implementation in the higher education institutions are surmountable with commitment, determination and purpose-driven leadership by the managers of the system. This was clearly stated in the study of Ugwuanyi and Chukwuemeka (2013) where they emphasized that "a focused, purposeful and responsible political leadership at the head of all levels of government and university institutions are major ways of achieving effectiveness in implementing educational policies". Other ways of achieving effectiveness according to them are; improvement in the working conditions of the administrative staff, reduction in the political infiltration by politicians in the bureaucratic activities and the discouragement of the culture of discontinuity of policies in cases of change in government or organizational leadership. This is in line with Nnajiolor, Ifeakor and Mgbemena (n.d.) who suggested political will, knowing the needs of the people and engaging stakeholders as ways of enhancing policy implementation in Nigeria. In their study titled Nigeria and the enigma of policy implementation Ugwuanyi and Chukwuemeka (2013) further advocated that the pace at which policies can be effectively implemented be hinged essentially on the ability of the government to formulate appropriate policies and very importantly on the capacity of the public bureaucracy to effectively implement the formulated policies.

Signe (2017) also suggested that access to available funding and resources is a precondition for successful policy implementation. There is a saying that money answers all things. Every well-formulated good policy requires resources (men, money and material) to translate the idea to reality. Therefore access to funding is critical if policies are to achieve desired goals. While funding alone will not generate success, it will be difficult to mobilize other aspects of an implementation strategy without funding.

According to Daniel-Kalio (2018) successful policy implementation requires political will, involvement of the implementers of policy in the process, building administrative capacity, proper communication, compatibility of organizational structure of government with functional requirement of development processes, involvement of target groups in the process, corruption free system, adequate monitoring, adequate financial resources, realistic targets, adequate implementation timing and a well-formulated policy. Egyankosh (n.d, p.168) suggested that “it is important for the policy implementation authority to construct a policy-implementing network which will ensure that policy tasks occur in proper sequence and on time so as to achieve success”. The suggested policy implementation network is expected to help the management of the institution to identify the critical tasks in the policy in a sequential manner and timing that will ensure policy performance. Egyankosh (n.d) also identified allocation of task personnel and good decision making in the face of unanticipated events as additional ways of ensuring effective policy implementation. Other factors considered by Egyankosh (n.d) are comprehensive understanding of the political process involved in the entire policy implementation process and that policy makers always ensured that external circumstances do not impose crippling constraints, adequate time and resources are made available, policy to be implemented is based upon a valid cause and effect theory, there is complete understanding of and an agreement on the objectives to be achieved, there is perfect communication, that those in authority can demand and obtain perfect obedience and the process should be analyzed in terms of organizational structure for the implementation process to be successful.

The research is indicative of the fact that implementing an education policy involves getting a large number of actors to co-operate at various levels of the university system in order to translate the policies into new learning materials for students, new methods of teaching by teachers/lecturers, new management practices for leaders, new assessments etc.

Among the various elements of policy, implementation is the most important and yet the least developed. Therefore efforts of systems managers should always be on how best to effectively implement policies. No policy should be formulated and introduced into the university system without adequate consideration and analysis. And when introduced, should not be easily thrown out or abrogated. Viennet and Pont (2017) were of the view that continuous reversal of policy without justification is detrimental to the achievement of socio-economic policy goals set by government. Their study recommended that under no circumstances should any administration abrogate an existing policy with the notion that the policy is an initiative of the previous administration. This practice is highly detrimental to educational development in the nation. A situation where a new Vice Chancellor wants to outdo the predecessor and abrogates policies of the university just to introduce new policies without minding the consequences and various implications of such an action is retrogressive.

Introduction and implementation of a new policy is not a cheap exercise and should not be embarked upon unnecessarily without very serious considerations. Instead, every educational policy implementation should have a well- articulated implementation process with well-defined strategies that will facilitate goal achievement. As a matter of fact, Barbara, Joicey, Pletcher,

Shaw, Whaley, Peters and Dunlap (2014) advocated an initial implementation of a policy at selected sites in form of a pilot study before the full application of the new policy in the entire organization or institution. This proposition has merit as it will prevent colossal waste of resources if anything goes wrong. This view is however different from the views of other scholars whose policy implementation processes did not include a pilot implementation of a new policy before adopting it all over the organization. However, what is common in all the studies reviewed is that there are stages and processes involved in policy implementation which managers of universities must not ignore if they are to achieve the goals of the policy and the expected change.

### **Understanding Leadership in Nigerian Universities**

Leading Nigerian universities is a herculean task. Most Nigerian universities lack adequate funding, well equipped laboratories, functional libraries, conducive learning and stimulating environment and other basic requirements for academic programmes to thrive and be productive. It takes a good university leader to still manage in the prevailing circumstances and optimize the best. An effective university leadership can direct human resources towards the objectives of the university and ensure the alignment of organizational functions with external environment. Effective leaders are able to predict the future and design choice strategies to satisfy uncertainties (Raiz & Haider 2010, in Daramola & Amos, 2016). Like other universities, Nigerian universities are established to teach, research, build capacity and provide community services in order to engender dynamic social, technological, and economic development. Performing these obligations in the face of current realities is enormous which is why Nigerian university education is considered as a complex organization of interactions among independent bodies, groups and individuals with the aim of achieving the national educational goals. Nigerian universities are yet under serious pressure to provide specialized training to more students, develop and transfer technologies to industry and provide responses to societal needs. Daramola and Amos (2016) stated that University leadership must manage knowledge production, knowledge impartation and knowledge dissemination or transfer by way of research, teaching and service delivery, as well as the resources and facilities to ensure adequate flow of their operations. In all of these, the role of a committed Vice Chancellor as a leader ready to provide the time, support and role modeling as well as his/her commitment to democratic behavior, competence and concern for the wellbeing of the people being led cannot be over emphasized (Nakpodia, 2009).

In every organization, good leadership is fundamental to growth, development and success, particularly in a university which is a place of learning that supports students to achieve professional knowledge, skill and understanding. A leader is one who makes this a reality by building a strong and positive relationship between the students and faculty members who facilitate the learning process. Therefore, while it is important to have a good mix of curriculum, world class infrastructure and good students from the secondary schools are of great importance, Ogunraku (2016) is of the view that managerial competencies that are capable of harnessing these inputs into excellent finished products are of greater importance. This view is supported by Daramola and Amos (2016) who stated that while management is the ability to cope with complexity, to devise structures and system that produce order and harmony, leadership is the ability to cope with change, to establish a new direction and to get institutions and individuals to

move in that direction. A Vice Chancellor’s job involves both management and leadership, but the latter is more important than the former.

Bain (2004) in Daramola and Amos (2016) is of the view that the Vice Chancellor should be an enabler rather than a controller. This view is very critical and necessary to highlight especially as it concerns the complexities of policy implementation. The understanding of the role of the Vice Chancellor as an enabler rather than a controller is expected to facilitate better coordination of resources. Good university governance/leadership should be collegial, transparent and responsible for better result opined Bain (2004) in Daramola and Amos (2016).

The leadership of the university as provided for by the laws and statutes establishing them will include the Chancellor, the Pro-Chancellor, Chairman of Governing Council, the Vice Chancellor and Chairman of Senate, Deputy Vice Chancellor(s), the Registrar, and Secretary of the Council, Senate, Congregation and Convocation, the Librarian, the Bursar, Provosts, Deans, Heads of Departments/Units and Directors of various Units of operation. This is exemplified below.

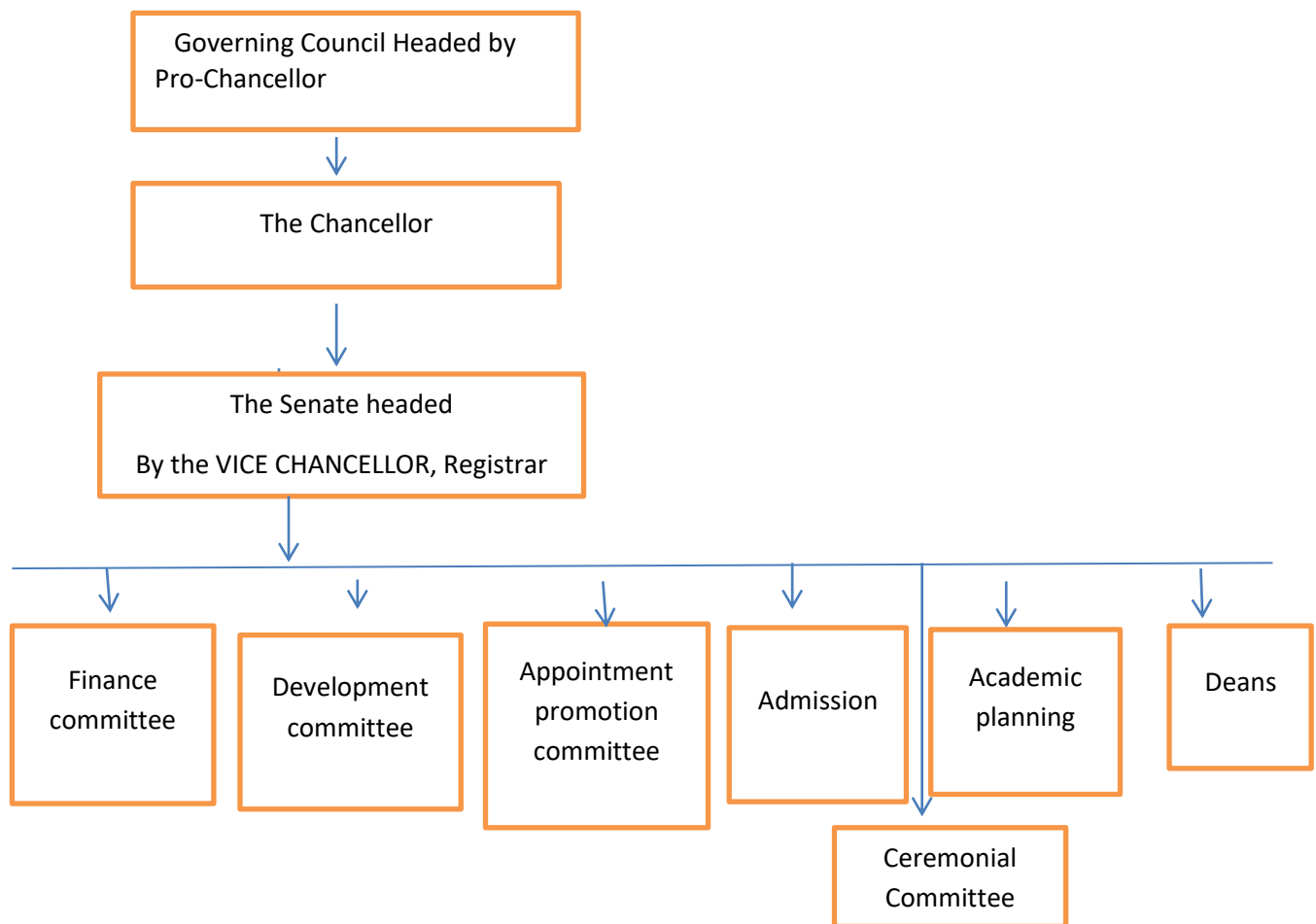


Figure 4: Internal Management Structure of Universities

Source: Ajayi and Ekundayo (n.d); Ademola, Ogundipe, and Babatunde (2014).

As seen in the organogram, internal policy matters rest squarely on the shoulders of the Governing Council, and the Senate headed by the Vice Chancellor who regulates the academic activities of the university using the general guidelines stipulated by NUC as the guide. The

Governing Council in a public university is usually made up of both external and internal members comprising of the lay public and representatives of variety of interests and the University Senate. Its composition is stipulated by law in the autonomy bill of 2003 and has the Pro-Chancellor who is appointed by the government and made the Chairman of Council, the Vice Chancellor, the Deputy Vice Chancellor, one person from the Federal Ministry responsible for education, 4 persons representing a variety of interest and broadly representing the National Council of Ministers, 4 persons appointed by the Senate from among members, 2 persons appointed by the Congregation from among its members, 1 person appointed by Convocation from among its members.

As a matter of policy, the Governing Council serves tenure of four (4) years. According to in Ajayi and Ekundayo (2004) in Mgbekem (n.d), the universities in Nigeria are administered through the Committee system as expressed in the organogram above. These committees are either responsible to the Council or the Senate. Mgbekem (n.d) asserted that all universities in Nigeria have the same national pattern of organization.

The organogram shows that universities all have three levels of management viz; the political, the Administrative and the Academic. The political level consists of the university Governing Council, the senate, the congregation and convocation. This is considered political because the heads of these groups are all political appointees. The Administrative level consists of the administrative and management staff of the university headed by the Vice Chancellor and the Academic consists of all academic/Teaching staff of the university and the students run by Deans of Faculties, Head of Departments and Lecturers. According to Mgbekem (n.d) the academic and Administrative divisions/levels are the livewire of the university as they enable the university to function. The Council is the supreme governing authority responsible for those policy decisions which have financial implications, general management of the affairs of the university, and the control of the property and expenditure of the university. The Council has powers to do anything which in its opinion, is calculated to facilitate the carrying on of the activities of the university including the regulation of the constitution and conduct of the university.

The Senate formulates academic policies including the organization and control of all academic activities of the university and co-ordinates the recommendations from various faculties and departments. The law stipulates that the Senate performs the following functions:

- The establishment, organization and control of faculties, departments and other branches of learning;
- The appointment and promotion of lecturers;
- The organization of courses, examinations and award of degrees and all other qualification including honorary degrees as prescribed;
- The supervision of the welfare of students, etc. (University of Ibadan, 2019).

The leadership and management of Nigerian university education is legally provided for in the acts and statutes established by the federal government through the National Universities Commission (NUC). The government is expected to provide the enabling policy and legal framework for universities to function (Okwori & Okwori, 2007 in Adetunji & Ogunleye, 2015).

A case study by Akilagpa (1992) in Adetunji and Ogunlaye 2015 showed that government policies are important to ensure effective institutional management and ensure sustainability and good practices throughout the whole university system. However, the story of



university education today has largely been a story of mixed fortune as Ibikun (1997) in Ajayi and Ekundayo (n.d) observed that university governance in Nigeria today is nothing but crises management. Capacities for managing the university system and individual institutions have struggled to keep pace with the increasingly large complex federal university system. Oyebade (2016) presented a summary organizational structure of a university as given below.

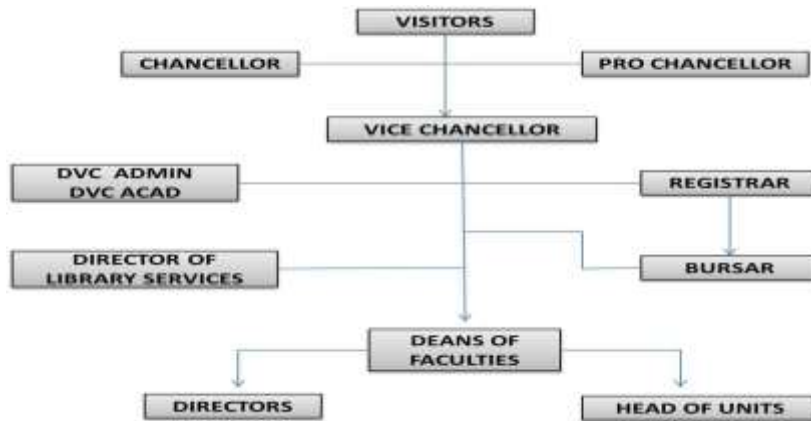


Figure 5: University Organogram / Organizational Structure. Source: Oyebade (2016).

The whole essence of the different levels of management and governance structure in the university system is the planning and utilization of all resources to ensure the development of high quality manpower for the development of the nation.

### **The Leadership Challenges in Nigerian Universities**

The leadership of Nigerian universities is facing numerous challenges. Some of these challenges have negated the development and transformation of the universities into world-class learning institutions. There still exist tremendous gaps between the goals the universities set out to achieve and actual achievements. Permit me to go through memory lane in addressing the leadership challenges in Nigerian universities. Perhaps an understanding of some foundational issues may enhance the appreciation of the depth of the situation in the universities. There is no doubt that the original crisis in university education in Nigeria is entangled with the political crisis which brought the military to power. This entanglement became one of the greatest threats to knowledge building, knowledge sharing and human capacity development. Institutions were destroyed by the incursion of the military in governance. In the words of Senator Babafemi Ojudu (2012), starting from 1966 when they first seized power and ending with the General Babangida-Abacha era where the military simply buried an already ailing university system, Nigeria has witnessed leaders who are the very anti-thesis of human capital development. With higher education destroyed by the military, aided and abetted by their civilian cronies, it was no surprise that virtually every other institution of society, including the moral fabric of society was virtually wiped out.

The implication of this assertion is that the university education system of Nigeria was destroyed even before it was properly formed. The military invaded the system barely six (6) years after independence and before a totally Nigerian policy on education was formulated. By

the end of the military rule in 1999, there was nothing left in the universities because systems, culture, values, processes, defined structure, etc. had not been established in the system. This set back has continued to trail the system as the culture of brazenness, nepotism, corruption etc permeates the Nigerian system and invariably the universities.

Several years after independence and democratic rule, the challenges of the old continue to face the country because the right foundation of seriousness, meritocracy, excellence and commitment was never sown in the system. Like they say, it is difficult to reap what has not been sown. Nigeria has been described in several derogatory terms and known for the not-too-pleasant things which also reflect in the university system. No wonder, policies upon policies, naira upon naira, one action after another, still, the situation in the universities continues to deteriorate. The more universities are established, the more the number of students increases in the universities, the lower the quality and the rating of the graduates of the institutions. For instance according to Ogudu (2012) by 1980 university of Ibadan and Ahmadu Bello University earned global recognition for research in tropical health and agriculture respectively. This reputation steadily tarnished under successive military administrations. Right now, Nigerian universities are not even recognized in West Africa. Rather, rich Nigerians go everywhere else to acquire university education. The situation is compounded by the fact that successive governments in Nigeria have refused to make intentional or tactical investments in education. Against all global policies, the country continues to pay lip service to commitment to education. Never has Nigeria committed the 26% budgetary allocation to education as advised by the United Nations. Compared to the population growth and annual budgetary allocation, it can be said that there is rather a percentage drop even in the highest budgetary allocation of less than 11% in 2015 (RemmyAlex, 2018); Nigeria's budget from 1999 – 2018, Business News). The annual budgetary allocation is usually between 7-11%. This is sad compared to other countries like Ghana, South Africa and Kenya whose annual budgetary allocation to education is not below 26%, 26% and 24% respectively. The irony of this is that Nigeria is richer and more populated but lowest in budgetary allocation to education than these countries.

In the environment of massive corruption and mismanagement of the economy, Nigerian universities' leadership have plethora of challenges to contend with which include managerial assumption of university leaders, diminishing financial resources, problems of access and equity, lack of vision and integration of universities into national planning by political leaders, limitations on university autonomy and academic freedom, problems of ineffectiveness and inefficiency, brain-drain, limited access to technologies, limited infrastructural facilities, limited qualified teachers, lack of innovation in teaching and research, incessant industrial actions by unions, patrimonial networks among university administrators, poor leadership quality of some Vice Chancellors, centralization of university administration, explosion of students population, absence of a standardized system that rewards hard work and productivity, high fees among private universities, non-availability of scholarships, student loans and grants, politicization of the appointment of Vice Chancellors, poor quality of education and poor students attitude to learning, inadequate research, governance and sectarianism, mobility of academics, inadequate quality assurance, etc.

Other challenges external to the university include, leadership failure, slowness in industrialization of the economy, non-realization of national cohesion, incessant crime and insecurity, the erosion of university autonomy, graduate unemployment and incongruent policies (Ogudu, 2012; Nakpodia, 2009; Ebuara, Udida, Ekpiken, & Bassey, (2009).; Ajayi & Ekundayo, n.d; Adetunji & Ogunleye, 2015). The list of challenges seem unending and too numerous for

detailed explanation of each in this paper. One thing that is certain is that Nigerian universities are not performing optimally as a result of these issues and the lack of government will and commitment to address the issues squarely. At the end of the day, it is the responsibility of the internal leadership of the universities that is expected to manage these challenges and still achieve success of the system. It is however painful to specifically observe that one major leadership issue that plagues the management of the university system is the quality of leadership provided internally by some Vice Chancellors and the other officers. While some members of the governing council (the apex body) in the university come with innate leadership qualities and commitment to the development of the university Ademola et al (2014) opined that a good number had no business being in a university not to talk of being in the Council. They are merely politicians pursuing the interest of their sponsors in most cases. This portends danger for a system with an unending list of challenges.

### **Possible Solutions to the Challenges of Policy Implementation and Leadership in Nigerian Universities**

A glossary look at the numerous challenges of policy implementation on one hand and the challenges of leadership of Nigerian universities on the other hand leaves a sense of despair and a feeling that these issues are insurmountable. However, several attempts have been made by researchers on possible ways of mitigating the challenges and improving the Nigerian University education system. Some of the possible solutions are presented below.

As noted by Adamolekun (2007) in Adetunji and Ogunleye (2015), universities are particularly complex institutions that have to take a variety of decisions which make the university activities even more complex as the needs, expectations and requirements of students, staff, employers and society change. All of these place a premium on good governance, management and policies. It is therefore obvious that the solution to the numerous challenges lie in good governance, leadership, management and good policies.

The first action worthy of mention in an attempt to proffer solution to the challenges of university leadership and management is the action taken by the NUC in 2001 upon realizing and recognizing the challenges the universities face especially in the area of professionalism and effective management. The commission took steps to promote more professional institution management by encouraging institutional strategic planning and commenced the organization of annual two-week management training workshops for senior administrators because universities in Nigeria have been confronted with staggering number of management challenges with obvious societal consequences (NUC, 2001).

In considering the role of leadership in addressing the challenges mentioned above, it is important to note that the buck stops on the table of the Vice Chancellor. The Vice Chancellor is therefore not expected to be appointed on the basis of his/her political connection but on his/her ability to cope with complexities of the institution, to devise structures and systems that produce order and harmony and manage available resources effectively and efficiently in order to achieve the desired educational goals if transformation is expected in the university system.

The Vice Chacellor should be able to cope with changes, to establish a new direction and to get institutions and individuals to move in a given direction. The job of a Vice Chancellor involves leadership, management and administration. He/she does not successfully run a university primarily by crunching the numbers, redrawing organizational charts or applying the latest business school concepts and techniques. Bain (2004) in Daramola and Amos (2016) stated

that “the key function of the Vice Chancellor is to lead the university, to harness the social force within it, to shape and guide the values, to build a good management team and to inspire it and others working in the university to take initiatives around a shared vision and implement it”. This implies that the appointment of a qualified and effective Vice Chancellor as the manager of the university is a crucial factor if the aspirations of the university must be achieved. According to Daramola and Amos (2016), the university which was described as an “ivory tower” is now, in conjunction with government, civil society and industry forming the dynamic building blocks of the knowledge economy that produce knowledge, know-how, and technology of prosperous societies. This has put new pressure on the university to provide specialized training for more students, develop and transfer technologies to industry and provide responses to societal needs. Therefore the summary of what the leaders of the universities as expressed in the organogram above are expected to do is to effectively manage all the resources for goal attainment. Therefore, universities require innovative, creative, good and effective leadership to surmount all the challenges.

The criticality of good leadership in the management of Nigerian universities cannot be over-emphasized. For instance, the issue of gross under-funding of the educational system in the country rendering the university system incapacitated is not going to be over very soon from the look of things. It has been there even in the times of the oil boom in Nigeria. Therefore, to achieve any form of improvement in the face of dwindling resources, the system will require a prudent and resourceful leader to optimally manage the available resources of the university. When the leadership, management and governance of the university is effective and universities are granted some level of autonomy, free from political interferences and internal due process is followed, then most of the challenges of both policy implementation and leadership in universities will be surmounted.

Having reviewed the challenges of policy implementation and leadership in Nigerian universities and the similarities in their possible solutions, a Four-Dimension Solution model is presented below for easy and quick glossary look and comprehension of the four broad areas of possible solution. The model categorizes the possible solutions under four major headings which are the economy, politics, environment and the policy itself which incidentally are also the sources of the challenges.

THE ECONOMY	POLITICS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial prudence</li> <li>• Good remuneration and staff welfare/training</li> <li>• Industrialization</li> <li>• Funding</li> <li>• Efficiency and effectiveness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government will</li> <li>• Due process</li> <li>• Autonomy of universities</li> <li>• Reduced Government/political interference</li> <li>• Effective leadership/management</li> <li>• Non-politicization of the appointment of the Vice Chancellor</li> <li>• National cohesion and absence of sectarianism, tribalism etc.</li> </ul>
ENVIRONMENT	THE POLICY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducive working environment</li> <li>• Adequate infrastructure</li> <li>• Access and equity</li> <li>• Conducive school environment for students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear understanding</li> <li>• Well-articulated/formulated</li> <li>• Clear identification of action parties and beneficiaries</li> <li>• Realistic and appropriate policies.</li> </ul>

Figure 6: Four-Dimension Solution model

The implication of the Four-Dimension Solution model is that it makes it critical to look at the different components when addressing the challenges of policy implementation and leadership of Nigerian universities in order to be holistic in the approach and be more result-oriented. It will reduce the challenge of looking in a single direction when trying to proffer solution to the challenges and avoid half-measure solutions. A critical factor worthy of consideration in a 21<sup>st</sup> century university is the concept of management of change. An effective management of any organization in modern times demands a structured change process and designated officers who are charged with the responsibility of managing a change process.

## **CONCLUSION**

After due consideration of the literature reviewed, it can be clearly stated that no single educational policy has totally achieved its purpose of formulation and that universities still have numerous challenges inspite of the introduction of different policies. Good leadership is a major factor for success in the university system which cannot be overlooked. The implementation of policies in Nigerian universities is a serious task that should be adequately managed by both internal and external leadership. The challenges militating against effective policy implementation and leadership in Nigerian universities are categorized into four broad areas of politics, environmental, economy and the policy itself. Incidentally the solutions to these challenges can be handled in like manner (i.e using good policy, politics, economy and environmental considerations). The conclusion of this paper is that all the issues plaguing policy implementation and challenges of leadership in Nigerian universities can be addressed with political will from the government, proper management of resources, appropriate policy, application of management of change principles and effective university leadership.

## **Recommendation**

To improve on policy implementation and leadership challenges in Nigerian universities, the following suggestions are made:

- A strong internal leadership that is proactive, creative, innovative and prudent which is devoid of undue political interference is required for the management of the universities.
- Unnecessary introduction or change of policy should be avoided. Policy change is expensive, complex and capable of destroying existing successes of the system if not well articulated and managed. A change in policy should always be thoroughly reviewed before implementation.
- Proper understanding of the policy, its implementation processes and management of change abilities are necessary skills every policy implementer and university leader must have in order to surmount the myriad challenges militating against successful policy implementation.
- Going forward, the National Policy on Education should be reviewed again to highlight areas of contradiction vis-à-vis current realities for proper harmonization and implementation.
- Leadership of Nigerian Universities should have proper understanding of the goals of the universities, the changes expected, appropriate policies necessary to achieve the goals, the operating environment and the policy implementation process.

- The Four-Dimension solution model which categorized the challenges and solutions of policy implementation and leadership in Nigerian universities into four broad areas of the economy, political, environment and the policy itself should be further reviewed and adapted for use as a simplified approach of management. This is because the use of the model gives holistic view of the issues and broadens the resolution approach.
- The paper also suggests further empirical research on the application of the suggested model in addressing the challenges of policy implementation and leadership in Nigerian universities.

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