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Oshagbemi

LEADERSHIP

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IN

UNIVERSITIES



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Titus Oshagbemi

Leadership and Management in Universities Britain and Nigeria



E9063391



Walter de Gruyter · Berlin · New York 1988

Dr. Titus A. Oshagbemi
Senior Lecturer and Acting Head
Department of Management Studies
University of Jos, Nigeria

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Oshagbemi, T. A. (Titus A.)
Leadership and management in universities : Britain and Nigeria /
Titus A. Oshagbemi.
p. cm. — (De Gruyter studies in organization : 14)
Originally presented as the author's thesis (doctoral).
Bibliography: p.
Includes index.
ISBN 0-89925-426-8 (U.S.)
1. Universities and colleges--Great Britain--Administration--Case
studies. 2. Universities and colleges--Nigeria--Administration--Case
studies. 3. College administrators--Great Britain--Case
studies. 4. College administrators--Nigeria--Case studies.
I. Title. II. Series.
LB2341.8.G7084 1988 88-29749
378.41--dc 19 CIP

Deutsche Bibliothek Cataloging in Publication Data

Oshagbemi, Titus:
Leadership and management in universities: Britain and Nigeria /
Titus Oshagbemi. – Berlin ; New York : de Gruyter, 1989
(De Gruyter studies in organization ; 14)
Zugl.: Bradford, Univ., Diss.
ISBN 3-11-011514-X
NE: GT

☉ Printed on acid free paper.

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Typesetting: Asco Trade Typsetting, Hongkong. – Printing: Gerike GmbH, Berlin. – Binding: D. Mikolai, Berlin. – Cover Design: Hansbernd Lindemann, Berlin. – Printed in Germany.

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Preface

This is an exploratory study designed to identify ways in which universities could improve their management policies and practices through an examination of the job characteristics and perceptions of their academic leaders. The impetus for the research arose from the concern to provide ways of enhancing university performance, a need arising from the increasing environmental turbulence which universities experience and which manifests itself in the shortage of funds, increased governmental intervention in their internal activities, public criticisms, and the alleged mediocre performance by the universities. Universities in most countries seem to be experiencing zero-growth or decline conditions with the resultant need for new and better management capabilities. This is especially so as the experiences of many academic leaders seem to be limited to the expansion era which is a sharp contrast to the current situation of stagnation and recession.

The central hypothesis is that academic leaders spend most of their time on administration and management and not on research or teaching as the public impression seems to be. Given that the hypothesis is true, and considering the important administrative and management positions which academic leaders occupy in the university organizational structure and decision processes, especially their policy formulation function, it becomes expedient that academic leaders be adequately equipped to perform their administrative and management duties better. There were a number of research questions which the project concerned itself with. For example, there was the desire to find out the extent to which academic leaders know the nature of their jobs and whether cultural differences affect the nature of these jobs significantly. Answers to these and other related questions are relevant to exploring measures designed to make the universities more effective.

Employing multiple research methodologies, and collecting data from both Nigerian and the British Universities, the study proceeded to test the central hypothesis and to answer its many research ques-

tions. This involved using, in part, appropriate computer-based statistical techniques such as cluster analytical procedures. The findings of the research confirm the central hypothesis and reveal that academic leaders spend about half of their working time on administration and management, spending on the average more time on this activity than on the combined research, teaching, and consulting functions. It is also revealed, that academic leaders are poor estimators of how they spend their time and that British and Nigerian academic leaders' jobs are roughly similar. Before the summary and conclusions, the book examines important issues, such as the selection and training of academic leaders, which directly affect academic leadership and management practices, and ends by highlighting the theoretical as well as the practical implications and applications of the study.

This book is addressed to all academics and to all those people, including government officials, who are connected with or interested in improving the performance of higher education. The book is also aimed at students of management and organizational behaviour who are interested in the problems and challenges of improving managerial performance in organizations. As the focus of the book is on managerial work, it is directed at practising managers in both the public and private industries. Finally, the book is recommended to researchers in the social and behavioural sciences who may find the methodological approach particularly useful.

The research which led to the writing of this book was initially reported in the authors doctoral thesis. From the pilot and data gathering stages, several individuals contacted me and indicated their interest in obtaining a copy of the finished work. This, in addition to the important issues raised, has encouraged me to make the report of the thesis available in a book form to a wider audience.

I received various forms of assistance and encouragement from many people when writing the original thesis. These people include Dr. John Sharp, Dr. Nasir Hussain, Dr. Geoff Mallory, Prof. J.C. Higgins, Dr. Graham Hooley, Dr. Barnabas Agbonifoh, Mr. Bamidele Adepoju, Prof. Peter Buckley, Dr. Jim Lynch, Mr. Yaku-bu Isa, Mr. Joshua Omuya, Prof. David Hickson, and the members of the Human Resources Research Group, University of Bradford Management Centre. I continue to be grateful to them all. However, I would like to distinguish Dr. Peter Wright who supervised the doctoral work and offered invaluable suggestions.

I would also like to mention my appreciation to the academic leaders who responded to the survey including the pilot work, and especially those who completed the diaries over a duration of one week. Similarly, I thank the University of Jos for granting me leave of absence from work during the period when I worked on the initial project. Finally, I am indebted to my wife for her moral and practical support which facilitated the preparation and the completion of this book.

Jos, August 1988

T.A. Oshagbemi

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