

EMPOWERING THE VICE-CHANCELLORS FOR EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF CLIMATIC CHANGE IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

The importance of university education needs not be over-stressed. It prepares the individual for life and helps to reform the society. The potential of university education system in Nigeria to fulfill these responsibilities is frequently thwarted by long-standing problems of climate change and empowerment of universities Vice-Chancellors which have generated a lot of heated debates in recent times among education stakeholders. This paper examined the climate change and management of climate change in Nigerian universities. The paper also looked at influence of climate change on university education and factors responsible for climate change. To meet the various challenges recommendations were given towards empowering the Vice-Chancellors for effective management of climatic change in Nigerian universities.

Key Words: *Empowerment, Climate-Change, Society, Education*

Introduction

The economic, political, scientific and technological development and advancement of any nation is determined by the nation's educational system (Famade, 2004). In developing nations, like Nigeria, education remains a potent factor for eradicating poverty and changing the misfortunes of under-development. For education to be able to achieve these goals, a nation's educational system as well as its educational aims and objectives must be properly articulated, channeled and well executed. The potential of university education system in Nigeria to fulfill this responsibilities is frequently thwarted by long-standing problems of climate change and inadequate empowerment of Vice-Chancellors to effectively manage the effects of climate change in Nigeria. Universities climate changes have generated a lot of heated debates in recent times among education stakeholders.

Changes in the earth's climate and its adverse effects are common concern of humankind. This statement is a derivative of the Earth Summit on Sustainable development, implying that efforts to

reduce greenhouse gasses should be made strong and supported. Since climate change is much more likely to become worse before it becomes better, all hands must be on the desk to fight the consequences of climate change. It has been observed that the management of climate change has been that of governments and non-governmental organizations while higher institutions are saddled with the responsibility of teaching, research and community services.

However, Buba (2004) identified deforestation, bush and forest fires, flooding, gully erosions, air pollution, condensation, precipitation and evaporation of earth's water resources and others as part of the factors responsible for climate change. If the Vice-Chancellors who are the Heads of the citadel of higher learning are well empowered with all necessary resources would effectively manage such changes. This paper examined the empowerment of Vice – Chancellor and management of climate change in Nigerian Universities.

Climate Change

The empowerment (natural, physical or man-made features) is very important to human survival. Whatever everyone does to the environment, the environment is equally waiting to do something to everyone. The mutual actions between man and the environment have brought about a lot of environment changes; among these environmental changes is climate change (Adebayo, 2010).

Climate is a major environmental factor and it goes a long way to dictate so many things about the environment and human survival. These include the way man lives, eats, cloths, relates with each other, forms, relaxes, reproduces, behaves, sleeps, wakes up, dies and every other thing that man does from womb to tomb. The climatic extreme which have been mainly in form of flood, drought, global warming, heat and cold waves, have had a devastating effect on man and his various activities. Climate encompasses not only the average weather conditions, but also deviation or variability from such average conditions. A climatic change, therefore, represents a significant difference between two climatic states or climatic normal with significant impacts on the ecosystem.

The United Nations defined climate change as a change of climate which is attributable directly or indirectly to human activities that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is addition to natural climate variability observed over a comparable time period (IPCC 2005). The end result is a long term shift, alteration or change in the type of climate prevailing over a specific location, region or the entire planet (Ayoade, 2006). Though developing countries like Nigeria contribute the lowest to climate change they are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

For the Federal Government of Nigeria to establish an environmental regulatory body in the effort to address the challenges of climate change is an indication that Nigeria is not immune from such events.

Causes of Climate Change in Nigeria

There are several factors that responsible for climate change which is expressed as global and local causes of climate change. Afolabi (2008) enumerate the causes of climate change as following:

Global

- Concentration of greenhouse gases and aerosole in the earth's atmosphere (Co₂o, CH₄ CFC) and so on.
- Global warming and hence the depletion of the ozone layer/rises in earth temperature
- Temperatures have risen during the past for decades in the lowest skin of the atmosphere, ocean heat has increased, snow cover and ice extent have decreased the ocean heat content, has increased. Climate extreme are exacerbated due to global warming.
- ELNino – South Oscillation
- Drought
- Terrorist attacks and the use of chemical weapons and so on.

Local factors especially in Nigerian Universities

- Deforestation or vanishing of carbon sinks
- Bush burning/Biodiversity loss and city fires
- Use of fuel wood
- Water pollution
- Land pollution
- Air pollution/Gas flaring in mineral scale
- Land dereliction/Land improverishment
- Urban sprawl/Uncontrolled Land uses
- Uncontrolled use of form chemicals menace/overgrazing
- Uncontrolled population growth
- Flooding and erosion

All these have been identified as evidence of climate change and the frequency and magnitude of such climate phenomenon is a threat to education for all and the Millennium Development Goals and in particular Nigerian Universities.

Researchers including Buba (2004) and Odjugo (2007) have established that anthropogenic factors which include urbanizations, deforestation, population and industrialization and the release of green house gases are major contributing factors to the depletion of the Ozone layer and its associated global warming and climate change. Current trends of rising environmental temperatures, floods and deforestation are an indication that Nigeria will experience extreme destabilizing of climate impart that may affect various sectors of the society including education. It is therefore imperative to establish the effects of climate change on human health.

Effects of Climate Change

The effects of climate change on human health are enormous and these can come directly and indirectly. The direct effects are the changes in the frequency or intensity of extreme weather events for example storms, tornadoes, hurricanes etc, all these can lead to deaths, injuries, psychological disorders, damage to public health infrastructure and so on. The indirect effects are the change in ecology of water borne and food borne infective agents would lead to diarrhea and other infectious diseases, changed in food productivity associated with pests and diseases has effects on economy resources supply infectious diseases. Also health effects of both outdoor and indoor air pollution associated with health hazard.

Empowerment of Vice-Chancellors towards Climate Change in Nigeria Universities

Empowerment is a construct shared by many disciplines and arenas. Community development, psychology, education, economics and studies of social movements and organizations among others. How empowerment is understood varies among these perspectives. In recent empowerment is often assumed rather than explained or defined. Rapport (1984) has noted that it is easy to define empowerment by its absence but difficult to define in action as it takes on different forms in different people and contexts.

A common understanding of empowerment is necessary, however, to allow us to know empowerment when we see it in people with whom we are working for, and through programmes evaluation. According to Baiky (1992), how we precisely define empowerment within our projects and programmes will depend upon the specific people and context involved.

Based on the above submissions empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is, capacity to

implement) in people, for use in their own lives, their communities and in their society by acting on issues that they define as important.

Empowering also means to invest with power especially legal power or official authority. According to Collins (2003) empowerment involves the followings:

- The giving or delegation of power or authority; authorization
- The giving of an ability; enablement or permission
- The way of increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender or economic strength of individuals or groups to make choices into desired actions and outcomes

Empowerment of vice-chancellors in Nigeria Universities is a way of giving full power or authority. If the universities are well catered for in the areas of financing, facilities and staff development much will be achieved in the areas of climate change both within and outside the universities in Nigeria. The problems confronting the Nigerian university system has been described by Erinoshio (2004) as linked to the role of their properties and those that are self-inflicted by the Vice-Chancellor to meet up the various challenges.

The funding situation in the Nigeria University system in 1960s and early 1970s was considered adequate until late 1970s and early 1980s when the situation began to change, a situation in the universities that is said to be causing considerable tension and stress within the university system during the period.

The committee of the Vice-Chancellors (CVC) of the Nigerian Federal Universities in a communiqué issued at the end of their regular meeting in 2001 indicated that the university system is in crisis due to under funding and universities have been unable to pay salaries as at when due. This development was said to have exhausted their reserves and some borrowed money from financial institutions in order to sustain payments of emoluments and the fallout is that many projects are either stalled, abandoned or put on hold.

The inadequate funding of the universities has, no doubt, had calamitous effect on teaching, research, community services and universities has been forced to embark on income generating projects in order to source for funds that would serves as an internal empowerment to Universities in order to find solution to the climate change within and outside the university system.

Conclusion and Recommendation

From the foregoing it is inferred that empowering the Vice-Chancellors for effective management of climate change as a concept that enhances both internal efficiency is not fully integrated into the Nigeria University system. The paper recommends that the government at all levels should empowered the Vice-Chancellor with adequate funds that would enable them to solve the problem of climate change. Also they should be empowered towards good staff development scheme by given training in Nigeria and outside on climate change education. Universities must be given free hand to charge appropriate fees and running of academic programmes that could lead to institutional transformation.

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