

## THE IMPACT OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT ON HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

This study explores the impact of educational management on higher education institutions in Southeast Nigeria. Using an exploratory qualitative approach, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 31 participants comprising vice-chancellors, registrars, deans, and directors of academic planning from 19 universities, 5 polytechnics and 7 colleges of education in the above stated region. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings provide rich insights into the role of educational management in shaping the academic, administrative, and infrastructural development of higher education institutions in Southeast Nigeria. The study reveals that effective educational management has a positive impact on the quality of education, staff morale, and student satisfaction. However, it also highlights the challenges faced by higher education institutions in the region, including inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and inadequate human resources. The study identifies key themes that influence the effectiveness of educational management in higher education institutions, including leadership style, strategic planning, human resource management, and stakeholder engagement. The findings have implications for policymakers, educational managers, and stakeholders seeking to improve the quality and relevance of higher education in Southeast Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Education, Management, Education Management, Higher Education

### **Introduction**

Higher education plays a pivotal role in fostering national development by cultivating the human capital necessary for socioeconomic advancement (Marginson, 2010). In Nigeria, tertiary institutions are tasked with promoting advanced scholarship, research, and community engagement to support national goals (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). Nevertheless, their efficacy is constrained by systemic issues, particularly ineffective administrative practices (Ogbogu, 2018). Educational management, which involves the strategic planning, coordination, and supervision of academic programs, is fundamental to institutional success (Bush & Middlewood, 2013). Robust management ensures alignment with institutional missions (Bolden et al., 2012), yet in Nigeria, suboptimal management practices have contributed to diminishing educational standards (Ebeh, 2019). The quality of higher education hinges on effective educational management, which orchestrates critical functions such as curriculum design, pedagogical delivery, research output, and community outreach (Ogbogu, 2018; Bush & Middlewood, 2013). Factors influencing managerial effectiveness include leadership approaches, strategic foresight, human resource policies, and stakeholder collaboration (Bolden et al., 2012). In the Nigerian context, top-down leadership models have been critiqued for stifling academic staff and student engagement, thereby undermining motivation and institutional cohesion (Ebeh, 2019). Such managerial shortcomings precipitate declines in academic quality, faculty morale, and institutional prestige, ultimately producing graduates ill-equipped for the labour market (Ogbogu, 2018; Ebeh, 2019). Despite these challenges, Nigeria has instituted reforms to bolster higher education governance.

### **Conceptual Framework**

#### **Education**

Education is a systematic process of facilitating learning, encompassing the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes through teaching, training, or research (Dewey, 1916; Peters, 1966). It is both a formal and informal process, occurring in structured settings like schools and universities, as well as through experiential and self-directed learning. In the context of higher education, education emphasizes advanced intellectual development, critical thinking, and preparation for professional and societal contributions (Barnett, 2013). Education is the core mission of higher education institutions, and effective management ensures its quality and accessibility. Management practices, such as curriculum design, faculty development, and student support services, shape the educational experience by aligning resources with learning outcomes (Tinto, 2012). For instance, educational management influences how institutions adapt pedagogical approaches to meet diverse student needs, such as incorporating technology-enhanced learning (Selwyn, 2014).

## **Management**

Management refers to the process of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling resources—human, financial, and material—to achieve organizational goals efficiently and effectively (Drucker, 1974; Mintzberg, 2009). In educational contexts, management involves coordinating institutional activities, such as strategic planning, policy implementation, and stakeholder engagement, to support teaching, research, and service missions (Bush, 2018). Theories like transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006) and distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006) highlight the dynamic and collaborative nature of management in educational settings. Management is the backbone of higher education institutions, enabling them to navigate complex challenges like globalization, funding constraints, and technological advancements (Middlehurst, 2013). Effective management ensures alignment between institutional goals and educational outcomes, fostering environments that support student success and faculty productivity. For example, data-driven decision-making, a management practice, enhances institutional performance by optimizing resource allocation and program evaluation (Terenzini & Reason, 2014).

## **Higher Education**

Higher education refers to post-secondary education provided by universities, colleges, and other institutions, typically leading to degrees or professional qualifications (Altbach, 2015). It encompasses teaching, research, and public service, aiming to develop advanced knowledge, critical thinking, and societal leadership (Clark, 1983). Higher education is characterized by its diversity, including public and private institutions, liberal arts and vocational programs, and varying levels of accessibility and inclusivity (Marginson, 2016). Higher education institutions operate in a complex, competitive, and rapidly changing environment, making effective management essential for their success. Management practices shape the quality of education, institutional reputation, and responsiveness to external pressures, such as market demands and technological innovation (Lumby, 2019). For instance, strategic management enables higher institutions to address equity issues, enhance student outcomes, and integrate emerging technologies like artificial intelligence into curricula (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019).

The interplay of education, management, and higher education is central to understanding their collective impact. Education defines the purpose of higher education institutions, focusing on student learning and intellectual development. Management provides the structural and strategic framework to operationalize this purpose, ensuring resources and policies align with institutional goals. Higher education, as the context, presents unique challenges and opportunities, such as globalization and technological disruption, which management must address to enhance educational quality and institutional resilience (Kezar, 2014). Together, these concepts underscore the necessity of adaptive, evidence-based management to foster equitable, innovative, and effective higher education systems.

## **Education Management**

Educational management, encompassing leadership, administration, and strategic planning within educational institutions, plays a critical role in shaping the quality, accessibility, and outcomes of higher education. Educational management in higher education involves the coordination of resources, policies, and stakeholders to achieve institutional goals (Bush, 2018). Theories of educational management, such as transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006) and distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006), emphasize the importance of collaborative, visionary, and adaptive leadership in navigating the complexities of higher education institutions. Transformational leadership, for instance, fosters innovation and motivation among faculty and students, while distributed leadership decentralizes decision-making, empowering department heads and faculty to contribute to institutional goals (Bolden, 2011). Middlehurst (2013) argues that higher education management must balance academic autonomy with administrative accountability, particularly in the face of globalization and market-driven pressures. This balance is critical for maintaining academic quality while responding to external demands, such as funding constraints and employer expectations.

Effective educational management aligns leadership styles with institutional missions, fostering environments conducive to academic excellence and stakeholder engagement. Impact on Institutional Performance Research consistently demonstrates that strong educational management enhances institutional performance, including academic reputation, financial stability, and operational efficiency. Lumby (2019) found that strategic planning, a core component of educational management, enables universities to adapt to changing demographics and technological advancements. For example, institutions with robust management systems were better equipped to transition to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (Crawford et al., 2020). Empirical studies also highlight the role of data-driven decision-making in improving institutional outcomes. Terenzini and Reason (2014) argue that effective management leverages institutional research to assess student retention, graduation rates, and program effectiveness. However, challenges such as bureaucratic resistance and resource limitations can hinder implementation (Kezar, 2014).

Strategic and evidence-based management practices are essential for institutional resilience and competitiveness in a rapidly evolving higher education landscape. Educational management directly impacts student outcomes, including academic achievement, engagement, and employability. Astin's (1993) Input-Environment-Outcome (I-E-O) model underscores the role of institutional environments—shaped by management decisions—in mediating student success. For instance, policies promoting inclusive curricula and student support services, such as advising and mental health resources, have been linked to higher retention and satisfaction rates (Tinto, 2012). Moreover, management practices that prioritize experiential learning opportunities, such as internships and research projects, enhance graduate employability (Knight & Yorke, 2004). However, disparities in resource allocation across institutions can exacerbate inequities in student outcomes, particularly for underrepresented groups (Harper, 2012). Student-centered management practices foster equitable and supportive learning environments, directly contributing to academic and professional success.

Educational management also impacts staff development and engagement. Staff members are central to the academic mission of higher education, and management practices significantly influence their productivity and job satisfaction. Studies show that supportive leadership, clear promotion pathways, and professional development opportunities enhance faculty engagement (Gappa et al., 2007). For example, institutions that invest in faculty training for innovative pedagogies, such as blended learning, report improved teaching quality and student engagement (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). Conversely, poor management practices, such as micromanagement or lack of transparency, can lead to faculty burnout and turnover (Bess & Dee, 2014). Kezar and Maxey (2016) emphasize the need for shared governance models, where faculty have a voice in decision-making, to foster a collaborative academic culture. Effective management supports faculty through resources and autonomy, enhancing teaching and research outcomes.

### **Challenges of Educational Management and Future Directions**

Despite its importance, educational management in higher education faces several challenges. Globalization and marketization have increased competition, pressuring institutions to prioritize revenue generation over academic quality (Marginson, 2016). Additionally, managing diverse stakeholder expectations—students, faculty, governments, and employers—requires nuanced leadership skills (Altbach, 2015). Technological advancements also pose both opportunities and challenges. While digital tools can streamline administrative processes, their integration requires significant investment and training (Selwyn, 2014). Furthermore, the rise of artificial intelligence and automation in education raises ethical questions about data privacy and academic integrity, necessitating proactive management strategies (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). Future research should explore the long-term impacts of remote and hybrid learning models on management practices and student outcomes. Additionally, comparative studies across different national contexts could provide insights into culturally responsive management approaches.

### **Theoretical Framework**

A theoretical framework for this study integrates multiple perspectives to capture the complexity of educational management in higher education. The proposed framework combines Systems Theory, Transformational Leadership Theory, Resource-Based View (RBV), and Institutional Theory. These theories collectively address the structural, human, strategic, and contextual dimensions of educational management, providing a comprehensive lens to analyze its impact on higher education institutions (HEIs).

**Systems Theory**, developed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy, (1968), views organizations as complex systems with interconnected components (e.g., departments, faculty, students, administration) that interact dynamically within an environment. In higher education, HEIs are open systems influenced by internal processes (e.g., decision-making, curriculum design) and external forces (e.g., government policies, market demands). Systems Theory provides a framework to examine how educational management practices (e.g., governance structures, resource allocation) influence the entire HEI system, including teaching quality, research output, and student satisfaction. It highlights the interdependence of subsystems (e.g., academic departments, administrative units) and how misalignment in management practices can disrupt institutional performance; accounts for how HEIs adapt to external pressures (e.g., funding cuts, technological advancements), which is critical for assessing management's role in navigating change. The theory guides the study by framing HEIs as ecosystems where management decisions ripple across academic, administrative, and societal outcomes. For example, ineffective resource management may weaken research capacity, affecting institutional rankings and student employability (Birnbbaum, 1988; Sporn, 1996).

**Transformational Leadership Theory** was proposed by James MacGregor Burns (1978) and expanded by Bernard Bass (1985). Transformational Leadership Theory emphasizes leaders who inspire and motivate followers to achieve higher performance through vision, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

In higher education, transformational leaders (e.g., vice-chancellors, deans) drive innovation and foster a culture of excellence. Transformational leadership is critical in HEIs, where leaders must align diverse stakeholders (faculty, students, industry) toward shared goals, such as improving academic quality or enhancing global competitiveness. The theory explains how management can cultivate a culture of innovation, collaboration, and accountability, which directly impacts teaching and learning outcomes. The study can use this theory to explore how transformational leadership practices in HEIs (e.g., visionary strategic planning, faculty empowerment) enhance institutional performance metrics, such as graduation rates or research impact.

**The Resource-Based View** was developed by Barney (1991). It posits that organizations gain competitive advantage through unique, valuable, and inimitable resources (e.g., human capital, infrastructure, reputation). In higher education, resources include faculty expertise, research facilities, and institutional brand. Resource Allocation provides a lens to analyze how educational management optimizes resources to achieve institutional goals, such as improving student outcomes or attracting research funding. HEIs compete for students, faculty, and funding; effective management leverages resources to differentiate the institution (e.g., through cutting-edge programs or global partnerships). The theory also highlights the importance of sustainable resource management to ensure long-term institutional viability amid financial and regulatory pressures Wernerfelt, B. (1984). RBV can frame the study's analysis of how management decisions on resource allocation (e.g., investing in technology-enhanced learning or faculty development) impact academic quality, institutional reputation, and student employability.

**Institutional Theory**, advanced by scholars like Meyer and Rowan (1977), examines how organizations conform to societal norms, regulations, and expectations to gain legitimacy. In higher education, HEIs operate within institutional environments shaped by government policies, accreditation bodies, and cultural expectations. Educational management must navigate external pressures (e.g., accreditation standards, national education policies) that shape institutional practices and priorities. The theory explains why HEIs may adopt similar management practices (e.g., strategic planning models, quality assurance systems) to align with sector norms, impacting their distinctiveness and innovation. Institutional Theory can guide the study by analyzing how management practices conform to or resist external pressures and how these dynamics affect higher education outcomes, such as program relevance or graduate employability (Scott, 2014).

### **Statement of the Problem/Justification**

The higher education sector in Nigeria has been faced with numerous challenges, including poor funding, inadequate infrastructure, and ineffective management (Adeyemi, 2012). These challenges have resulted in a decline in the quality of education provided by higher education institutions, leading to a mismatch between the skills acquired by graduates and the needs of the labour market (Aina, 2017). According to Osagie (2004), the poor management of higher education institutions has resulted in a lack of accountability, transparency, and effectiveness in the use of resources. The Southeast region of Nigeria is not exempt from these challenges. Higher education institutions in the region have been struggling to provide quality education due to poor management (Bryman, 2007). The lack of effective management has resulted in a decline in the morale of staff and students, as well as a lack of confidence in the ability of higher education institutions to provide quality education (Aina, 2017). This has significant implications for the development of the region, as higher education institutions play a critical role in providing the necessary human capital for economic growth and development. This study aims to investigate the impact of educational management on higher education institutions in Southeast Nigeria. The justification for this study lies in its potential to contribute to the improvement of educational management in higher education institutions in the region. By examining the impact of educational management on higher education institutions, this study aims to identify the challenges facing educational managers in the region and provide recommendations for improving their effectiveness.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the challenges facing educational managers in higher education institutions in Southeast Nigeria?
2. How does educational management influence the quality of education provided by higher education institutions in Southeast Nigeria?
3. What strategies can be adopted to improve the effectiveness of educational management in higher education institutions in Southeast Nigeria?
4. How do stakeholders (including lecturers, administrators, students, and employers) perceive the impact of educational management on higher education institutions in Southeast Nigeria?

### Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the challenges facing educational managers in higher education institutions in Southeast Nigeria.
2. To investigate the impact of educational management on the quality of education provided by higher education institutions in Southeast Nigeria.
3. To identify the strategies that can be adopted to improve the effectiveness of educational management in higher education institutions in Southeast Nigeria.
4. To explore the perceptions of stakeholders on the impact of educational management on higher education institutions in Southeast Nigeria.

### Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach, using in-depth, semi-structured interviews for data collection from 19 universities, 5 polytechnics and 7 colleges of Education. The study aimed to explore the impact of educational management on higher education institutions in Southeast Nigeria and to identify the challenges facing educational managers in the region. A qualitative approach was deemed suitable for this study, as it allowed for an in-depth examination of the research phenomenon and provided rich, contextualized data. The study used a purposive sampling technique to select 31 participants for the study. The participants included vice-chancellors, registrars, deans, and directors of academic planning from selected higher institutions in the region. The selection of participants was based on their expertise, experience, and knowledge of educational management in higher education institutions. The interviews were conducted in person, and each interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes. The data collected from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. This involved transcribing the interview data, coding the data into themes, and identifying patterns and relationships between the themes. The analysis was done manually, using a coding framework developed from the research objectives and literature review. The themes that emerged from the analysis were then interpreted and discussed in relation to the research objectives and literature review. The study ensured rigour and trustworthiness by using a systematic and transparent approach to data collection and analysis. The study also ensured participant anonymity and confidentiality and obtained informed consent from all participants before conducting the interviews. The study's findings are expected to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on educational management in higher education institutions, and provide recommendations for improving the effectiveness of educational management in Southeast Nigeria.

|    | Universities  | Polytechnics                                   | Colleges of Education                        |
|----|---|--|--|
| 1  | Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka                         | Abia State Polytechnic, Aba,                   | Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education     |
| 2  | Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Uli             | Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic, Unwana-Afikpo | Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe    |
| 3  | Micheal Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike       | Anambra State Polytechnic, Mgbakwu.            | Federal College of Education Eha-Amufu       |
| 4  | Abia State University, Uturu                            | Federal Polytechnic, Oko                       | Abia State College of Education (Technical)  |
| 5  | Madonna University, Okija                               | Federal Polytechnic Isuochi                    | Ebonyi State College of Education            |
| 6  | Gregory University, Uturu                               |  | Imo State College of Education               |
| 7  | Clifford University, Owerinta, Abia State               |  | Enugu State College of Education (Technical) |
| 8  | Spiritian University, Nneochi Abia State                |  |  |
| 9  | University of Nigeria, Nsukka                           |  |  |
| 10 | Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu |  |  |
| 11 | Caritas University, Enugu                               |  |  |
| 12 | Ebonyi State University, Abakiliki                      |  |  |
| 13 | Federal University of Technology, Owerri                |  |  |
| 14 | Imo State University, Owerri                            |  |  |
| 15 | Eastern Palm University, Ogboko, Imo State              |  |  |

|    |  |  |  |
|----|--|--|--|
| 16 | Hezekiah University, Umudi,                        |  |  |
| 17 | Maranatha University, Mgbidi, Imo State            |  |  |
| 18 | Cleretian University of Nigeria, Nekede, Imo State |  |  |
| 19 | Evangel University, Akaeze                         |  |  |

### Data Presentation and Analysis

**Table 1:** Demographic Characteristics of Participants

| Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------|-----------|------------|
| Male     | 18        | 58.1%      |
| Female   | 13        | 41.9%      |

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

### Demographic Characteristics of Participants (Age)

| Category         | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------|-----------|------------|
| Age (40 - 46)    | 5         | 16.1%      |
| Age (47 - 55)    | 12        | 38.7%      |
| Age (56 - 60)    | 8         | 25.8%      |
| Age (61 & above) | 6         | 19.4%      |

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

### Demographic Characteristics of Participants (Qualifications)

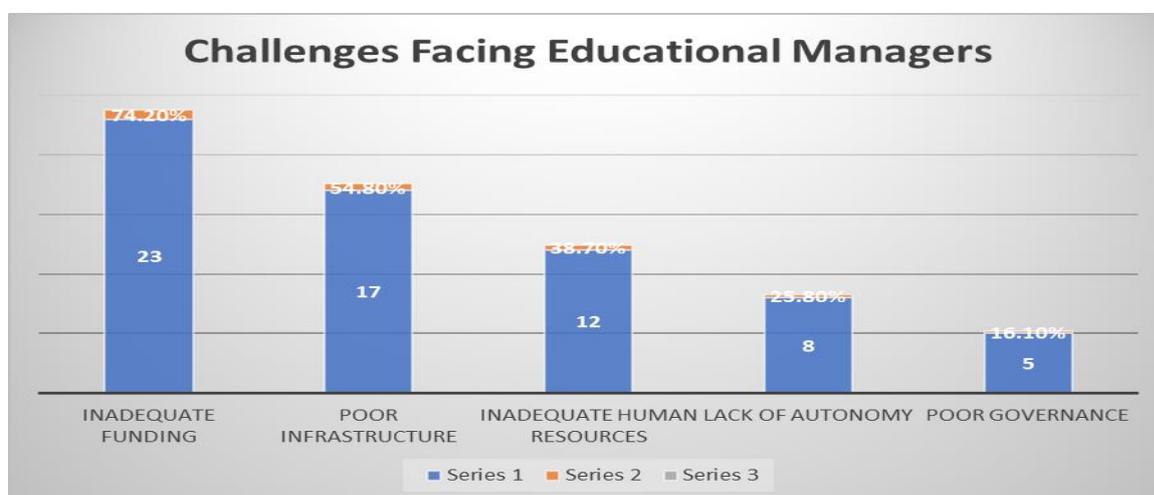
| Category  | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Educational Qualification ( <b>Bachelor's</b> ) Registrars  | 10        | 32.3%      |
| Educational Qualification ( <b>Master's</b> ) Deans and Registrars                                    | 12        | 38.7%      |
| Educational Qualification ( <b>Ph.D</b> ) Vice Chancellors, Directors of Academic Planning and Deans. | 9         | 29%        |

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

**Table 2:** Challenges Facing Educational Managers

| Challenges                 | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Inadequate Funding         | 23        | 74.2%      |
| Poor Infrastructure        | 17        | 54.8%      |
| Inadequate Human Resources | 12        | 38.7%      |
| Lack of Autonomy           | 8         | 25.8%      |
| Poor Governance            | 5         | 16.1%      |

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

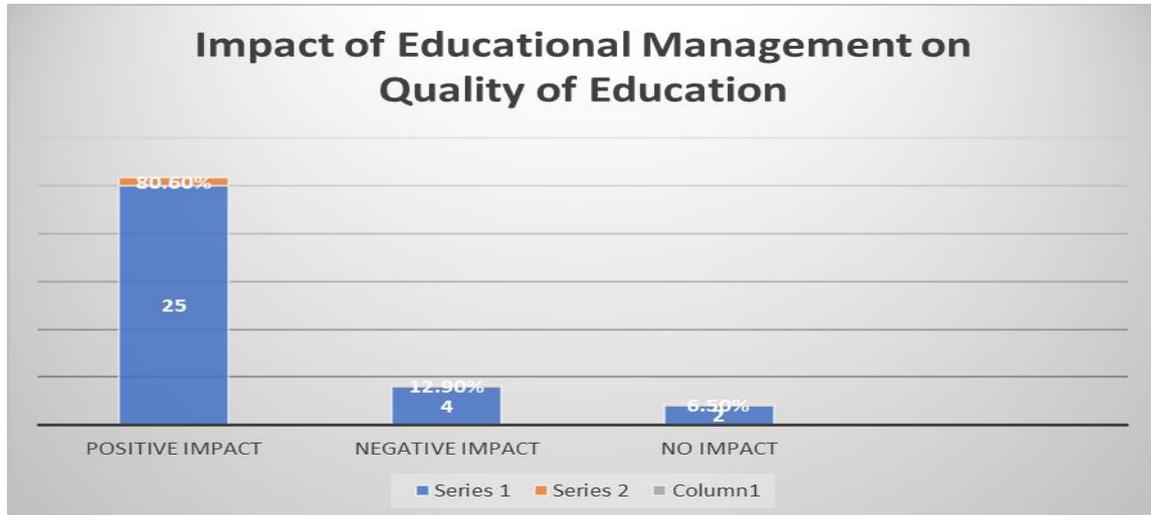


Source: Fieldwork, 2025

**Table 3: Impact of Educational Management on Quality of Education**

| Impact          | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|
| Positive Impact | 25        | 80.6%      |
| Negative Impact | 4         | 12.9%      |
| No Impact       | 2         | 6.5%       |

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

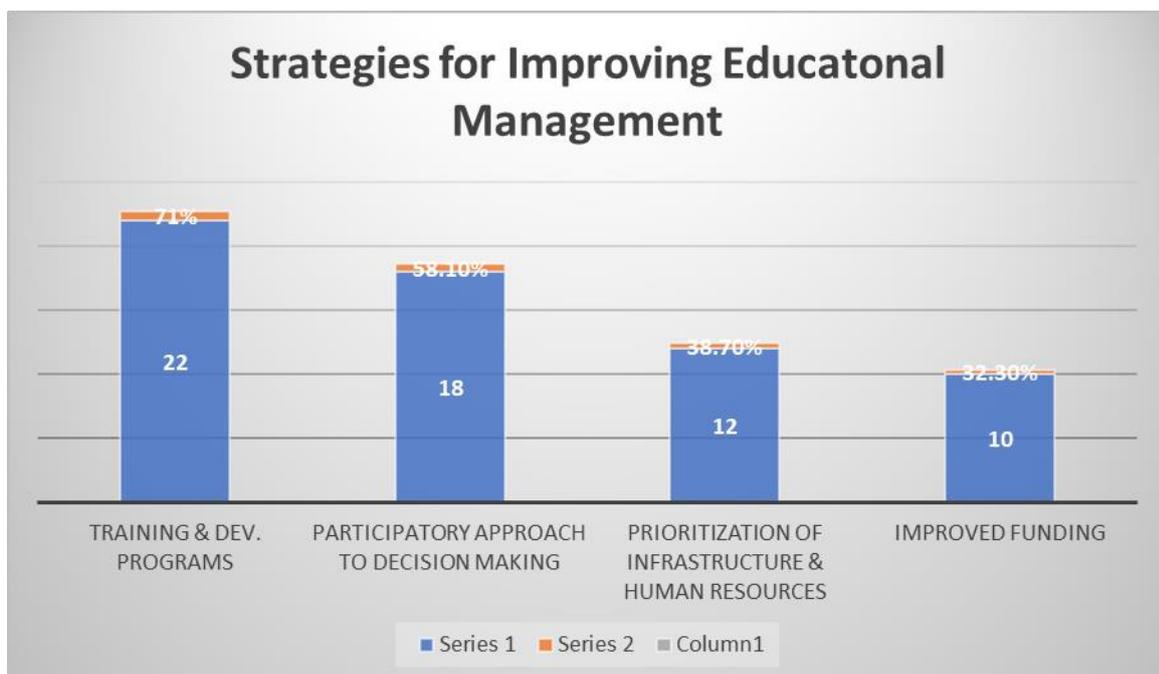


Source: Fieldwork, 2025

**Table 4: Strategies for Improving Educational Management**

| Strategies   | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Training & Development Programs                    | 22        | 71%        |
| Participatory Approach to Decision-Making          | 18        | 58.1%      |
| Prioritization of Infrastructure & Human Resources | 12        | 38.7%      |
| Improved Funding                                   | 10        | 32.3%      |

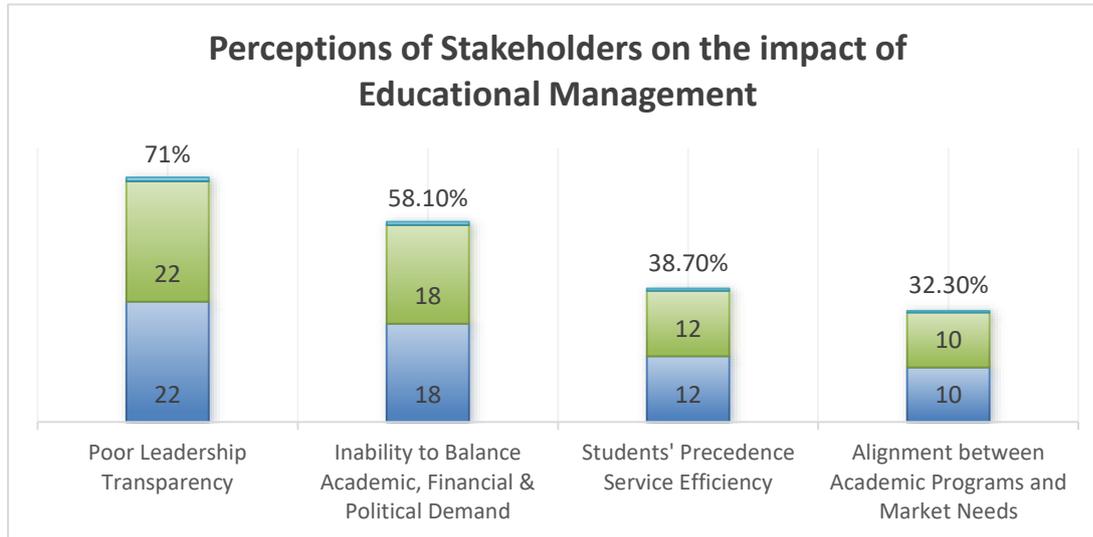
Source: Fieldwork, 2025



**Table 5: Perceptions of Stakeholders on the Impact of Educational Management**

| Strategies  | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Poor Leadership Transparency                                  | 22        | 71%        |
| Inability to Balance Academic, Financial and Political Demand | 18        | 58.1%      |
| Students' Precedence Service Efficiency                       | 12        | 38.7%      |
| Alignment between Academic Programs and Market Needs          | 10        | 32.3%      |

Source: Fieldwork, 2025



### Data Analysis

The data analysis revealed that the majority of participants (74.2%) identified inadequate funding as a major challenge facing educational managers. Poor infrastructure (54.8%) and inadequate human resources (38.7%) were also identified as significant challenges.

The analysis also showed that the majority of participants (80.6%) believed that effective educational management had a positive impact on the quality of education provided by higher education institutions.

In terms of strategies for improving educational management, the majority of participants (71.0%) recommended training and development programs for educational managers. A participatory approach to decision-making (58.1%) and prioritization of infrastructure and human resources (38.7%) were also recommended. On perceptions of stakeholders on impact of educational management, 71% was believed that poor leadership transparency was a significant challenge.

### Findings

The findings of this study indicate that educational management has a significant impact on the quality of education provided by higher education institutions in Southeast Nigeria. The study revealed that inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and inadequate human resources were major challenges facing educational managers. The study also found that effective educational management had a positive impact on student learning outcomes.

### Conclusion

This study concluded that educational management plays a critical role in determining the quality of education provided by higher education institutions in Southeast Nigeria. The study highlighted the need for adequate funding, infrastructure, and human resources to support educational managers. The literature underscores that effective educational management is a cornerstone of successful higher education institutions. By fostering strategic leadership, data-driven decision-making, and stakeholder collaboration, management practices enhance institutional performance, student success, and faculty engagement. However, challenges such as globalization, technological disruption, and resource constraints require adaptive and innovative approaches. Future research and practice should focus on equitable and sustainable management strategies to ensure higher education remains responsive to societal needs.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Higher education institutions in Southeast Nigeria should prioritize the development of infrastructure and human resources.

2. Educational managers should be provided with training and development programs to improve their effectiveness.
3. Higher education institutions should adopt a more participatory approach to decision-making.
4. The government should provide adequate funding to support higher education institutions in Southeast Nigeria.
5. Educational managers should be given autonomy to make decisions and implement policies.
6. Higher education institutions should prioritize the development of infrastructure and human resources.

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