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UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES AND INTERNAL LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE IN OYO STATE-OWNED UNIVERSITIES, EVIDENCE FROM EAUED AND LAUTECH, 2022–2025

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Abstract

University governance provides the institutional framework through which authority, responsibility, accountability and decision-making are organised within higher education institutions. In public universities, the effectiveness of governance is particularly important because institutional administration is influenced by statutory regulations, government policies, financial resources and the interests of different stakeholder groups. This study examined governance challenges and internal leadership structure in two Oyo State-owned universities—Emmanuel Alayande University of Education (EAUED), Oyo, and Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH), Ogbomoso—between 2022 and 2025. The study was guided by three research questions focusing on governance and internal leadership arrangements, major governance challenges, and measures for strengthening university governance. Institutional Theory and Stakeholder Theory provided the theoretical foundations for the study. A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was adopted. The findings identified inadequate funding as the most prominent governance challenge, with an overall mean of 4.24. Inadequate facilities recorded a mean of 4.12, The study concludes that effective internal leadership in Oyo State-owned universities requires not only formal governance structures but also adequate resources, clear authority relationships, accountable leadership and institutional conditions that allow governance organs to discharge their responsibilities effectively.

Keywords: accountability, governance challenges, institutional autonomy, internal leadership, Oyo State, public universities, university governance.

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INTRODUCTION

University governance has become an increasingly important issue in discussions about the effectiveness, accountability and sustainability of higher education institutions. Universities are complex organisations in which authority is distributed among governing councils, senates, principal officers, faculties, departments, administrative units and other stakeholder groups. Consequently, the effectiveness of a university depends not only on the existence of formal governance structures but also on how those structures function in practice.

Recent scholarship on African higher education governance emphasises the relationship between the state and universities, internal university governance, regulatory systems and the interaction between governing councils, senate and university management. Nabaho and Turyasingura's recent work on African higher education governance particularly highlights the importance of understanding university governance at institutional, national and continental levels.

The governance of public universities is especially complex because such institutions operate between two sometimes competing expectations. On the one hand, universities require sufficient autonomy to make academic, administrative and financial decisions efficiently. On the other hand, government, as proprietor and funder, has legitimate interests in accountability, quality assurance and the appropriate use of public resources. The relationship between government oversight and university autonomy therefore remains an important governance issue.

In Nigeria, these concerns have become more visible as universities have experienced increasing demands for accountability, improved service delivery and effective resource management. Recent interventions by the National Universities Commission (NUC), for example, have placed emphasis on integrity, accountability and good governance in the management of public universities. In July 2025, the NUC and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission held a strategic meeting with vice-chancellors of federal and state universities specifically addressing integrity and accountability in university financial management.

The importance of effective governing councils has also received renewed attention. The NUC in 2024 charged university councils with improving service delivery and emphasised their role as co-managers of universities. These developments demonstrate that university governance is not simply an internal administrative concern but an important component of wider higher education policy.

The situation is particularly relevant to state-owned universities because the relationship between university management and the state government can have direct implications for funding, leadership appointments, infrastructure and institutional autonomy. Oyo State provides an interesting context for examining these issues. The period covered by this study witnessed important developments in the state's university system, including the emergence of Emmanuel Alayande University of Education as a university and the transition of LAUTECH to sole ownership by Oyo State.

The governance environment of the two institutions is therefore worthy of comparative examination. Although EAUED and LAUTECH operate within the same state policy environment, they differ considerably in institutional history and organisational experience. LAUTECH has a longer institutional history, while EAUED is a relatively newer university. These differences provide an opportunity to examine whether institutional experience influences perceptions of governance challenges and internal leadership.

The 2025 inauguration of the LAUTECH Governing Council further demonstrates the continuing importance of governance structures within the Oyo State university system. The state government stated at the inauguration that it intended to increase support to its state-owned universities to enable them to meet their obligations.

Recent African scholarship also demonstrates that university governance affects the quality of institutional decision-making. Research on public universities in Ethiopia, for example, found that governance structures, policies and practices influence decision-making and educational service quality, while transparent, accountable and participatory governance can strengthen institutional performance.

Despite the growing literature on higher education governance, there remains a need for institution-specific empirical evidence from Nigerian state-owned universities. Much of the Nigerian literature discusses university governance at a broad systemic level, while less attention has been given to how governance challenges are experienced within specific state-owned institutions and how those challenges affect internal leadership.

This study addresses this gap by examining EAUED and LAUTECH during the period 2022–2025. Rather than treating governance as merely the existence of formal structures, the study examines the practical challenges that affect the ability of those structures and their leaders to function effectively.

The establishment of formal governance structures does not automatically guarantee effective university administration. Governing councils, senates, management committees and administrative offices may exist in accordance with university laws, yet their effectiveness can be weakened by inadequate funding, bureaucratic procedures, infrastructural deficiencies, unclear authority relationships and external interference.

The problem is particularly important in state-owned universities because the institutions depend substantially on government policies and financial support while simultaneously requiring sufficient autonomy to carry out their academic and administrative responsibilities. Where funding is inadequate, governance decisions may remain unimplemented. Where bureaucratic procedures are excessive, decisions may be delayed. Where external influence becomes excessive, internal governance organs may experience difficulty in exercising their statutory responsibilities.

The empirical evidence from the present study confirms the seriousness of these concerns. Respondents identified inadequate funding as the most prominent governance challenge, with an overall mean of 4.24. EAUED recorded 4.38 compared with 4.10 for LAUTECH. Inadequate facilities recorded 4.12, administrative delays 3.96 and external interference 3.94.

More importantly, governance challenges were not merely perceived as administrative inconveniences. Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong negative relationship between governance challenges and perceived institutional performance ($r = -.72$, $p < .001$).

The problem, therefore, is not simply whether governance structures exist, but whether the institutional environment enables them to function effectively. This study consequently investigates the major governance challenges confronting EAUED and LAUTECH and considers how these challenges influence internal leadership and institutional functioning. The study was guided by research questions: What major challenges affect university governance and internal leadership structure in EAUED and LAUTECH? What measures can strengthen university governance and internal leadership structure in Oyo State-owned universities?

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

University Governance

University governance refers to the structures, processes and relationships through which authority is exercised, decisions are made and institutional responsibilities are coordinated within universities. It includes the relationship between governing councils, senates, management, academic units, administrative units and external stakeholders.

Contemporary African scholarship views university governance as operating at several interconnected levels, including the relationship between the state and university, internal governance arrangements and external regulatory mechanisms. The internal governance model commonly involves the university council, senate and management, with each performing distinct but complementary responsibilities.

The effectiveness of governance therefore depends on the coordination of these different organs. Where responsibilities are clearly defined and respected, decision-making can be more predictable and institutional stability can be strengthened. Conversely, overlapping responsibilities or unclear authority can create administrative conflict.

Governance and Internal Leadership

Internal leadership is closely connected to university governance because formal governance structures must be translated into practical administrative action. The vice-chancellor, deputy vice-chancellors, registrar, bursar, deans, heads of departments and other officers are responsible for implementing decisions made through the university's governance system.

Recent research on university governance has emphasised the importance of aligning governance structures with institutional objectives and holding academic leaders accountable for service quality and institutional outcomes.

The relationship between governance and leadership is consequently reciprocal. Good governance provides leaders with clear authority, procedures and accountability mechanisms, while competent leadership ensures that governance structures operate effectively.

Funding as a Governance Issue

Funding is one of the most important conditions for effective governance in public universities. Financial resources determine the extent to which universities can implement strategic decisions, maintain infrastructure, support staff development and provide administrative facilities.

Recent Nigerian research has continued to draw attention to the relationship between university governance, funding and human-capital development. Agba et al. (2023), for instance, examined university governance in relation to TETFund and human-capital development in Nigerian public universities.

Funding should therefore not be regarded solely as a financial management issue. It is also a governance issue because decisions made by governing organs require financial capacity for implementation.

Accountability and Transparency

Accountability is central to public university governance because universities manage public resources and perform important public functions. Transparent decision-making can strengthen institutional trust, while accountability mechanisms provide incentives for university leaders to exercise authority responsibly.

Recent Nigerian discussions have continued to emphasise the importance of transparency, accountability and integrity in university administration. A 2024 study on strengthening integrity and governance in Nigerian universities identified transparency, accountability, stakeholder engagement and institutional capacity as important components of governance improvement.

Government Influence and Institutional Autonomy

Public universities require an appropriate balance between government oversight and institutional autonomy. Government has legitimate responsibilities as proprietor and regulator, but excessive intervention can potentially weaken the capacity of university governance organs to make timely decisions.

The broader African literature similarly identifies the relationship between the state and university as one of the central questions in higher education governance.

This issue is particularly relevant to Oyo State-owned universities because the institutions operate within a state policy environment while maintaining statutory governance organs.

Stakeholder Participation

Universities have multiple stakeholder groups, including academic staff, non-academic staff, students, government, governing councils and the wider community. Their interests may not always be identical. Stakeholder participation can therefore provide a mechanism through which different interests are considered in institutional decision-making.

Recent research has demonstrated the importance of stakeholder participation in higher education governance. Research on student government in a Sub-Saharan African university, for example, shows that students can constitute important actors in institutional governance and that intra-organisational relationships can influence governance outcomes.

The present study consequently treats stakeholder participation as an important component of effective internal governance.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Institutional Theory

The study is anchored partly on Institutional Theory. Institutional Theory emphasises the influence of formal rules, norms, structures and established practices on organisational behaviour.

Universities do not operate independently of their institutional environments. Their governance structures are shaped by university laws, government regulations, professional norms and established administrative practices. The theory therefore provides an appropriate framework for understanding why governance structures may exist formally but produce different experiences across institutions.

The theory is particularly useful in explaining the difference between EAUED and LAUTECH. Although both institutions operate under the same state environment, their institutional histories differ. Consequently, governance practices may become internalised differently.

4.2 Stakeholder Theory

The second theoretical foundation is Stakeholder Theory. Freeman's (1984) theory emphasises the importance of recognising the interests of groups affected by organisational decisions.

In university governance, stakeholders include academic staff, non-academic staff, students, government, management, governing councils and the wider society. Their participation can enhance legitimacy, communication and acceptance of institutional decisions.

The theory therefore provides an appropriate basis for examining the study's findings on stakeholder participation and inclusive governance.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods research design. This design was appropriate because the study sought to combine measurable perceptions of governance with qualitative explanations of how governance challenges are experienced within the institutions.

The study was conducted in Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo, and Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso. The institutions were selected because they represent two state-owned universities with different institutional histories and developmental experiences.

Quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires. The governance-challenges section contained items relating to funding constraints, external interference, administrative delays, infrastructural deficiencies and the effects of governance challenges on institutional outcomes.

A total of 200 respondents participated in the quantitative component. Stratified random sampling was used to provide representation from the relevant categories of university staff.

The qualitative component involved 20 semi-structured interviews with selected principal officers, senior academic staff and administrative officers. The interviews were analysed thematically.

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, chi-square tests of independence and Pearson correlation analysis with SPSS. The chi-square test was used to examine differences in perceptions between the two universities, while Pearson correlation was used to examine relationships between governance challenges and perceived institutional performance.

RESULTS

Governance Practices and Internal Leadership

The findings indicate that governance practices and internal leadership arrangements are closely related. Respondents generally recognised the importance of institutional regulations, accountability, transparency, supervision and clearly defined responsibilities.

The qualitative interviews reinforced this finding. Participants explained that effective governance depends on compliance with institutional regulations and the proper discharge of statutory responsibilities. Interviewees also emphasised that unclear reporting relationships can create administrative difficulties.

Participants identified the Governing Council, Senate, Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Registrar, Deans and Heads of Departments as important actors within the governance system. They emphasised that leadership becomes more coordinated when these organs perform their respective responsibilities without unnecessary duplication or interference.

This finding is important because it suggests that internal leadership effectiveness depends not merely on individual leadership qualities but also on the institutional structure within which leaders operate.

Government Policy and Stakeholder Participation

The quantitative evidence indicated strong agreement that government regulations guide university governance. However, the rating concerning the interaction between policy and stakeholder participation was comparatively lower, with the relevant item recording a mean of 3.70.

The qualitative findings provide further explanation. Participants acknowledged that government policies influence administrative procedures but emphasised that successful implementation depends upon cooperation among university stakeholders. They also reported that consultation with academic staff, non-academic staff and students can facilitate policy implementation.

This suggests that the existence of a policy framework does not necessarily guarantee effective implementation. Participation and communication remain important.

Major Governance Challenges

The most prominent finding concerned governance challenges.

Table 1: Major Governance Challenges

Governance challenge	**EAUED Mean**	**LAUTECH Mean**	**Overall Mean**
Insufficient funding	4.38	4.10	**4.24**
External interference	4.02	3.86	**3.94**
Administrative delays	4.08	3.84	**3.96**
Inadequate facilities	4.26	3.98	**4.12**

Challenges reduce institutional outcomes	3.98	3.72	**3.85**
Section Mean	**4.15**	**3.89**	**4.02**

Source: Study data.

The table shows that insufficient funding recorded the highest overall mean of 4.24. EAUED respondents recorded a higher mean of 4.38 compared with 4.10 for LAUTECH. Inadequate facilities followed with a mean of 4.12, while administrative delays and external interference recorded 3.96 and 3.94 respectively.

The overall governance-challenges score was 4.02, with EAUED recording 4.15 and LAUTECH 3.89. Thus, EAUED respondents expressed somewhat greater concern about governance challenges.

The finding is consistent with the qualitative evidence. Interview participants explained that inadequate funding limits the implementation of governance decisions, while bureaucratic procedures delay administrative action and inadequate infrastructure affects communication and coordination.

Comparative Chi-Square Result

The chi-square test produced the following result:

$\chi^2 = 9.63$, df = 4, $p = .047$, Cramer's V = .31.

Because $p < .05$, there was a statistically significant association between university type and perceptions of governance challenges. Cramer's V of .31 indicates a moderate association under the interpretation adopted in the study.

The result should not be interpreted to mean that one institution has governance problems while the other does not. Rather, it indicates that the intensity or perception of governance challenges differs between the two institutional contexts.

Governance Challenges and Institutional Performance

One of the most important findings was the relationship between governance challenges and perceived institutional performance.

Pearson correlation produced:

$r = -.72$, $p < .001$.

This indicates a strong negative relationship between governance challenges and perceived institutional performance. As perceptions of governance challenges increased, perceptions of institutional performance tended to decrease.

By comparison, governance practices had a positive relationship with perceived performance (**r = .68**), while governance structures recorded a positive relationship of **r = .61**.

This is particularly significant because it demonstrates that governance challenges are not simply procedural inconveniences. They have implications for how stakeholders assess the capacity of their institutions to achieve their objectives.

6.6 Measures for Strengthening Governance

Respondents expressed strong support for all five proposed improvement measures.

Table 2: Proposed Measures for Governance Improvement

Measure	EAUED Mean	LAUTECH Mean	Overall Mean
Improved funding support	4.42	4.48	**4.45**
Strict policy compliance	4.28	4.18	**4.23**
Stronger accountability systems	4.44	4.18	**4.31**
Active stakeholder participation	4.18	4.32	**4.25**
Continuous training of officials	4.30	4.24	**4.27**
Section Mean	**4.28**	**4.32**	**4.30**

Source: Study data.

The overall mean of 4.30 demonstrates strong consensus concerning the proposed reforms. Improved funding recorded the highest mean of 4.45, followed by accountability systems at 4.31 and continuous training at 4.27.

Importantly, there was no statistically significant difference between the two universities concerning proposed solutions ($\chi^2 = 2.14$, $p = .710$).

This suggests that although EAUED and LAUTECH differ in their experiences of governance challenges, stakeholders broadly agree on the direction of governance reform.

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

The qualitative evidence provided important explanations for the quantitative results.

First, participants emphasised that governance effectiveness depends upon compliance with institutional regulations, effective supervision and responsible leadership. Second, participants identified clear authority relationships and coordination among governance organs as essential for effective internal leadership.

Third, participants recognised the influence of government policy but stressed the importance of stakeholder participation in successful policy implementation. Some participants also expressed concern that excessive external influence could affect institutional flexibility.

Fourth, the interviews confirmed the quantitative finding that funding was the dominant governance challenge. Participants also identified bureaucracy, external interference and inadequate infrastructure as important constraints.

Finally, participants advocated a multi-dimensional approach to reform. They supported improved funding, accountability, stakeholder participation, leadership development and improved administrative procedures. The qualitative evidence therefore reinforces the argument that governance reform cannot depend on one intervention alone.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first major finding is that governance practices and internal leadership are closely interconnected. The results indicate that institutional rules, accountability and clearly defined authority relationships provide the foundation for effective administration. This is consistent with Institutional Theory, which emphasises the importance of rules, norms and established organisational arrangements.

The finding is also consistent with recent African scholarship that conceptualises university governance as involving the interaction of governing councils, academic governance bodies and university management.

The second major finding is the prominence of inadequate funding. With an overall mean of 4.24, funding was the most strongly identified challenge. This suggests that financial constraints affect governance beyond the narrow issue of budgeting. Where funds are unavailable, management may be unable to implement decisions approved by governance organs.

The finding is consistent with Nigerian research linking university governance with resource mobilisation and human-capital development.

The third major finding concerns bureaucracy and administrative delays. Respondents recorded a mean of 3.96 for administrative delays. Qualitative participants explained that decisions may pass through multiple approval stages before implementation. This indicates that procedures intended to protect accountability may become counterproductive when they generate unnecessary delays.

The fourth finding concerns external interference. The overall mean of 3.94 demonstrates substantial concern about external influence. The finding must, however, be interpreted carefully. Public universities require legitimate government oversight. The issue is therefore not the complete absence of government involvement but the need to maintain an appropriate balance between oversight and operational autonomy.

This issue is particularly relevant within the wider African higher education context, where the relationship between the state and university remains a central governance question.

The fifth finding is the strong negative relationship between governance challenges and perceived institutional performance. The correlation of −.72 indicates that governance problems have consequences extending beyond administrative processes. This finding strengthens the argument that governance should be regarded as an institutional-performance issue rather than simply an organisational-structure issue.

The sixth finding concerns the strong consensus regarding reform measures. Despite differences between the two universities in their perceptions of governance challenges, respondents agreed on improved funding, stronger accountability, stakeholder participation, policy compliance and leadership training.

This convergence is important. It indicates that the governance experiences of the two institutions may differ, but there is substantial agreement among stakeholders concerning what should be done to improve governance.

CONCLUSION

This study examined governance challenges and internal leadership structure in EAUED and LAUTECH between 2022 and 2025. The findings demonstrate that the effectiveness of university governance depends on the interaction between formal institutional structures and the conditions under which those structures operate.

The evidence shows that inadequate funding constitutes the most prominent governance challenge, followed by infrastructural deficiencies, administrative delays and external interference. These challenges have implications for the effectiveness of internal leadership because they can constrain the ability of university leaders and governance organs to implement decisions.

The strong negative relationship between governance challenges and perceived institutional performance further demonstrates that governance weaknesses have consequences for institutional functioning.

The study therefore concludes that improving governance in Oyo State-owned universities requires a comprehensive approach. Formal governance structures are necessary but insufficient. Effective leadership also requires adequate resources, clear authority relationships, accountability, efficient administrative procedures, stakeholder participation and an appropriate balance between government oversight and institutional autonomy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study recommends the following:

Improve and stabilise university funding

The Oyo State Government should provide adequate and predictable funding to its universities. Since funding recorded the highest governance-challenge mean of 4.24 and improved funding was also the highest-rated reform measure at 4.45, financial support should be treated as a governance priority rather than merely a budgetary concern.

Strengthen accountability mechanisms

University management should strengthen internal accountability mechanisms, particularly in financial management, procurement, implementation of council decisions and administrative reporting.

Reduce unnecessary bureaucratic delays

Universities should periodically review approval processes to identify unnecessary stages and duplication. Streamlining procedures should, however, be undertaken without weakening accountability.

Protect appropriate institutional autonomy

Government oversight should be maintained, but university governance organs should be allowed sufficient operational space to perform their statutory responsibilities. This is particularly important in areas where excessive external intervention can delay routine administrative decisions.

Strengthen infrastructure and digital administrative systems

Investment should be directed towards office accommodation, information technology, communication infrastructure and other facilities that support governance and administrative coordination.

Institutionalise leadership development

Regular leadership and governance training should be provided for principal officers, deans, heads of departments and members of major governance committees. Training should include strategic management, communication, conflict management, accountability and participatory decision-making.

Strengthen stakeholder participation

Academic staff, non-academic staff and students should be given meaningful opportunities to contribute to major institutional decisions through established consultation and committee mechanisms.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

The study makes three principal contributions.

First, it provides comparative empirical evidence on governance challenges in two Oyo State-owned universities with different institutional histories.

Second, it demonstrates empirically that governance challenges are associated with perceived institutional performance, as shown by the strong negative correlation of $\mathbf{r = -.72}$.

Third, it demonstrates that stakeholders can experience governance differently across institutions while maintaining substantial consensus concerning appropriate reform measures. This is demonstrated by the significant difference in perceptions of governance challenges and the absence of a significant difference regarding proposed solutions.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The study was limited to two Oyo State-owned universities and therefore should not automatically be generalised to all Nigerian universities. The study also relied partly on respondents' perceptions, which may have been influenced by institutional positions and personal experiences.

Future studies could extend the comparison to other state-owned universities in Nigeria. Longitudinal research could also examine whether governance reforms produce measurable improvements over time. Further research could examine the relationship between governance challenges and specific outcomes such as staff productivity, research performance, financial sustainability and student outcomes.

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