

VISION AND MISSION IN CONTEMPORARY HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS: A CASE STUDY OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Higher education systems in Africa have been pivotal in terms of their roles in development. Each University established had its own mandate which was encapsulated in their vision and mission statement. Vision and mission are management tools for strategic planning. Most authors were of the opinion that universities today do have similar vision and mission statements and this is inadequate to identify the institutions strength and to delineate the institution's stance with others. The vision and mission statement of universities has been a tool for strategic management in the public and private institutions and the study considered the vision and mission of the ranked universities and what in the vision and mission made them to be ranked. Based on data collected by Times higher education, which presented a ranking of all universities in Nigeria, four universities emerged as the best and they are Covenant University, University of Ibadan, University of Lagos, University of Nigeria Nsukka. Voyant tools were used for content analysis of the mission and vision statement to know what conferred more advantage on the ranked institutions. Voyant tools is a web-based text reading and analysis software that uses more than 20 visualization tools to analyze a text corpus. Also, indicators common to University ranking such as research excellence, internationalization and quality of graduates will be considered. This study therefore recommends that the vision and mission of these institutions should be overhauled to factor in existing realities in the country at large and efforts must be placed on knowing whether universities are delivering on the ideals of their vision and mission.

KEYWORDS: Vision, Mission, Contemporary, Higher Education System, Nigeria & University

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INTRODUCTION

Higher education systems in Africa have been pivotal in terms of their roles in development. According to Cloete *et al* (2011) they were referred to as development universities. This underscores the importance of universities as edifices of development in Africa and they were important to meet the human resources need in the region. The higher education institutions in Africa were central to the development strategy of the newly independent countries in the region. This led to the proliferation of various universities in Africa. In Nigeria, the establishment of the first higher institution in Nigeria in 1934 which is Yaba Higher college became the basis for the first University college which is now University of Ibadan established in 1948. As the nation gained independence, there was need to broaden the educational scope of the nation and various universities were established.

To serve as management tools for strategic planning, mission and vision statements came to the fore (Bart, 2001a). The vision and mission statements seek to proffer answer to questions such as what the business is? What it should be and what it will be in the future? Each University established had its own mandate which was encapsulated in their vision and mission statement. Most authors were of the opinion that universities today do

have similar vision and mission statements and this is inadequate to identify the institutions strength and to delineate the institution's stance with others (Özdem, 2011; Kosmützky, 2012). Education has the import to contribute to national development and this led to the creation of various institutions with a mandate to deliver. The vision and mission thus became the compass by which the universities moved.

Consequently, this study will consider contemporary higher education system in Nigeria, the elements in their vision and mission that made them stood out, and the rankings of the universities.

VISION AND MISSION OF UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

The vision of the University refers to the ability of the management of such institution to envisage and build the future they anticipate (Kibuuka, 2001). It is a strategic instrument that exemplifies and convey the future the institution desires in written form. Higher education institutions are created with a vision in mind and a promise to be delivered in the future. This is captured in the vision of the University. Having a vision statement has its benefits as mentioned above. It also helps in guiding the process to achieving the predetermined objective. This becomes the policy documents that guides the conduct of academic and non-academic activities in the institutions. It also shows the ideal conditions for the institution, long term goals and future perspectives (Paina and Bacila, 2004).

Vision is also a composite of principles and beliefs which guides the way an institution accomplishes its mission (Kuenssberg, 2011). With a well spelt out vision and strong values, it will be easy to define the strategic objectives for the institution and integrate them into the institutions growth potential to confer a competitive advantage (Paina and Bacila, 2004). Vision is important as a basis for a good mission statement. It is the blue print for delivering on preconceived objectives.

The mission of a higher education institution is its main purpose or the reason the institution exists in a society (Paina and Bacila, 2004; Bonewits Feldner, 2006; Woodrow, 2006). Before institutions are created, there are reasons for having such institution in a particular place. It might be by the government or private individuals and this is communicated in the mission statement of the University. It is the basis and building block for the institutions vision and strategic plans (Velcoff and Ferrari, 2006). What necessitates the need for mission statements are the prevailing situation in a society, the internal environment, environmental pressures and challenges (James and Huisman, 2009). Take for instance a society where the entire youth demography is poorly educated as a result of no presence of higher institution of learning, this will cascade into lots of challenges for such society such as poor human capital critical for development initiatives, poor economic development in the society, increase in social vices, disregard for authorities etc.

Having a good mission statement shows the stance of the University on its philosophy and the core competencies that will help in delivering its mandate (Sidhu, 2003). This was discussed further by Woodrow (2006) by maintaining that an affective mission statement should clearly typify the reason for the existence of the institution, and its priorities so as to motivate all stakeholders to exemplify and live it. This serves as a template for all concerned to understand the purpose and also motivate them to see the mission as important and galvanize support towards achieving the mission and goals (Woodrow, 2006)

Kosmützky (2012) maintained that a University's mission showcases the institutions core duties and functions, sets the priorities and embodies the institution image and position among the comity of educational institutions. It shows the peculiarity and uniqueness of the institution and it's a tool for institutional decision making. It makes the institution

stand out from competitors and can ensure optimization and conservation of resources applicable to satisfy customers (Finley, Rogers and Galloway, 2001). Thus, to ensure that the mission statement has positive impact on the performance of the institution, the mission statement must be carefully designed with all stakeholders relevant to the sustenance of the institution included and also it must clearly highlight the goals and standards (Fugazotto, 2009). Vision and mission statement are vital tools for strategic management in public and private organizations (William PKD, 2012).

From the data in **table 1**. Covenant university is the leading institution in Nigeria as ranked by Times Higher education 2020. The institution has been noted for giant strides in teaching and research as exemplified in the vision and mission statement. With the vision to be a leading world class Christian mission University and a commitment to raise new generation of leaders in all fields of human endeavor, it can be said that the university has delivered on the vision as it has risen to be the best university as ranked by Times Higher education (2020). This has been realizable by some strategic actions as contained in the founding philosophy of the institution which has in it a departure from “form” to “skill”, a departure from “knowledge to empowerment”, a departure from “figures to future building”, a departure from “legalism to “realism”, a departure from “points” to “facts”, a departure from “mathe-matics” to “life-matics”. Spirituality was also an essential part of the vision and mission statement and they took their cue from the spiritual root of a number of world class universities such as Harvard University, Princeton University, Yale University, Columbia University (David Oyedepo, 2016). It is important to note that the vision and mission of the university has helped in realizing this huge milestone as revealed by the Vice-chancellor of the institution who maintained that “through the inspiration of the Almighty, the core values of the university were coined, the vision, the mission of the university were coined and these instruments have made Covenant University to stand out today as an exemplary institution on the African Landscape (Atayero, 2019).

From the data in Table 1. University of Ibadan is the premier university in Nigeria and it has over time been a school noted for academic excellence. The university has the vision to be a world class institution known for academic excellence geared towards meeting societal needs. With stringent conditions for academic admission into the school, the school only seek to have a crop of students that will help expand the frontiers of knowledge as contained in the mission of the institution. The institution has also maintained its stellar academic performance over the years which reinforces the excellence exemplified in the vision and mission statement. Saanu in a report on tribuneonline.ng (2016) reported that the university was the first to be ranked as the first and best university in Nigeria as well as the flagship of post-graduate studies in Nigeria. The institution was ranked as the 600th best university in Nigeria by Times Higher education in 2016. The ranking was based on level of teaching, research, citation of scholarly publication, industry income and international outlook and other metrics

University of Lagos Nigeria has been a top class institution in Nigeria with various accolades to their repute. With elements such as top class institution, conducive environment for teaching learning and research, excellence in knowledge and character in their vision and mission statement, the institution has lived up to expectation on delivering on these ideals. According to Times Higher Education 2020, the university of Lagos has for over five decades provided qualitative and research driven education to individuals from around the globe.

University of Nigeria Nsukka is reputable for research and innovation as seen in the vision and mission statement. This has been a defining characteristic for the institution among other universities in Nigeria.

Table 1: Vision and Mission of Universities in Nigeria

University	Website	Year Established	Vision	Mission
Covenant University	www.covenantUniversity.edu.ng	2002	To be a leading world-class Christian mission University, committed to raising a new generation of leaders in all fields of human endeavor	To create knowledge and restore the dignity of the black man via a human development and total man concept driven curriculum employing, innovative, leading edge, teaching and learning methods, research and professional services that promotes integrated, life applicable, life transforming education relevant to the context of science, technology and human capacity building
University of Ibadan	www.ui.edu.ng	1948	To be a world class institution for academic excellence geared towards meeting societal needs	To expand the frontiers of knowledge through provision of excellent conditions for learning and research. To produce graduates who are worthy in character and sound judgement. To contribute to the transformation of society through creativity and innovation. To serve as a dynamic custodian of society's salutary values and thus sustain its integrity.
University of Lagos	www.unilag.edu.ng	1962	To be a top class institution for the pursuit of excellence in knowledge, character and service to humanity	To provide a conducive environment for teaching, learning, research and development, where staff and students will interact and compete effectively with other counterparts globally
University of Nigeria Nsukka	www.unn.edu.ng	1960	Through research and innovation, to become a globally reputed first-rate School of Postgraduate studies	The School aims to attract, educate, train and transform qualified persons to high level manpower that are thoroughly equipped with adequate and update knowledge and specialized skills in research and innovation and deployable for first-rate development and improvement in all fields of human endeavor.

How Vision and Mission Statement Affects Performance

Mission statement is an enduring statement of purpose which differentiates one institution from another (Lussier, 2016). With proliferation of various academic institution in Nigeria, there is the need to have distinguishing features among various higher education institutions in Nigeria. It describes what the institution is all about, the benefit of the institution, the direction and focus which forms the template for objectives and strategies in the institution (Yazhou & Jian, 2011). The mission statement has two major components which are the core values and the core purpose. By the vision and mission

statements of universities, the organizational foundation is set.

Vision and mission statement influences organizational performance (Bartkus, Glassman and McAfee, 2006). This is made possible in the organization by examining the changes that have taken place with time and the changes that will take place in the future. Mission and vision statement are tools for strategic management and they set the pace for the performance of the university. There is therefore the need for effective strategic leadership to achieve optimum performance in the organization. There must therefore be a strategic vision and mission statement for universities that must be measurable as time passes and in the future.

The efficacy of mission statement guides performance which is dictated by strategic planning and other management initiatives directed towards fulfilling the goals of the organization. Huang (2014) was of the opinion that a well-defined mission statement can ensure that internal stakeholders are unified and energized while the perception, expectation and actions of the external stakeholders are enhanced.

For higher education system to be effective, there is the need for strategic direction which is developing long term vision for the organization. According to Leonard and Huang (2014) the vision and mission statements aligns the actions of people in the organization. The vision and mission is active and all the people understands it and work with it thereby influencing organizational performance. The vision and mission statement also has in it vigour, drive and energy which propels the people towards achieving positive outcomes for the organization. Kirkpatrick *et al* (2002) reported a significant relationship between vision statement, individual unit and organizational performance.

Vision and mission statement in higher education system can affect performance by giving a sense of purpose and direction to the institution and legitimates its presence. The vision and mission statement provides guides to businesses and sustains it. This is in line with the findings of Analoui and Karami (2002) who maintained that the development of mission statement can influence significantly the survival and growth of a business.

Importance of Higher Education in Nigeria

It has been stated before that a nation cannot develop more than the quality of its education. This shows that education is critical for national development and the current state of any nation is a reflection of its investment in education. Education is a vital tool for social mobility and helps in reducing income inequality, health and other opportunities in the entire demography. As a result of education, people are impacted with the necessary skills that will make their lives better in the society. It has many other dividends such as social consciousness in people, knowing the basic political norms and values of the society, obligation, virtues of discipline, tolerance, social equality and national cohesion (Abeshi&Ezondi, 2011). This in the long run when consolidated will culminate in economic sustainability for the nation. Education raises the quality of life of people and it confers dignity, self-worth and self-respect on them which typifies individual freedom. The worth of education s revealed by Patel (2003) is incalculable.

With various advances recently, education makes life easier and in the areas of health, education helps in improvement of people's condition. This will ensure child health, reduction in infant and maternal mortality, good nutritional standards for people. With the consciousness of knowing, it influences the overall health pattern of people including reproductive health, life expectancy, personal hygiene and dietary values. This is corroborated by the opinion of the World Health Organization (WHO) which revealed that a difference of one percent point in the national literacy rate will result to two-year gain in life expectancy (Dada &Bazza, 2007).

With education, there are now various technologies developed to make life easier for all. Having adequate access to knowledge through the learning environment has shaped human interaction globally and we now have better commerce, transport, entertainment, sports, nutrition, education systems in the world. With education, there are advances made in technologies which has also improved the educational processes. There is now wide access to a plethora of information relevant to education both offline and online and with the grasp of a phone or system, one can have access to billions of information in seconds. The intellectual dexterity of each nation has been a tool for competition among various nations of the world and it's a bias and pre-requisite for employment (Isyaku, 2009).

METHODOLOGY

The National Universities Commission is a dynamic regulatory agency acting as a catalyst for positive change and innovation for the delivery of quality University education in Nigeria. It's involved in regulating the activities of universities in Nigeria. NUC has not ranked the universities in Nigeria (<https://www.nuc.edu.ng/nuc-has-not-ranked-nigerian-universities-prof-rasheed/>) so, other credible sources will be considered for this research. Based on data collected by Times higher education, four universities emerged as the best in Africa and they are Covenant University, University of Ibadan, University of Lagos, University of Nigeria Nsukka (<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/student/best-universities/best-universities-nigeria#survey-answer>). The four institutions above will be considered and a content analysis of the vision and mission statement will be done which will be discussed in line with the ranking of the institution. Voyant tools was used for content analysis of the mission and vision statement to know what conferred more advantage on the ranked institutions. Voyant tools is a web-based text reading and analysis software that uses more than 20 visualization tools to analyze a text corpus. It has been applicable in researches published in peer reviewed journals (Boyle & Hall, 2016), book chapters (Sinclair & Rockwell, 2015) and proceedings (Prayoga & Abraham, 2017; Hermeneuti.ca, 2016). Also, indicators common to University ranking such as research excellence, internationalization and quality of graduates will be considered.

The World University Rankings 2020

Best Universities in Nigeria

The *Times Higher Education* World University Rankings are the only global performance table that judge research-intensive universities across all their core missions: teaching, research, knowledge transfers and international outlook. Times Higher education used 13 carefully calibrated performance indicators to provide the most comprehensive and balanced comparisons, trusted by students, academics, University leaders, industry and governments.

The performance indicators are grouped into five areas: **Teaching** (the learning environment); **Research** (volume, income and reputation); **Citations** (research influence); **International outlook** (staff, students and research); and **Industry Income** (knowledge transfer).

Table 2: Times Higher Education Ranking of Universities in Nigeria

Rank	Name/Country	Overall	Teaching	Research	Citations	Industry Income	International Outlook
1001+	University of Nigeria Nsukka	10.7-22.1	23.0	8.6	18.6	35.2	23.8
801-1000	University of Lagos	22.2-28.2	15.5	9.0	58.7	34.5	27.4
501-600	University of Ibadan	35.3-38.7	23.4	12.1	77.6	41.1	37.1

401-500	CovenantUniversity	38.8-42.3	27.2	14.7	78.4	43.8	26.2
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The vision and mission statement of universities has been a tool for strategic management in the public and private institutions and this study will consider the vision and mission of the ranked universities and what in the vision and mission made them to be ranked.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings from this study revealed that Times Higher Education have in their 2020 ranking four universities in Nigeria and they are Covenant University, University of Ibadan, University of Lagos and University of Nigeria Nsukka.

Covenant University Nigeria is a growing, dynamic vision birthed, vision driven University founded in a Christian mission ethos and committed to pioneering excellence at the cutting edge of learning. The institution is driven by the compelling vision of raising a new generation of leaders for the African continent on the platform of a holistic, human development and integrated learning curriculum in order to raise total men who will go out to develop their world. The core values of spirituality, possibility mentality, capacity building, integrity, responsibility, diligence and sacrifice are what defines the University's commitment to excellence (CovenantUniversity.edu.ng).

Covenant University is the leading University according to Times Higher education ranking and looking at the vision and mission statement of the institution, the most **frequent words** in the corpus are human (3), leading (2), life (2), man (2), applicable (1). Human development is at the center of Covenant Universities activity and the focus is on how to better human existence. This is achievable by engaging in researches that are tailored towards human development. With this as a focus, human development has been one of the goals of the institution. This is in a bid to raise total men who will go out to develop their world. Leading is also one of the common words in the vision and mission statement of the University and this has been manifested by the commitment of the management to ensure that the institution ranks highly amongst the comity of universities globally and locally. As stated on the University website about page that "we are driven by the compelling vision of raising a new generation of leaders for the African continent on the platform of a holistic, human development and integrated learning curriculum in order to raise total men who will go out to develop their world (www.CovenantUniversity.edu.ng/about-us). The idea of the University was to raise new generation of leaders.

Man also was a common term in the vision and mission statement of the University and this is exemplified in raising total man. A man balanced in all that is needed to live life and become meaningful in the society. This is important so that employees will meet up with their own side of the psychological contract of employability (Dadalen, Oni & Adekola, 2015). Life is a term common in the vision and mission statement of Covenant University. Covenant University has influenced life and the community immensely. The institution commenced a series of community development services which was aimed at improving the lives of people in the host community and environs. Some of the services they engaged in include environmental sanitation, beautification, construction of amusement park, engaging people in entrepreneurial skills. This series of activities were done to help the students ("human") "lead" and contribute to the "life" of other "men" to become "total men". The institution is devoted to humanity through leadership and personal development exemplified in the life of the students.

From other metrics used in ranking the institution, the University has ranked highly among others in some research areas as shown by Elsevier Scival (Covenantuniversity.edu.ng, 2017). In a study by in 2018, it was revealed that

teaching methods in the University include lecturing, seminars and the use of assignments which were to a large extent found to be compliant with all principles of Universal design for learning though they were found wanting on some areas (Sholanke. A *et al*, 2018). The institution ranked low in international outlook as there were no foreign students in the University. As revealed on the website of the institution, what also helped was the aspiration of the founder through unique curricular, quality teaching, cutting edge research, life changing innovations and impactful community development programmes with elements of it reflected in the mission and vision statement. Research is also an integral part of what gave credence to the ranking of the institution as scholars conduct research in many fields and also expand knowledge through analysis, innovation and insight. The University also crossed 5000 publication milestone for the first time since inception, ranked 91st in 2020 the emerging economies ranking etc (www.CovenantUniversity.edu.ng/news). In other metrics by Times Higher Education in table 2, the University ranked highly in citation, industry income and teaching.



Plate 1: Visualization of Key Words in Covenant University's Vision and Mission Statement.

University of Ibadan was established in 1948 and it is the first University in Nigeria. Until 1962 when it became a full-fledged independent University, it was a college of the University of London in a special relationship scheme. The University started with academic programmes in Arts, science and medicine has now developed into a comprehensive citadel of learning with academic programs in sixteen faculties namely arts, science, education, veterinary medicine, pharmacy, technology, law, public health, dentistry, economics, renewable natural resources and environmental design and management. The faculties of the basic medical sciences, clinical sciences, public health and dentistry are organized as college of medicine. (ui.edu.ng).

The vision and mission statement of the University of Ibadan was characterized by the following **words** in the corpus are academic (1), character (1), class (1), conditions (1), contribute (1). With the institution being the premier University in Nigeria, it is normal for the institution to live up to this and be a University with excellence as typified in their vision and mission statement. According to a report by Nigerian Tribune (2018), the success story of the University was attributed to attraction of high caliber international and local academic technical and administrative staff, culture of research, competitive student recruitment, high standards of reaching and learning, foreign institutions and foundations funded programs, staff development and internationally acclaimed centers of excellence. The institution has since its founding in 1948 410 professors, 120 readers, 402 senior lecturers, 355 lecturer I, 196 lecturer II and 61 assistant lecturers and also occupies the front seat as the flagship of postgraduate research and training in Sub-Saharan Africa (Oludayo Tade,

2018).

Since the inception of the institution, the University has created and maintained a conducive academic and social environment where students, teachers and researchers are motivated to work add to add value to the students, society and the country at large. Guided by elements such as academic, class, conditions, excellence and excellent in the vision and mission statement of the institution, this has been the roadmaps which has guided and spurred the institution to be ranked second after Covenant University by Times Higher Education. The main thrust of the University for the 21st century is to be world class institution for academic excellence geared towards meeting societal needs. Academic excellence in conducive environment has been one of the distinguishing factors for University of Ibadan as exemplified in the mission and vision statement. This has been a tool for strategic planning over the years which won the institution the ranking by Times Higher education after Covenant University in Nigeria. According to 2020 world University Rankings by Times Higher education, the University has 16.4 students per staff, 1% of international students, 48:52 student ration of females to males and 26,648 full time students.

In other metrics used by Times Higher Education in table 2, the institution ranked highly in citation, industry outcome and international outlook.



Plate 2: Visualization of Key Words in University of Ibadan Vision and Mission Statement.

University of Lagos was founded in 1962 and it has three campuses in Yaba and Surulere. Whereas two of its campuses are located in Yaba (the main campus at the former School of Radiography). Its college of medicine is located at Idi-Araba, Surulere. The University has twelve faculties namely arts, basic medical sciences, business administration, clinical sciences, dental sciences, education, engineering, environmental sciences, law, pharmacy, science and social sciences. The institution also offers masters and doctorate degree in most of the aforementioned programmes (Unilag.edu.ng)

Most **frequent words** in the corpus are character (1), class (1), compete (1), conducive (1), counterparts (1). The institution can boast of a conducive atmosphere necessary for academic excellence. According to key statistics in 2020 World University Rankings, the institution has 0% international students, 20.3students per staff, 46:54 student ration of females to males, 34,056 number of FTE students. The institution ranks highly in citations, industry income and international outlook.



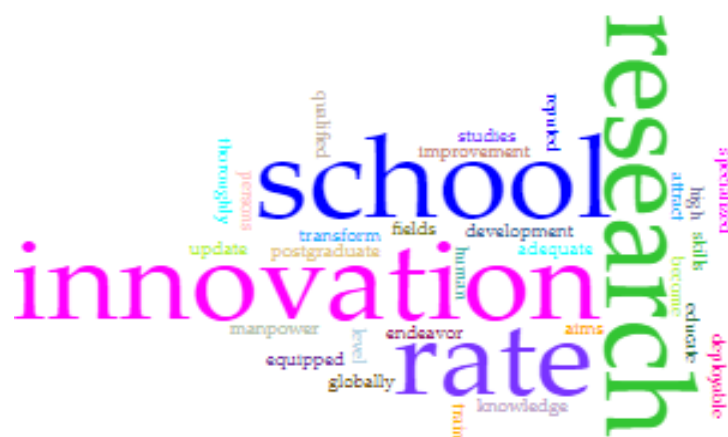
Plate 3: Visualization of Key Words in University of Lagos Vision and Mission Statement.

University of Nigeria Nsukka is a federal University located in Nsukka, Enugu State. It was founded by Nnamdi Azikwe in 1955 and it was formally opened on 7th October 1960. The University has four campuses and they are Nsukka, Enugu, Itulu-Ozalla and Aba Campus in Abia State.

Research and innovation is major in the vision and mission statement of the University. The most common words in the vision and mission statement of the University are innovation (2), rate (2), research (2), school (2), adequate (1). The school ranks highly in teaching, industry income and international outlook. On other metrics in the 2020 world University rankings, the institution has 13.2 students per staff, 1% international students, 51:49 student ratio of females to males, 34,227 number of FTE students.

Innovation has been a major factor that placed University of Nigeria Nsukka on the pedestal of universities in the World while sustaining the legacy of technological innovation.

In research, the University has fared well also. A report by Ikechukwu Obi (2019) revealed that the institution has over time proved its worth to the world that it has come of age in technological advancement and innovativeness made possible by research. Recently, the University produced the first gasification plant that uses organic waste to generate electricity and also assembled the Lion Laptop whose materials were sourced locally. The University was also ranked best by Webometrics in 2016 as a result of her giant strides in research publications among 1500 top universities in the world. These were all made possible by the laid foundation for innovative development drawn from the vision and mission statement of the University.



**Plate 4: Visualization of Key Words in University of Nigeria,
Nsukka Vision and Mission Statement.**

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has considered the vision and mission in contemporary higher education systems in Nigeria and findings revealed that both vision and mission statements are strategic planning tools adopted worldwide. They are necessary for defining the actual purpose and future path of action for institutions, and the related internal or external processes. This study therefore recommends that vision and mission should be overhauled to factor in existing realities in the country at large and efforts must be placed on knowing whether universities are delivering on the ideals of their vision and mission.

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