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# Bridging the Gap in Political Science Education: Aligning Educational Taxonomies with the Competency Demands of Political Leadership in Nigeria

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## ***Abstract***

Nigeria continues to face a leadership deficit, despite the proliferation of political science graduates from its universities. This paradox highlights a fundamental problem: the disconnection between academic training and the real-world demands of political leadership. Political science as a field of study encompasses various areas such as political theory, comparative politics, international relations, public administration, political economy, political behaviour, policy studies, political methodology, constitutional law, and human rights. Existing curricula tend to overemphasise cognitive development while underplaying the affective and psychomotor domains, both of which are crucial for cultivating ethical, emotionally intelligent, and practically competent leaders. This study evaluates the relevance of the three domains of education, cognitive, affective, and psychomotor, in preparing political science undergraduates for leadership roles in Nigeria. The objective is to critically analyse the extent to which university education equips students with the holistic competencies required for effective political engagement. Employing a qualitative methodology based on secondary sources, including peer-reviewed literature, policy frameworks, and curriculum content, the study utilises content analysis to interpret and synthesise data. Findings reveal a disproportionate focus on theoretical knowledge at the expense of experiential learning and values-based education. Consequently, many graduates lack the interpersonal, ethical, and practical skills necessary for transformative leadership. The paper concludes by advocating for a balanced integration of all three educational domains within political science programmes. This approach not only bridges the theory-practice gap but also contributes to national development by nurturing a generation of well-rounded, responsive, and visionary leaders.

**Keywords:** Classroom, Cabinet, Education, Political Science, Undergraduates, Leadership

## Introduction

Nigeria continues to face a leadership deficit, despite the proliferation of political science graduates from its universities. This paradox highlights a fundamental problem: the disconnection between academic training and the real-world demands of political leadership. Existing curricula tend to overemphasise cognitive development while underplaying the affective and psychomotor domains, both of which are crucial for cultivating ethical, emotionally intelligent, and practically competent leaders.

The 21st-century political landscape in Nigeria demands leaders who are intellectually grounded, emotionally intelligent, and physically agile, qualities that correspond to the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains of education. Political science, as a discipline, plays a crucial role in cultivating such leaders. However, the persistent leadership crisis in Nigeria has raised questions about the quality and relevance of university education in producing competent political leaders. The transition from classroom learning to national leadership, particularly for political science undergraduates, necessitates a comprehensive education framework that extends beyond rote knowledge acquisition to encompass value orientation and practical skills (Bloom, 1956; Uvalić-Trumbić & Okebukola, 2023). The three educational domains, originally proposed by Benjamin Bloom and others in the 1950s, offer a comprehensive framework for achieving this holistic development.

The cognitive domain, which centres on knowledge acquisition, comprehension, and critical thinking, is crucial for political science students. It enables them to analyse political ideologies, evaluate governance systems, and craft policies. However, cognitive mastery alone is insufficient in the complex terrain of Nigerian politics. Without the integration of the affective domain, which develops emotional intelligence, ethical reasoning, empathy, patriotism, and a commitment to social justice, graduates may lack the integrity and emotional maturity necessary for responsible leadership (Krathwohl, Bloom & Masia, 1964). Given the divisive nature of Nigerian politics, emotional competence and a value-driven perspective are indispensable for leaders who must navigate ethnic, religious, and socio-economic pluralism. Similarly, the psychomotor domain, though often overlooked in the social sciences, cannot be disregarded in leadership preparation. It involves the development of practical, action-oriented skills such as public speaking, negotiation, and conflict resolution. These skills are particularly relevant in a country like Nigeria, where effective communication and crisis management are essential for democratic governance and peacebuilding (Obun-Andy & Banjo, 2021; Wertheim, n.d.; Shonk, 2025). As student leaders transition from classroom theory to public service, the capacity to act decisively, mobilise resources, and respond to dynamic socio-political realities becomes critical. Hence, experiential learning methods such as debates, simulations, internships, and political campaigns should be integrated into the political science curriculum to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Despite reforms in tertiary education, Nigerian universities often prioritise theoretical instruction over the holistic development of students, resulting in a disconnect between educational outcomes and national leadership needs (Akinyemi, Ofem & Ikuenomore, 2012). Political science undergraduates are frequently not exposed to adequate mentoring, real-world policy engagement, or leadership grooming that aligns with the tripartite educational objectives. This inadequacy contributes to the recycling of unprepared leaders who lack the intellectual depth, emotional resilience, and practical dexterity needed to solve Nigeria's governance challenges.

It is within this context that this study examines the relevance of the three domains of education in equipping political science undergraduates for leadership roles in Nigeria. The research aims to evaluate whether current educational practices in Nigerian universities effectively prepare students for the multifaceted demands of public leadership and policy-making. In doing so, it emphasises the imperative for a more integrative curriculum that aligns cognitive rigour with affective integrity and psychomotor efficacy. As Nigeria continues its search for transformational leaders, the role of higher education, especially political science education, becomes central in shaping the future of governance and democratic consolidation.

### **Conceptualising Three Domains of Education, Political Science Undergraduates and Leadership**

The three domains of education — cognitive, affective, and psychomotor — form the foundational pillars of holistic learning and human development. Introduced by Bloom and colleagues in the mid-20th century, these domains categorise educational objectives into intellectual capabilities (cognitive), emotional and value-based learning (affective), and practical or manipulative skills (psychomotor) (Bloom, 1956; Krathwohl et al., 1964). The cognitive domain focuses on knowledge acquisition, comprehension, and evaluation, and is heavily emphasised in academic disciplines, including political science. The affective domain involves attitudes, emotions, values, and interpersonal skills—key for ethical reasoning and emotional intelligence. The psychomotor domain, though less visible in theoretical disciplines, is essential for developing hands-on skills relevant to public leadership, including communication, coordination, and strategic implementation (Fiveable Inc., 2025).

Political science as a discipline encompasses a wide array of subfields, including political theory, comparative politics, international relations, public administration, political economy, and constitutional law. Students of political science in Nigeria typically undergo rigorous intellectual training to understand political systems, governance processes, and policy analysis. However, this training is often rooted in the cognitive domain, relying heavily on lecture-based teaching, theoretical content, and summative assessments (Heywood, 2013). Despite the strength of the cognitive approach, scholars argue that it inadequately prepares students for the complex realities of political leadership and civic engagement (Akinyemi et al., 2012; *Disciplines in Nigeria*, 2025). Political leadership demands more than theoretical competence; it requires affective traits such as empathy, ethical judgment, and emotional maturity, alongside psychomotor skills like strategic action, public communication, and operational effectiveness. These dimensions of leadership are underdeveloped when education is limited to abstract reasoning and content recall.

Leadership, particularly within the political arena, is a multifaceted concept involving the ability to influence, mobilise, and guide people toward shared objectives (Northouse, 2018). In the Nigerian context, where governance challenges persist, leadership demands a balance of intellectual insight, emotional awareness, and practical competence. According to Yukl (2013), leadership development should cultivate vision, ethical grounding, adaptability, and communication skills—outcomes that align with the three educational domains. This holistic perspective is especially relevant in Nigeria, where democratic consolidation and national development depend on the quality of leadership emerging from the educational system.

The interrelationship between the three domains of education, political science training, and political leadership reveals a critical gap between theory and practice. While Nigerian

universities equip students with knowledge to understand governance, limited attention to affective and psychomotor development impairs their readiness for leadership roles (Idris & Bako, 2021). As Nigeria continues to face leadership challenges, there is a pressing need for higher education to reform political science curricula by integrating value-based learning, experiential leadership training, and practical engagement strategies.

By embedding the full spectrum of educational domains into political science education, Nigerian universities can foster a new generation of leaders who are not only intellectually capable but also emotionally intelligent and action-oriented. This integrative approach is crucial for bridging the gap between classroom learning and cabinet-level leadership in Nigeria's evolving political landscape.

### **Classroom-Cabinet: A Nexus of Political Science and Political Leadership**

The link between the classroom and the cabinet represents a critical intersection where academic preparation translates into national leadership. In Nigeria, this nexus is vital in addressing the persistent challenge of producing competent, visionary, and ethically grounded leaders. Political science education, covering governance, public administration, international relations, policy-making, development studies, and political theory, is uniquely positioned to prepare future leaders (Heywood, 2013). However, the gap between academic theory and the practical demands of leadership remains wide, undermining democratic consolidation and national development.

Political science classrooms should ideally function as laboratories of leadership where students engage with real-world governance issues, simulate decision-making, and internalise public service ethics. Yet, in Nigeria, didactic and content-heavy curricula dominate, emphasising rote memorisation over critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and practical leadership experience (Akinyemi et al., 2012; *Disciplines in Nigeria*, 2025). This cognitive bias overlooks the affective and psychomotor domains, which are essential for skills such as empathy, negotiation, and communication, key attributes for cabinet-level leadership. Effective leadership requires integration across all three educational domains. The cognitive domain offers theoretical and analytical tools (Bloom, 1956); the affective domain instils patriotism, accountability, and ethical responsibility (Krathwohl et al., 1964), while the psychomotor domain develops practical abilities such as speech-making, political mobilisation, and crisis management. Neglecting any of these results in leaders who may be intellectually capable but lack the moral and operational competence needed for high office. Cabinet-level leadership involves dynamic responsibilities such as policy formulation, stakeholder negotiation, and national representation. As Northouse (2018) notes, leadership goes beyond knowledge to include influence and adaptability. Thus, political science education must incorporate experiential learning through simulations, internships, community engagement, and leadership boot camps to ensure students are adequately prepared for post-academic leadership roles.

Practical competencies rooted in the psychomotor domain are crucial. Speech-making, for instance, is an essential leadership tool. Winston Churchill's wartime speeches and Nelson Mandela's messages of reconciliation exemplify how oratory can inspire collective action and national healing (BBC, 2020; Sampson, 2011). Barack Obama's 2008 campaign showed the power of political mobilisation through strategic rhetoric and media engagement, galvanising youth participation (Fengjie, 2016). In crisis response, leaders like Angela Merkel and John F. Kennedy offer instructive examples. Merkel's decision during the 2015 refugee crisis and Kennedy's handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis underscore the necessity of calm, informed, and

timely action, skills developed through practical experience, not theory alone (De La Baume, 2017; Blight & Lang, 2012).

Ultimately, the classroom-cabinet nexus reflects the role of higher education in nation-building. In Nigeria, where leadership is often undermined by weak policy capacity and ethical failures (Idris & Bako, 2021), universities must reform political science curricula to embrace a multidimensional leadership education, anchored in intellectual rigour, ethical clarity, and hands-on skills. By doing so, academic institutions can contribute meaningfully to producing leaders who are not only theoretically knowledgeable but also emotionally intelligent and operationally competent.

### **Curriculum–Leadership Disconnection: The Nigerian Experience**

Nigeria faces a growing paradox within its political and educational spheres: despite the rapid expansion of tertiary institutions nationwide, the country continues to experience a persistent leadership crisis. By July 2022, Nigeria had established 49 federal universities, 57 state universities, 111 private universities, and 55 degree-awarding colleges of education (Commonwealth of Learning, 2022). Yet, although these institutions annually produce thousands of graduates, particularly in political science, their impact on the quality of national leadership remains limited. A key concern is the predominantly theoretical orientation of academic programmes, especially within political science, which prioritises knowledge acquisition over the development of practical governance skills.

The quality of leadership in Nigeria continues to be undermined by poor governance indicators, pervasive corruption, weak institutional frameworks, and minimal developmental progress (Hassan & Musa, 2010, 2011). Despite the growing number of political science graduates, many struggle to meet the practical demands of political leadership. This persistent gap between academic preparation and real-world governance challenges underscores a fundamental disconnection within the educational system, highlighting the urgent need for a more practice-oriented approach to political education.

In this context, the output of political science graduates, although numerically significant, is often ill-equipped to address the country's complex socio-political and economic challenges. Political leaders, despite their academic credentials, often lack the hands-on experience necessary to navigate the intricate dynamics of governance. They may possess theoretical knowledge of policy frameworks, public administration, or economics, but they often struggle to apply these concepts effectively in the governance of a nation characterised by diverse and frequently conflicting interests. This gap is a major contributing factor to Nigeria's leadership crisis, as it leaves leaders unprepared to implement meaningful reforms, combat corruption, or enhance the lives of citizens. This persistent disjuncture between academic learning and political practice calls for a fundamental rethinking of the approach to political science education in Nigeria. There is an urgent need to incorporate experiential learning into university curricula so that graduates can gain the practical experience necessary to navigate the political landscape and tackle the complex challenges of governance. Only then will Nigeria be able to bridge the gap between its academic institutions and the leadership qualities required for effective governance, ultimately addressing the systemic issues that continue to hinder its progress.

At the heart of this crisis lies the outdated and narrow design of Nigeria's political science curricula, which have traditionally prioritised the cognitive domain, emphasising theoretical



understanding of political ideologies, systems, and constitutional frameworks (Idris & Bako, 2021), while largely neglecting the affective and psychomotor domains, which are vital for emotional intelligence, ethical behaviour, civic responsibility, and hands-on leadership skills (*Disciplines in Nigeria*, 2025). This overreliance on theoretical instruction is reflected in the structure of many political science programmes, which offer limited opportunities for experiential learning, internships, simulations, or community-based political engagement. Consequently, graduates may possess academic knowledge of state institutions but remain ill-equipped for leadership tasks such as conflict resolution, stakeholder negotiation, or grassroots mobilisation.

Historically, Nigeria's political education system was modelled after the British system during the post-independence era, focusing primarily on classical political theory and public administration. While this framework may have served an academic purpose, it did not evolve in line with the sociopolitical transformations that followed, including military interventions, civil conflicts, and democratic transitions. The return to democratic rule in 1999 offered an opportunity to reframe political science education toward leadership development. However, successive curriculum reviews have not sufficiently addressed the practical dimensions of political leadership. For instance, the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) for political science in Nigerian universities still place disproportionate emphasis on abstract theories, with limited incorporation of leadership training modules (National Universities Commission, 2015, 2018).

Contemporary realities reveal the consequences of this disconnection. For example, the rise of youth political activism seen in the #EndSARS movement of 2020 demonstrated that while Nigerian youth are politically conscious, there is often a lack of structured knowledge and leadership capacity to transform agitation into sustained political change. Similarly, many elected officials, including political science graduates, have struggled with governance due to a lack of ethical grounding and practical experience (Mayanja, 2014; Okagbue, 2012). A case in point is the recurrent budgeting failures and policy inconsistency at state and national levels, challenges that demand strategic thinking, institutional knowledge, and leadership acumen, which should ideally be embedded during university education.

Data from Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (2023) places Nigeria at 145 out of 180 countries, reflecting enduring challenges of political accountability and governance ethics, areas strongly tied to effective education. Additionally, Nigeria ranks low on the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance (2022), especially in categories related to public participation and political inclusion, indicating that the cultivation of democratic values within the education system is insufficiently robust. These deficits are not merely governance issues but are symptomatic of deeper educational gaps.

Globally, universities are reforming political science education to integrate leadership development. In Africa, many institutions have incorporated civic leadership modules, community service requirements, and ethical reasoning workshops. For instance, the University of Cape Town's Global Citizenship Programme in South Africa focuses on civic engagement and ethical leadership, while the University of Pretoria offers a course titled "Leadership and Ethics in the Public Sector" (University of Cape Town, 2025; National School of Government, 2022). In Nigeria, Covenant University mandates the Total Man Concept (TMC) course, emphasizing leadership, ethical conduct, and community service (Covenant University, 2014). Similarly, the University of Ibadan includes "Ethics in Public Administration" and

compulsory community projects (University of Ibadan, n.d.). In Kenya, Strathmore University and the University of Nairobi offer service-based leadership modules and community attachments (Mukuria, 2008). Across Africa, universities such as Ashesi University in Ghana and Makerere University in Uganda ensure that leadership and ethics are central to their political science curricula (Ashesi University, 2023). This continental shift underscores the increasing recognition that political education must extend beyond theory, preparing future leaders with practical ethical reasoning, civic engagement, and leadership competencies essential for effective governance. Idris and Bako (2021) highlight that internships have long been embedded in Canadian universities, providing students with vital opportunities to complement their academic training with practical experience. At the University of Toronto, Political Science students are placed in a range of public and private organizations, including Amnesty International, the Atlantic Council of Canada, and the World Bank. These internships bridge academic learning with real-world experience, fostering well-rounded political leaders. According to Idris and Bako, the programme is flexible, allowing students to complete placements in their home countries, as long as the organizations are approved by the department. The initiative aims to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and the practical demands of professional settings, ensuring that Political Science graduates are equipped with both academic and practical expertise (Idris & Bako, 2021).

To bridge the curriculum–leadership disconnection in Nigeria, there is an urgent need to reconceptualise political science education as a platform for producing transformative leaders rather than mere policy analysts. This would entail integrating leadership laboratories, political internships, debate forums, and ethical training into university programmes. Moreover, partnerships between universities and government institutions can offer students real-world exposure and mentorship opportunities. Without such reforms, Nigeria risks perpetuating the cycle of producing theoretically educated but practically unprepared leaders who struggle to meet the demands of a dynamic and complex political environment.

### **Relevance of the Three Domains of Education in Preparing Political Science Undergraduates for Leadership Roles in Nigeria**

In Nigeria, the university education system plays a pivotal role in shaping the leaders of tomorrow, especially in fields such as political science. However, despite the increasing number of political science graduates emerging from Nigerian universities each year, the nation still grapples with significant leadership challenges, ranging from corruption to ineffective governance. The question then arises: Does the current university curriculum adequately prepare political science students for the leadership roles they are expected to fill? To answer this, we must critically examine the three domains of education —cognitive, affective, and psychomotor —and their relevance in preparing these students for the realities of political engagement.

The cognitive domain is arguably the most emphasised in political science education in Nigeria. This domain focuses on the development of intellectual abilities such as understanding, analysis, and evaluation, which are crucial for political theory, policy analysis, and governance. Students are taught foundational concepts in political science, such as political ideologies, public administration, international relations, and the structure of state institutions. These theoretical frameworks provide students with a fundamental understanding of the political system and its governance structures. However, there is a concern that the heavy focus on theoretical knowledge leaves graduates inadequately prepared for the practical realities of



political leadership. This disconnect is reflected in Nigeria's persistent leadership challenges, despite the large number of graduates in political science. For instance, Nigeria's legislature, populated by many university-educated representatives, continues to struggle with inefficiency, corruption, and poor policy implementation (Umaru, 2017). The failure to effectively translate theoretical understanding into impactful governance highlights the limitations of a curriculum that prioritises cognitive knowledge over practical skills. A comparative look at political science curricula in other parts of the world underscores the importance of a more balanced approach. In countries such as South Africa, Ghana, Morocco, and Kenya, where the political science curriculum incorporates both theoretical knowledge and leadership development through internships and community engagement, the results are more aligned with national development goals. Political science graduates in these countries are often better equipped to lead with ethical awareness and hands-on skills, areas that are somewhat neglected in Nigeria's system (Idris & Bako, 2021).

The affective domain, which encompasses values, attitudes, motivations, and emotional responses, is perhaps the most neglected area in Nigerian political science education. This domain is critical for developing the emotional intelligence, ethical grounding, and social responsibility that are essential for effective political leadership. In a country as diverse and politically charged as Nigeria, the ability to empathise, make ethical decisions, and understand the emotions and motivations of others is vital for promoting national unity, peace, and democratic governance. The lack of emphasis on the affective domain is evident in the pervasive issues of corruption, lack of accountability, and political instability that characterise Nigeria's leadership. Despite the large number of university-trained politicians, governance in Nigeria is often characterised by impunity, patronage, and a disconnect from the needs of the populace. For example, the scandal surrounding the mismanagement of public funds by political leaders highlights the absence of ethical leadership (Tar, Manu, & Musa, 2014), a direct consequence of the insufficient focus on moral and civic education within political science curricula. Data from Transparency International consistently reveals that Nigeria ranks among the highest in the world on the Corruption Perceptions Index (Musa, 2022), reflecting the extent to which corruption has permeated its political system. This is compounded by a lack of civic responsibility and accountability, which are critical components of the affective domain. It is clear that without fostering ethical leadership and emotional intelligence, political science education cannot effectively prepare students to address the country's complex socio-political challenges.

The psychomotor domain, which focuses on the development of practical and physical skills, is another area where Nigerian political science education is deficient. Leadership in politics is not just about theoretical knowledge or ethical behaviour; it also requires practical skills such as public speaking, negotiation, conflict resolution, policy implementation, and grassroots mobilisation. These skills are essential for effective governance and for translating ideas into actions that positively affect society. Unfortunately, Nigerian political science programmes often fail to provide students with sufficient opportunities to develop these skills. While students may gain theoretical knowledge about the political system, they are rarely given opportunities for hands-on experience through internships, student union activities, or involvement in community-based political projects. A critical barrier to preparing graduates for the realities of political leadership in Nigeria remains the persistent lack of practical engagement within higher education curricula. Although political science programmes across numerous institutions offer extensive theoretical knowledge, there is minimal emphasis on

experiential learning, internships, leadership simulations, and practical political training. This gap has had far-reaching implications for Nigeria's political development. Historically, during the Second Republic (1979–1983), many elected officials, including state governors and federal legislators, struggled to manage the demands of democratic institutions. For instance, the abrupt collapse of the Second Republic was largely attributed to widespread administrative inefficiency, rampant corruption, and an absence of a robust democratic ethos among political officeholders, most of whom lacked prior experience or training in democratic governance (Hassan & Musa, 2014). The challenges persisted into the Fourth Republic, inaugurated in 1999. Despite Nigeria's return to civilian rule, the problem of poorly prepared leaders became increasingly evident.

Numerous reports, including those by the Collaborative Africa Budget Reform Initiative (CABRI, 2018), Kumbut (2020), and Imuetinyan-Ogbeide and Enabunene (2023), have highlighted that many elected representatives in Nigeria lack a fundamental understanding of governance processes, budgeting, and legislative functions. SaintJerry (2023, May 11) similarly observed that, "If there is anything the 9th Assembly legislative agenda has failed to do, it is implementing its own set of rules, not merely grandstanding to appear engaged, but actually doing nothing for the interest of the nation and its citizenry." This deficiency largely stems from a lack of practical experience, which has contributed to poor oversight and weak legislative performance, thereby exacerbating inefficiencies within the legislature. According to Imuetinyan-Ogbeide and Enabunene (2023), the 9th National Assembly largely failed in its core responsibilities, particularly in holding the executive accountable and promoting good governance. The Senate faced criticism for its ineffective oversight of Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), resulting in widespread mismanagement and the abandonment of government projects nationwide. Furthermore, the Assembly's indiscriminate approval of virtually all loan requests from President Muhammadu Buhari worsened Nigeria's debt burden. It reinforced the public perception of the legislature as a mere "rubber stamp" for the executive. Despite the Senate President's efforts to counter this narrative, public opinion remained largely negative.

The 9th Assembly's handling of critical national issues further exemplifies these shortcomings. For instance, the drafting of the Electoral Act 2022 drew criticism after the inadvertent exclusion of statutory delegates from participating in primary elections under Section 84(8), thereby undermining internal party democracy. The House of Representatives similarly failed to exert sufficient pressure on the executive to address Nigeria's escalating security crisis, as numerous resolutions were either ignored or poorly implemented. Ministers and presidential appointees often disregarded legislative summonses, highlighting a broader pattern of executive impunity and legislative ineffectiveness (Imuetinyan-Ogbeide and Enabunene, 2023).

Additional examples of legislative failure are evident from the 7th National Assembly's tenure. During this period, both the legislature and anti-corruption agencies like the EFCC and ICPC failed to resolve several high-profile corruption cases. Notable among these were the Maina Pension Scam, which involved the alleged looting of N195 billion and implicated Senate members in bribery allegations; the Kerosene Subsidy Scam, which saw billions of naira misappropriated without decisive legislative action; and the Police Pension Fund fraud, involving the misuse of N32.8 billion, which similarly went unaddressed. Other unresolved scandals included the missing N20 billion in oil revenues, the \$15 million private jet arms deal, the Abba Morro immigration recruitment tragedy, the Malabu Oil scandal involving illicit oil

block sales, the Ekiti Gate electoral fraud tape, and Farouk Lawan's bribery incident during the fuel subsidy probe. Despite substantial evidence, the Assembly failed to hold perpetrators accountable (adminTheCJID, 2015). The case of former Delta State Governor James Ibori, who pleaded guilty to money laundering charges in the United Kingdom in 2012, further illustrates the deep-rooted ethical failures and governance weaknesses among Nigeria's political elite (BBC, 2012). Moreover, Nigeria's persistent leadership crisis is reflected in its ranking of 154th out of 180 countries in Transparency International's 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index. This ongoing crisis underscores the severe consequences of electing leaders without sufficient practical training and an ethical foundation. Nigeria's political history consistently demonstrates that theoretical knowledge, when not matched with experiential learning and integrity, is insufficient for effective governance. The lack of exposure to democratic norms and processes significantly contributed to the failures of successive civilian governments in effectively addressing national challenges. Furthermore, the absence of experiential learning opportunities within Nigeria's educational system has left many leaders ill-equipped to transition from authoritarian tendencies to democratic governance.

The integration of the three domains—cognitive, affective, and psychomotor—is essential for the holistic development of political science students in Nigeria. A curriculum that combines theoretical knowledge with emotional intelligence and practical skills will better equip graduates to assume leadership roles that require both intellectual and practical competence. The goal should be to produce well-rounded leaders who not only understand political systems but also possess the ethical grounding and practical skills necessary for effective governance. For instance, universities could introduce mandatory internships with government agencies, NGOs, or political campaigns, providing students with real-world experience in the political process. Additionally, leadership training modules that focus on conflict resolution, ethical decision-making, and emotional intelligence could be embedded within the curriculum. Such reforms would ensure that political science graduates are not only knowledgeable but also capable of navigating the complexities of political leadership in a diverse and dynamic society like Nigeria. The current political science education system in Nigeria requires a significant overhaul to adequately prepare students for the leadership roles they are expected to fill. By integrating the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains into their curricula, Nigerian universities can better equip future political leaders with the knowledge, values, and skills necessary to address the nation's pressing political challenges.

### Discussion on Findings

The findings from this study highlight a concerning trend within Nigerian political science education, characterised by a disproportionate focus on theoretical knowledge while neglecting experiential learning and values-based education. This imbalance has significant consequences for the quality of leadership produced by Nigerian universities, as graduates emerge from academic programmes without the critical interpersonal, ethical, and practical skills necessary for transformative leadership in Nigeria's complex socio-political landscape.

One of the primary findings of this research is the overwhelming emphasis placed on theoretical knowledge within Nigerian political science curricula. Political theory, governance structures, historical political movements, and constitutional law comprise the syllabus, providing students with a comprehensive understanding of political ideologies and systems. While these theoretical foundations are undeniably important, they often fail to equip students with the practical competencies required for effective political leadership. For example,

Nigerian political science students are typically well-versed in various political theories, including liberalism, conservatism, and Marxism. However, many struggle to translate these abstract concepts into practical policy solutions or governance strategies when confronted with the real-world challenges of managing Nigeria's complex and diverse political environment. The curriculum's focus on theoretical knowledge without sufficient opportunities for experiential learning, such as internships, community service, or hands-on involvement in political processes, leaves many graduates ill-prepared for the practical realities of political leadership. This disconnect is evident in the experiences of political science graduates entering the Nigerian political arena. Despite a robust academic background, many struggle to engage with constituents, build effective coalitions, or manage the intricacies of public policy. For instance, former political science graduates who assume public office often face difficulty in crafting policies that address the real needs of the people, as evidenced by the challenges faced by former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan in implementing his Goodluck Jonathan Transformation Agenda, which was widely criticised for its lack of effective grassroots impact.

Experiential learning—defined as learning through direct engagement and real-world experience—remains a significantly overlooked element of political science education in Nigeria. Political science students are rarely offered structured opportunities for internships, placements, or hands-on involvement within political institutions or governmental bodies, opportunities that would allow them to gain invaluable practical experience in governance, policy development, and political negotiation. Consequently, many graduates of political science, public administration, public policy, economics, accounting, and public service find themselves ill-equipped to navigate the complex and often volatile political landscape they are expected to govern. Despite possessing strong academic credentials, a significant number of these individuals struggle to translate theoretical frameworks into effective political leadership practices.

The persistent gap between academic learning and practical political application has continued to undermine effective governance in Nigeria. A discernible trend reveals that political leaders, despite their formal education, frequently lack the experiential grounding necessary for competent and transformative leadership. Umaru (2017), citing Nmeribeh (2010), references the poignant observation of Alhaji Yusuf Maitama Sule, a revered elder statesman, who lamented that Nigeria's political sphere had become dominated by "a large chunk of irresponsible people," characterised as job seekers and businessmen more concerned with personal enrichment than with public service. Sule further contended that many individuals entered politics not to lead or to contribute to the public good, but rather to exploit political office for personal gain—a stark and tragic departure from the true ideals of responsible and ethical leadership. This critique underscores the crucial role that practical political education, underpinned by values-based training and experiential learning, must play in preparing future leaders for the complex realities of governance.

This criticism became particularly evident during Nigeria's Fourth Republic, inaugurated in 1999. Rather than utilising their parliamentary majority to enact progressive legislation, many legislators became increasingly preoccupied with personal enrichment. As Mbah (2002) observed, the legislative arm—ideally the bastion of democratic governance—degenerated into a hub of "money-spinning projects", where lawmaking became virtually synonymous with money-making. The proliferation of self-serving legislative practices during this period starkly illustrates the profound consequences of failing to embed experiential learning and values-

based education within the political training of undergraduates. Furthermore, attention must also be drawn to the executive arms of government, particularly state governors, who serve as the chief security officers and chief executive officers of their respective states. In urban centres such as Lagos, Kano, and Port Harcourt, where exponential population growth and mounting socio-economic complexities are now the norm, the demands of governance increasingly transcend a mere theoretical understanding of economics, development policies, or administrative procedures. Effective leadership in such contexts requires emotional intelligence, negotiation acumen, cultural sensitivity, and the practical ability to navigate diverse and often conflicting interests. However, in the absence of structured experiential learning within university curricula, many political science graduates are deprived of the opportunities necessary to develop these critical leadership competencies, leaving them ill-prepared to meet the complex realities of political office.

By contrast, during Nigeria's First Republic (1960–1966), many political leaders, such as Sir Ahmadu Bello, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, ascended to leadership after years of experiential engagement through political activism, journalism, law, education, and public service. Their leadership competencies were shaped not merely by formal education but by hands-on experiences in governance, negotiation, and nation-building at both regional and national levels. For instance, Ahmadu Bello's grounding in traditional leadership structures and colonial administration afforded him practical insights into managing Northern Nigeria's complex socio-political fabric. Similarly, Awolowo's stewardship of the Western Region demonstrated how experiential learning—especially in mass education and regional development—could yield transformative governance outcomes. The contrast between the leadership training of the First Republic and that of the Fourth Republic highlights a critical gap: Contemporary Nigeria urgently needs to reintroduce experiential learning frameworks into its political science and public administration education to restore competence, integrity, and vision to public leadership. Thus, the Nigerian experience reveals that a heavy reliance on cognitive, theory-based education without corresponding attention to the affective and psychomotor domains severely undermines the effectiveness of political leadership. It highlights the urgent need for a holistic reform of political science education—one that integrates experiential learning through internships, civic engagements, leadership simulations, and mentorship under seasoned practitioners. Without such reforms, the disconnection between academic training and real-world governance will continue to perpetuate leadership failures at all levels of Nigeria's political system.

Another significant finding of this study is the insufficient focus on values-based education, particularly in the development of ethical leadership. In a country where corruption and mismanagement remain deeply ingrained in the political system, the need for leaders who are not only knowledgeable but also morally grounded is critical. However, Nigerian political science education often overlooks the importance of ethics, integrity, and the values that underpin good governance. This failure to prioritise ethical education has been most evident in the public scandals that have plagued Nigerian politics (Musa, 2014; Musa, 2023). The cases of Alamieyeseigha, Ibori, Abacha, and others serve as a stark reminder of the devastating consequences of inadequate ethical training in Nigerian political leadership. These leaders, despite their political experience and academic backgrounds, fell prey to corrupt practices, undermining public trust and contributing to the country's leadership crisis. Moreover, the persistent corruption seen in various levels of government highlights the need for a curriculum that instils ethical responsibility and accountability in future leaders. As the 2023



Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index showed, Nigeria continues to rank poorly in terms of perceived corruption, reflecting the failure of many leaders to uphold ethical standards. This highlights a critical gap in the political science education system, which must incorporate values-based education to prepare students for the moral challenges of leadership.

The persistent lack of emphasis on the development of interpersonal, ethical, and practical leadership skills within Nigeria's higher education system has resulted in graduates who, while technically knowledgeable, are often ill-equipped for effective leadership. Political science programmes in many Nigerian federal and state universities, are heavily weighted toward theoretical instruction, with courses focusing predominantly on political theory, constitutional law, and comparative politics, often at the expense of developing critical soft skills like negotiation, conflict management, ethical reasoning, and strategic leadership. This educational gap is evident in Nigeria's political environment, where many public officials, despite their formal educational backgrounds, struggle with the demands of ethical and effective governance. A notable example is the case of several former state governors, such as James Ibori of Delta State, who, despite holding university degrees, were convicted or accused of corruption and mismanagement (*BBC*, 2012). Moreover, the 2020 EndSARS protests underscored the failure of political leaders, many of whom are products of Nigerian universities, to engage meaningfully with the grievances of the youth, demonstrating a glaring disconnect between theoretical knowledge and responsive, empathetic leadership.

Internal leadership crises within universities, as well as among student unions, reflect broader governance challenges in Nigeria. For instance, the University of Lagos (UNILAG) has been marred by persistent leadership disputes, most notably the protracted battle over the legitimacy of the student union elections and other issues, which led to widespread protests and the suspension of the union's activities. This instability disrupted academic activities and demonstrated a failure of governance within the institution (Ogundare, 2016; Wahab, A., & Osayande, 2024). Similarly, the University of Benin (UNIBEN) has faced multiple student union leadership crises, particularly in the 2010s, where factions within the student body engaged in violent clashes over control of the union. These conflicts resulted in the suspension of the student union and tarnished its ability to effectively represent student interests or collaborate with university management (*Sahara Reporters*, 2021, April 6; Osemudiamen, 2021). These crises in student unions are not isolated incidents but rather indicative of broader governance issues that extend beyond the campus. It is unsurprising to note that many Nigerian universities struggle to establish effective governance structures, often characterised by inadequate mechanisms for conflict resolution and a lack of ethical leadership practices. Instead of universities serving as training grounds for the development of ethical, responsible, and pragmatic leaders, these crises suggest that they often fail to instil the practical leadership skills required for success in both academic and national governance. This failure at the institutional level has long-term consequences, as many graduates, particularly in political science and public administration, enter the workforce ill-prepared for the complexities of leadership in government and public service.

As a result, many political science graduates struggle to address the multifaceted issues facing Nigeria, such as poverty, insecurity, and poor infrastructure. While theoretical knowledge is essential for understanding political systems, the ability to make decisions, negotiate, and engage with diverse communities is crucial for effective leadership. For instance, Nigerian politicians often struggle with crisis management, which is a critical skill for leaders in a country prone to political unrest and insurgency. The lack of training in conflict resolution and



diplomatic negotiation was evident during the 2015 fuel subsidy protests, where several political figures failed to communicate effectively with the public, leading to widespread anger and a breakdown in trust between the government and the citizens. This failure highlights the importance of incorporating psychomotor skills, such as communication and conflict resolution, into political science curricula.

### Conclusion

This paper has highlighted the critical gap between the theoretical foundation provided by Nigerian political science programmes and the practical leadership skills needed to navigate the complexities of governance. It is evident that while political science students are well-equipped with the cognitive knowledge necessary to understand political structures and theories, they are often ill-prepared for the realities of leadership due to the underdevelopment of affective and psychomotor skills. These deficits in leadership qualities such as emotional intelligence, ethical responsibility, and practical governance skills hinder the effectiveness of political leaders and contribute to the persistent leadership deficit in Nigeria.

The importance of integrating all three domains of education, the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, within political science curricula cannot be overstated. A more balanced approach that fosters intellectual knowledge alongside emotional intelligence and practical leadership skills is crucial for producing leaders who are not only knowledgeable but also capable of addressing the multifaceted challenges that Nigeria faces. This shift in focus would ensure that political science graduates are not only adept at understanding political theory but also skilled in translating that knowledge into real-world applications, engaging with diverse constituencies, and making ethically sound decisions that promote national development.

### Recommendations

#### 1. *Curricular Reform*

Nigerian universities should revise their political science curricula to include greater emphasis on experiential learning. Internships, community engagement projects, and simulations of real-world political scenarios should be incorporated into the programme. These practical experiences would help students develop the psychomotor and affective skills necessary for effective leadership. Universities should collaborate with political parties, governmental bodies, and non-governmental organisations to create structured placement opportunities for students.

#### 2. *Integration of Ethics and Values-Based Education*

A dedicated focus on ethics, integrity, and good governance should be embedded within the curriculum. This would help develop political leaders who not only understand the theory behind governance but also possess the ethical grounding required for moral leadership. Courses on political morality, anti-corruption strategies, and leadership ethics should be mandatory for political science students.

#### 3. *Leadership Training and Development*

Political science programmes should place greater emphasis on leadership training. This includes the development of soft skills such as communication, negotiation, conflict resolution, and decision-making. By incorporating leadership development into the curriculum, students will be better prepared to assume leadership roles in Nigeria's complex political landscape.

Workshops, mentorship programmes with experienced political leaders, and leadership retreats could serve as valuable additions to university offerings.

#### *4. Strengthening the Link between Academia and Political Practice*

Strengthening the link between academic institutions and political practice is essential to bridging the theory-practice divide. This could involve establishing partnerships between universities and political institutions, enabling students to gain practical insights into governance, policy-making, and leadership. Additionally, political leaders and policymakers should engage more actively with universities to offer guidance, feedback, and real-world perspectives that can inform academic training.

#### *5. Evaluation and Continuous Improvement*

Regular evaluation of the political science curriculum is necessary to ensure that it remains relevant to Nigeria's evolving political landscape. Feedback from graduates working in political offices, civil service, and other political arenas should be used to continuously refine the curriculum. Moreover, the integration of modern tools such as digital platforms for learning political simulation games or online forums for political discussions could help prepare students for the future of governance in a technologically advanced world.

In conclusion, integrating all three domains of education into political science programmes will not only better equip graduates with the holistic competencies required for effective leadership but also contribute to Nigeria's overall development. By nurturing leaders who are intellectually astute, emotionally intelligent, and practically competent, Nigeria can begin to address its leadership challenges and work towards a more sustainable and prosperous future.

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