# EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS A PANACEA FOR STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN UNIVERSITIES IN NORTHEAST NIGERIA

**GREMA Ali Dapshima**
Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Federal University of Agriculture and Entrepreneurship
P.M.B. 16, Bama, Borno State, Nigeria
E-mail: dapshigreali3@gmail.com

## Abstract

*This study examined educational foundations as a panacea to strengthening institutional development in universities in Northeast Nigeria. Specifically, it investigated the extent to which philosophical foundations influence governance efficiency, sociological foundations enhance institutional inclusiveness, psychological foundations impact staff development, and educational foundations relate to quality assurance practices. A descriptive survey research design with correlational and predictive components was adopted. The population comprised 1,500 academic and administrative staff from selected universities in Northeast Nigeria, while a sample of 320 respondents was determined using Yamane's formula. Data were collected using the Educational Foundations and Institutional Development Questionnaire (EFIDQ), validated by experts and tested for reliability using Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.86$). Mean and standard deviation answered the research questions, while regression and correlation analyses tested the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that philosophical foundations significantly influence governance efficiency ($\beta = 0.69$, $p < 0.05$), sociological foundations significantly enhance institutional inclusiveness ($\beta = 0.65$, $p < 0.05$), psychological foundations significantly improve staff development ($\beta = 0.70$, $p < 0.05$), and educational foundations have a strong positive relationship with quality assurance ($r = 0.67$, $p < 0.05$). The study concluded that educational foundations are critical drivers of institutional development. It recommends that universities institutionalize clear philosophical frameworks emphasizing ethics and transparency, develop inclusive policies, embed psychological principles in staff training, and integrate educational foundations into quality assurance frameworks.*

**KEYWORDS:** Institutional development, educational foundations, panacea for strengthening, universities, Northeast Nigeria

## Introduction

Effective institutional development requires not only structural reforms but also a strong theoretical and philosophical grounding that informs decision-making processes. Educational foundations comprising philosophical, sociological, psychological, and historical perspectives provide a framework for understanding how educational institutions operate and how they can be improved (Okeleke, 2025). Philosophical foundations guide institutional vision and values, sociological perspectives help institutions respond to societal needs, and psychological foundations inform teaching, learning, and staff development processes (UNESCO, 2023).

Global trends in higher education increasingly highlight governance,

transparency, and quality assurance as key drivers of institutional development (Jowi, 2024). Effective governance structures ensure accountability and strategic direction, while quality assurance mechanisms maintain academic standards and institutional credibility (Aldhobaib, 2024). In fragile and conflict-affected regions such as Northeast Nigeria, these elements become even more critical, as universities must operate under complex socio-political and economic conditions (Bertoni et al., 2023; UNESCO, 2026). The integration of educational foundations into institutional management has been linked to improved policy implementation and organizational effectiveness (Eze et al., 2026). Universities that adopt evidence-based management approaches grounded in educational theory are better positioned to respond to emerging challenges and achieve sustainable development (Association of African Universities [AAU], 2024a).

Institutional development remains a central determinant of the effectiveness, relevance, and sustainability of higher education systems globally. Universities play a pivotal role in national development through knowledge generation, research advancement, and production of skilled manpower (UNESCO, 2024). However, universities in Northeast Nigeria continue to grapple with multifaceted challenges, including inadequate funding, persistent insecurity, weak governance frameworks, infrastructural deficits, and declining academic standards, all of which undermine institutional effectiveness (Bertoni et al., 2023; Ezeaku, 2026). The concept of institutional development encompasses improvements in governance structures, leadership effectiveness, policy implementation, academic quality, and organizational capacity (AAU, 2024a).

**Statement of the Problem**

Universities in Northeast Nigeria experience persistent challenges that undermine effective institutional development. Weak governance structures, inadequate staff development, and ineffective quality assurance mechanisms limit institutional efficiency and constrain the ability of universities to fulfill their mandates of teaching, research, and community service (Okeleke, 2025; Ezeaku, 2026). Poor governance practices, including lack of accountability and ineffective leadership, have been identified as major factors affecting institutional performance in developing countries (Eze et al., 2026).

Insufficient investment in staff development hinders the professional growth of academic and non-academic personnel. Effective staff training is essential for improving teaching quality, research output, and institutional innovation; however, many universities lack structured and sustainable staff development programmes (AAU, 2024b; Makuachukwu, 2023). Similarly, weak quality assurance systems have contributed to declining academic standards and reduced global competitiveness (Aldhobaib, 2024; Umar & Mohammed, 2023).

Although educational foundations offer valuable frameworks for addressing these challenges, their application within institutional management remains limited. Many universities do not fully integrate philosophical, sociological, and psychological principles into their operational systems (UNESCO, 2023). Furthermore, despite growing interest in higher education reform, there is a scarcity of empirical studies examining the role of educational foundations in strengthening institutional development in Northeast Nigeria. This gap limits evidence-based decision-making and policy formulation aimed at improving university systems.

**Purpose of the Study**

The study examined educational foundations as a panacea to strengthening institutional development in universities in Northeast Nigeria. Specifically, the study seek to:

i. examine the extent to which philosophical foundations influence governance efficiency in universities in Northeast Nigeria;
ii. determine the effect of sociological foundations on institutional inclusiveness in universities in Northeast Nigeria;
iii. assess the impact of psychological foundations on staff development in universities in Northeast Nigeria; and
iv. evaluate the relationship between educational foundations and quality assurance practices in universities in Northeast Nigeria.

**Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent do philosophical foundations influence governance efficiency in universities in Northeast Nigeria?
2. What effect do sociological foundations have on institutional inclusiveness in universities in Northeast Nigeria?
3. To what extent do psychological foundations impact staff development in universities in Northeast Nigeria?
4. What relationship exists between educational foundations and quality assurance practices in universities in Northeast Nigeria?

**Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

i. **$H_{01}$:** Philosophical foundations have no significant influence on governance efficiency in universities in Northeast Nigeria.
ii. **$H_{02}$:** Sociological foundations have no significant effect on institutional inclusiveness in universities in Northeast Nigeria.
iii. **$H_{03}$:** Psychological foundations have no significant impact on staff development in universities in Northeast Nigeria.
iv. **$H_{04}$:** There is no significant relationship between educational foundations and quality assurance practices in universities in Northeast Nigeria.

**Literature Review**

**Concept of Educational Foundations**

Educational foundations refer to the interdisciplinary bases of education, comprising philosophical, sociological, psychological, and historical perspectives that collectively explain the nature, purpose, and functioning of educational systems (Okeleke, 2025). The philosophical foundation shapes institutional values, mission, and ethical standards, thereby influencing governance practices and strategic direction (UNESCO, 2023). The sociological foundation emphasizes the interaction between education and society, promoting inclusiveness, equity, and stakeholder participation (Trochmann et al., 2023). The psychological foundation contributes to understanding human behavior, motivation, and learning processes, which are essential for staff development and effective teaching (Makuachukwu, 2023). The historical foundation provides insights into the evolution of educational systems, enabling institutions to learn from past experiences (Jowi, 2024).

**Institutional Development in Higher Education**

Institutional development refers to a continuous process through which higher

education institutions improve their structures, governance systems, operational capacity, and overall performance (AAU, 2024a). A central component is effective governance, which determines how decisions are made, resources are allocated, and accountability is maintained. Institutions with strong governance systems characterized by transparency and participation tend to achieve higher levels of organizational effectiveness (Eze et al., 2026; Okeleke, 2025).

Quality assurance is another critical dimension. It involves systematic processes for monitoring, evaluating, and improving academic programmes and institutional performance (Aldhobaib, 2024). Effective quality assurance mechanisms help universities maintain academic standards, enhance credibility, and remain competitive (Anyidoho, 2023; Asamoah et al., 2025). Staff development also plays a vital role; the capacity of academic and administrative staff directly influences teaching quality, research output, and institutional effectiveness (AAU, 2024b; Greere, 2023).

In developing regions, challenges such as inadequate funding, infrastructural deficits, and political instability hinder institutional growth. Addressing these challenges requires strategic leadership and evidence-based management practices (UNESCO, 2024). Recent global perspectives emphasize that universities must adopt innovative approaches, including digital transformation and international collaboration, to enhance institutional capacity (Jakoet-Salie & Ramalobe, 2023; Jowi, 2024).

**Educational Foundations and Governance Efficiency**

Governance constitutes a fundamental element of institutional development. Educational foundations provide the philosophical and theoretical basis upon which sound governance practices are built (Okeleke, 2025). Institutions grounded in clear philosophical principles are more likely to promote integrity, accountability, and fairness in administrative processes (UNESCO, 2023). Similarly, sociological perspectives highlight the importance of inclusiveness and stakeholder participation in governance. Universities that incorporate these perspectives tend to adopt participatory approaches that improve institutional performance (Eze et al., 2026; Trochmann et al., 2023).

Empirical studies indicate that institutions guided by strong philosophical and sociological principles establish more transparent and effective governance systems (Ezeaku, 2026). Governance frameworks informed by educational foundations are better equipped to address policy implementation gaps, resource constraints, and organizational inefficiencies.

**Educational Foundations and Staff Development**

Staff development is vital for institutional effectiveness. Psychological foundations provide essential insights by explaining how individuals learn, develop skills, and remain motivated in professional settings (Makuachukwu, 2023). Institutions that apply these principles design effective staff development programmes that improve teaching effectiveness and employee satisfaction. Philosophical foundations contribute by promoting values such as lifelong learning and professional ethics (UNESCO, 2023). Sociological foundations highlight the importance of collaboration and organizational culture in professional development (Trochmann et al., 2023).

Empirical studies indicate that institutions prioritizing structured staff development initiatives achieve better outcomes in teaching quality and research output (AAU, 2024b; Greere, 2023).

Universities supporting continuous learning are better equipped to respond to changing educational demands, including the integration of digital technologies (Jakoet-Salie & Ramalobe, 2023).

**Educational Foundations and Quality Assurance**

Quality assurance involves systematic processes of monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement. Educational foundations provide the theoretical basis for designing and implementing these systems (Aldhobaib, 2024). The philosophical foundation guides the definition of quality by emphasizing excellence, relevance, and equity. The sociological foundation underscores the need for inclusiveness and stakeholder involvement in evaluation processes. The psychological foundation contributes by focusing on learning outcomes, instructional effectiveness, and assessment practices (UNESCO, 2023).

Recent studies emphasize the importance of integrating governance and quality assurance mechanisms. Institutions aligning these processes are better able to implement policies effectively and promote transparency (Anyidoho, 2023; Asamoah et al., 2025). Contemporary quality assurance systems increasingly rely on data-driven approaches, performance indicators, and accreditation processes (Umar & Mohammed, 2023; Awaah et al., 2023).

**Conceptual Framework**

This study is anchored on the relationship between educational foundations as the independent variable and institutional development as the dependent variable. The framework assumes that the effective application of educational foundations significantly influences institutional outcomes such as governance efficiency, staff development, quality assurance, and overall institutional effectiveness.

Educational foundations encompass the philosophical, sociological, psychological, and historical bases of education, which guide institutional policies, leadership practices, and decision-making processes (Okeleke, 2025; UNESCO, 2023). Institutional development includes governance efficiency, staff development, quality assurance, and institutional effectiveness (AAU, 2024a). The framework posits that the effective integration of foundational principles leads to improved governance, enhanced staff capacity, strengthened quality assurance systems, and overall institutional effectiveness (Jowi, 2024).

**Methodology**

This study employed a descriptive survey research design with correlational and predictive components (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The design enabled the systematic collection of quantitative data on respondents' perceptions while allowing for the examination of relationships and predictive effects among variables.

The population comprised 1,500 academic and administrative staff from selected universities in Northeast Nigeria. A sample size of 320 respondents was determined using Yamane's formula (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Stratified random sampling ensured proportional representation of academic and administrative staff.

Data were collected using the Educational Foundations and Institutional Development Questionnaire (EFIDQ). The instrument measured philosophical foundations (values, ethics, institutional philosophy), sociological foundations (equity, inclusiveness, stakeholder participation), psychological foundations (motivation, learning, staff development), and institutional development indicators (governance efficiency, staff development, quality assurance). Items were rated on a 5-

point Likert scale from *Very Low Extent* (1) to *Very High Extent* (5).

The instrument was validated by specialists in educational management and measurement and evaluation. Reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.86, indicating high internal consistency (Taherdoost, 2023).

Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) answered the research questions. Inferential statistics, including multiple regression and Pearson correlation, tested the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance (Field, 2023).

## Results

### Research Question 1: Philosophical Foundations and Governance Efficiency

**Table 1**: **Respondents' Ratings on Philosophical Foundations and Governance Efficiency (N = 320)**

| | Items | Mean | SD | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Institutional values guide transparent decision-making | 3.92 | 0.71 | High Extent |
| 2. | Ethical principles enhance accountability in governance | 4.01 | 0.68 | High Extent |
| 3. | Clearly defined institutional philosophy improves leadership practices | 3.88 | 0.74 | High Extent |
| 4. | Philosophy-driven policies promote participatory governance | 3.76 | 0.77 | High Extent |
| | **Grand Mean** | **3.89** | **0.73** | **High Extent** |

Table 1 shows the grand mean of 3.89 indicates that philosophical foundations influence governance efficiency to a **high extent**. Respondents generally agree that values, ethics, and institutional philosophy enhance transparency, accountability, and leadership effectiveness

### Research Question 2: Sociological Foundations and Institutional Inclusiveness

**Table 2**: **Respondents' Ratings on Sociological Foundations and Institutional Inclusiveness (N = 320)**

| Items | Mean | SD | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5. Institutional policies promote equal access and participation | 3.84 | 0.72 | High Extent |
| 6. Cultural diversity is reflected in institutional practices | 3.71 | 0.75 | High Extent |
| 7. Stakeholder involvement enhances inclusiveness | 3.90 | 0.69 | High Extent |
| 8. Social considerations influence decision-making | 3.78 | 0.73 | High Extent |
| **Grand Mean** | **3.81** | **0.72** | **High Extent** |

Table 2 indicates the grand mean of 3.81 shows that sociological foundations influence institutional inclusiveness to a **high extent**, indicating strong agreement on the importance of social context, equity, and participation.

### Research Question 3: Psychological Foundations and Staff Development

**Table 3**: **Respondents' Ratings on Psychological Foundations and Staff Development (N = 320)**

| Items | Mean | SD | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9. Training programmes enhance staff competence | 4.05 | 0.66 | High Extent |
| 10. Motivation improves staff performance | 3.98 | 0.70 | High Extent |
| 11. Learning theories guide professional development practices | 3.86 | 0.73 | High Extent |
| 12. Feedback mechanisms improve staff productivity | 3.91 | 0.69 | High Extent |
| **Grand Mean** | **3.95** | **0.70** | **High Extent** |

Table 3 shows the grand mean of 3.95 indicates that psychological foundations impact staff development to a **high extent**, suggesting that motivation, learning, and feedback significantly improve staff capacity.

**Research Question 4: Educational Foundations and Quality Assurance**

**Table 4**: **Respondents' Ratings on Educational Foundations and Quality Assurance (N = 320)**

| Items | Mean | SD | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|
| 13.Quality assurance policies are guided by educational principles | 3.87 | 0.71 | High Extent |
| 14. Continuous evaluation improves institutional standards | 3.94 | 0.68 | High Extent |
| 15. Data-driven decision-making enhances quality assurance | 3.89 | 0.70 | High Extent |
| 16. Accreditation processes improve institutional performance | 3.82 | 0.72 | High Extent |
| **Grand Mean** | **3.88** | **0.70** | **High Extent** |

Table 4 indicates the grand mean of 3.88 shows that educational foundations influence quality assurance to a **high extent**, indicating that foundational principles support continuous improvement and accountability.

**Hypotheses**
**Results**
**Philosophical Foundations and Governance Efficiency**

**Table 5**: **Regression Analysis of Philosophical Foundations and Governance Efficiency**

| Variable | B | Std. Error | Beta | t-value | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Philosophical Foundations | 0.67 | 0.09 | 0.69 | 7.44 | 0.000 |
| Constant | 1.08 | 0.42 | | 2.57 | 0.011 |

**$R = 0.69$, $R^2 = 0.48$, $F = 55.35$, $p < 0.05$**

The hypothesis is rejected, hence, results indicate that philosophical foundations significantly influence governance efficiency ($\beta = 0.69$, $p < 0.05$). The $R^2$ value of 0.48 shows that 48% of the variation in governance efficiency is explained by philosophical foundations.

**Sociological Foundations and Institutional Inclusiveness**

**Table 6**: **Regression Analysis of Sociological Foundations and Institutional Inclusiveness**

| Variable | B | Std. Error | Beta | t-value | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sociological Foundations | 0.61 | 0.08 | 0.65 | 7.63 | 0.000 |
| Constant | 1.15 | 0.37 | | 3.11 | 0.002 |

**$R = 0.65$, $R^2 = 0.42$, $F = 58.20$, $p < 0.05$**

The hypothesis is rejected. The findings reveal a significant positive effect of sociological foundations on institutional inclusiveness ($\beta = 0.65$, $p < 0.05$), with 42% of the variance explained.

**Psychological Foundations and Staff Development**

**Table 7**: **Regression Analysis of Psychological Foundations and Staff Development**

| Variable | B | Std. Error | Beta | t-value | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Psychological Foundations | 0.63 | 0.07 | 0.70 | 9.00 | 0.000 |
| Constant | 1.02 | 0.40 | | 2.55 | 0.012 |

**$R = 0.70$, $R^2 = 0.49$, $F = 81.00$, $p < 0.05$**

The hypothesis is rejected. The results show that psychological foundations significantly impact staff development ($\beta = 0.70$, $p < 0.05$), explaining 49% of the variation.

**Educational Foundations and Quality Assurance**

**Table 8**: **Correlation Analysis of Educational Foundations and Quality Assurance**

| Variables | N | Mean | SD | r | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Educational Foundations | 320 | 3.82 | 0.70 | 0.67 | 0.000 |
| Quality Assurance | 320 | 3.76 | 0.68 | | |

The hypothesis is rejected, hence it indicates a strong positive relationship between educational foundations and quality assurance ($r = 0.67$, $p < 0.05$).

**Discussion of Findings**

The findings provide strong empirical evidence that educational foundations significantly influence institutional development in universities in Northeast Nigeria. The high mean score (3.89) and significant regression result ($\beta = 0.69$, $p < 0.05$) indicate that institutional values, ethics, and clearly defined philosophies play a crucial role in promoting transparency, accountability, and effective leadership. This suggests that governance systems grounded in sound philosophical principles are more structured and responsive, consistent with Okeleke (2025) and UNESCO (2023), who emphasized that educational values shape institutional direction and that governance effectiveness is linked to strong normative frameworks.

The study found that sociological foundations significantly enhance institutional inclusiveness, as evidenced by a grand mean of 3.81 and a significant regression outcome ($\beta = 0.65$, $p < 0.05$). Attention to social context, equity, and stakeholder participation fosters inclusive institutional environments. This aligns with Trochmann et al. (2023) and UNESCO (2023), who identified inclusiveness as a key component of sustainable education systems and highlighted the role of social factors in participatory governance.

Psychological foundations had the strongest effect on staff development, with the highest grand mean (3.95) and a robust regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.70$, $p < 0.05$). Motivation, learning theories, and feedback mechanisms are critical in enhancing staff competence and productivity. This underscores the importance of applying psychological principles in designing professional development programmes, in agreement with Makuachukwu (2023) and AAU (2024b), who linked continuous professional development to improved teaching and research outcomes.

Finally, the study established a strong positive relationship between

educational foundations and quality assurance ($r = 0.67$, $p < 0.05$). Institutions grounded in educational principles are better able to implement effective quality assurance mechanisms, including continuous evaluation and data-driven decision-making. This finding is consistent with Aldhobaib (2024), Anyidoho (2023), and Asamoah et al. (2025), who emphasized the importance of structured frameworks in maintaining academic quality and the integration of governance and quality assurance systems for improved institutional performance.

Overall, the different dimensions of educational foundations are interrelated and collectively contribute to strengthening governance, inclusiveness, staff capacity, and quality assurance. The consistency between descriptive perceptions and inferential statistical evidence reinforces the validity of the findings.

**Summary of Findings**

The study revealed that:

1. Philosophical foundations influence governance efficiency to a high extent and have a significant positive effect on it.
2. Sociological foundations enhance institutional inclusiveness to a high extent and have a significant positive effect on it.
3. Psychological foundations improve staff development to a high extent and have a significant positive effect on it.
4. Educational foundations strongly support quality assurance systems and have a significant positive relationship with them.

**Conclusion**

This study examined the influence of educational foundations on institutional development in universities in Northeast Nigeria. Findings from both descriptive and inferential analyses consistently show that educational foundations significantly enhance governance efficiency, institutional inclusiveness, staff development, and quality assurance. Philosophical foundations strengthen governance through improved transparency and ethical leadership. Sociological foundations promote inclusiveness by encouraging equity and stakeholder participation. Psychological foundations enhance staff development through motivation and continuous professional growth. Educational foundations support quality assurance through continuous evaluation and institutional accountability.

The rejection of all null hypotheses confirms that educational foundations are critical drivers of institutional development. Consequently, sustainable institutional development in higher education depends on the deliberate and systematic integration of philosophical, sociological, and psychological foundations into university policies and practices.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Strengthening Philosophical Foundations in Governance.** Universities should institutionalize clear philosophical frameworks that emphasize ethics, accountability, and transparency.
2. **Promoting Sociological Inclusiveness.** University administrators should develop and implement policies that promote equity, diversity, and stakeholder participation.
3. **Enhancing Staff Development through Psychological Principles.** Institutions should design continuous professional development programmes grounded in motivation, learning theories, and performance feedback.
4. **Strengthening Quality Assurance Systems.** Universities should integrate educational foundations into their

quality assurance frameworks by emphasizing continuous evaluation, data-driven decision-making, and adherence to academic standards.

5. **Policy Integration and Institutional Reform.** Educational policymakers and regulatory bodies should ensure that educational foundations are embedded in higher education policies and institutional reforms.
6. **Capacity Building for Educational Leaders.** Training programmes should be organized for university leaders and administrators on the application of philosophical, sociological, and psychological principles in educational management.

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