

Public Universities Administration in Nigeria: Challenges and the ways forward

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Abstract – This article discussed the problems facing the universities administration in Nigeria. Secondary data was used to support the points raised in the article. The secondary data were sourced from print materials and online publications by recognized institutions and individual author. There are many problems hindering smooth administration of Nigerian public universities. Some of the problems include; inadequate funding, inadequate academic staff, inadequate infrastructural facilities, brain-drain, incessant strike actions by the universities unions, institutional corruption, insecurity problems, weak administrators and poor capacity development of academic staff, political interference in the universities administration, indiscriminate issuance of licenses for establishing new universities, universities autonomy dilemma, poor Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) among others. To solve these challenges, this article recommends: that the government should increase the funding universities, employ of more academic staff, provide adequate infrastructural facilities, implement all agreement with unions, ensure effective staff development programme and effective motivation policy.

Key words: Administration, Administrators, Challenges, Education,

1.0 Introduction

The importance of university institution as a centre for learning cannot be over emphasized. It is globally known as the peak of tertiary level of education, the mandates for universities are common universally, it is specifically designed to carry out researches and bring out innovations for both global and a specific problems. Historically, in Nigeria, the idea of setting up a university can be traced back to 1948 when the university college, Ibadan was established by the colonial administration based on the recommendations of Elliot Commission (Aguba, 2016). In Nigeria and other capitalist societies, the laws permit that a university can be established and run either by government (federal/states), private individuals or organizations. As a result, there are 171 universities in Nigeria owns by federal or states governments, private individuals or organizations. However, the focus this research work is on public universities.

Universities management has two organs; the external and the internal. The external organ comprises of the governing council headed by chairman (Pro Chancellor), the Chancellor, National Universities Commission (NUC) Federal/State Ministry for Education. On the other hand, the internal organ comprises of senate, headed by the Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar as the Secretary. This organ regulates the academic and administrative activities of the university based on the NUC guidelines it domiciles and operates within the university.

Regrettably, in spite of this beautiful arrangement for effective administration of Nigerian universities by the government, the effective management public universities remain poses an enormous challenge to government. This situation cause for concerns from both the policy makers and academicians alike. It is against this background that this work aimed at unearthing the challenges bedeviling the smooth management of public universities in Nigeria and make suggestions on the ways forward.

1.1 Evolution of Nigerian universities

The evolution of Nigerian universities can be traced back to 1948 when the university college, Ibadan was established by the colonial administration based on the recommendations of Elliot Commission set up in 1943 (Aguba, 2016). That was the stroke that breaks the camel's back. From that point to date the numbers of public and private universities keep swelling by the day. Today, we have a total of 171 universities operating in Nigeria, the number comprises the following:

- Federal government owned universities 44
- State governments owned universities 48
- Private owned universities 79

Some of these universities are specialized ones. Universities in Nigeria are classified based on the year establishment year or generations. Thus in the first category we have those established between 1948 - 1962 known as first generation universities these includes

- University of Ibadan, 1948
- Univsity of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1960

- Obafemi Awolowo University, (then University of Ife, Ile-Ife) 1962
- Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria 1962
- University of Lagos, 1962

The second generation category comprises those established under the Third National Development Plan (1975-1980) here we have: University of Maiduguri, University of Jos, University of Calabar, University of Port Harcourt, University of Ilorin, Bayero University, Kano and Usmanu Danfodio University, Sokoto. The third generation universities are those established from 1980 to early 1990s, they are all the universities of technology sited at Bauchi, Owerri, Yola, and Minna others in this category include Marudi, and Akure.

In the fourth generation class we those varsities established from 1991 to date. The 12 federal universities established by President Goodluck Jonathan between 2011 and 2013 and those recently established by Buhari's administration.

2.0 Concept of Administration

Administration means different things to different people, perhaps, it was due to its versatility, it found in both formal and informal organizations. It is a carefully designed activities and cooperation aim at achieving predetermined goals. Amadi (2008) defined administration "as a process of systematically arranging and coordinating the human and material resources available to any organization for the main purpose of achieving stipulated goals of that organization".

In the context of university, administration refer to systematic harmonization various components or stakeholders and effective the utilisation resources available for the purpose of attainment of the cardinal objectives of the university. As highlighted earlier, universities are administer from two front the external and the internal, the two organs must coordinate and harmonize the activities for the interest and development of the university.

3.0 Challenges Facing Administration of Public Universities in Nigeria

There are many problems facing universities administration in Nigeria. Some of these problems include; inadequate funding, inadequate lecturers, inadequate infrastructural facilities, brain-drain, incessant strike actions by the universities unions, institutional corruption, insecurity problems, weak administrators and poor capacity development lecturer, political interference in the universities administration, indiscriminate issuance of licenses for establishing new universities, universities autonomy dilemma, poor Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) among others.

3.1 Inadequate Funding

Inadequate funding is a major challenge facing the administration of universities in Nigeria. The university system requires a lot of funds for effective administration to be realized. The annual budgetary allocation for the administration of universities in Nigeria is grossly inadequate. The inability of the federal government to stick to the UNESCO 26% of national budget for education is affecting the management of Nigerian universities. For one decade now the annual budget for the entire educational sector in Nigeria is below 15% and this is affecting the effective administration of the different levels of education in the country including the university system. The poor funding of education is responsible for the poor quality of the universities education in Nigeria. The annual budget for the administration of universities in the country is not adequate to provide the needed infrastructural facilities and human resources that the various universities required to function properly. The underfunding of the university system in the country is also responsible poor researching and ineffective teaching. Okoli, Ogbondah, & Ewor, (2016) , Ogbondah (2010) and Uzoka, (2007) all are in agreement that inadequate funding is a major problem facing the university education in Nigeria.

3.2 Inadequate Academic Staff

Academic staff or lecturers are faculty members in the higher institutions or in the universities. The lecturers are responsible for the implementation of teaching programme, they are the line unit in the university setting, and they deliver academic services of teaching and assessing the students. The roles of the academic staff in the development of the university education cannot be underestimated. It is unfortunate that as important as the academic staff are to the development of the university system, many universities in the country are understaffed. The Nigerian universities are faced with the problem of shortage of lecturers in many department and faculties especially in programme like the sciences. The shortage of lecturers in many department and faculties is responsible for high teacher-student ratio in the Nigerian universities.

The Nigerian higher institutions especially the universities are understaffed. The NEEDS (2014) on the assessment of higher institutions in Nigeria revealed that majorities of the higher institutions are facing problem of staff shortage. The report indicated that there were 37,504 academic staff in the 74 public universities in the country. The number compare to the student population is inadequate. The shortage of the academic staff resulted to the high students-teacher ratio in most of the universities in the country. For instance, University of Abuja had staff to student ratio 1:122, Lagos state university had a ratio 1:144 and National Open University had a ratio 1:363. The report also showed that 43% of the lecturers in the Nigerian universities had PhD while other have less qualification. The reported also revealed that only 50% of the academic staff have required skills and pedagogical skills, counselling and ICT competencies required for efficient service delivery in tertiary institutions. The report indicated that the shortage of lecturers in majorities of the higher institutions are in the area of

sciences, engineering, medicine and surgery, law, early child education, special education etc. The inadequate lecturers in majorities of the higher institutions in the country is responsible for the falling standard of higher education. There are many reasons responsible for shortage of academic staff in the Nigerian universities, some of the reasons include; low salaries and poor motivation compare to other institutions in the country where they pay high salaries and allowances. Teaching of large classes and rising workload in the universities are also some of the reasons. Brain-drain and poor working environment and lack of manpower planning for higher institutions in the country. The Nigerian higher institutions need about 22,496 teachers to improve the quality of teaching and academic service delivery in the higher institutions (NEEDS,2014).

3.3 Inadequate Infrastructural Facilities

Infrastructural facilities refer to social capital that aid the delivering of services especially in the educational institutions like the universities. Infrastructural facilities include offices, classrooms, libraries, laboratories, hostel accommodation, lecture halls, electricity, internet services, and water. An inadequate infrastructural facility is a very serious challenge for effective administration of universities in Nigeria. Many universities do not have adequate infrastructural facilities to deliver effective teaching and research programme. Many academic and non-academic staff do not have offices and para-venture they have one is been shared by five to six lecturers. The offices of the dean's and head of departments are not something to write home off. The Students do not have adequate lecture halls and hostels accommodations. Salisu (2001) did study on influence of school physical resources on students' academic performance. Salisu (2001) discovered that there was a positive relationship between academic performance of students and school physical resources. The inadequate infrastructural facilities like good classrooms, lecture halls and laboratories is a threat to the survival and sustainability of the university system. Ojo (2018), John, (2016), Udida, Bassey, & Udofia, (2009) also agreed that inadequate infrastructural facilities is a problem facing the universities.

3.4 Brain-Drain

Brain-drain refers to the mass movement of professionals from the developing countries to developed countries for better working conditions. Nigerian universities are facing the problem of brain drain because of poor motivation and poor working environment. Many lecturers have gone out of the Nigerian universities to other countries like South Africa and European countries. The reasons responsible for the best brain of Nigerian lecturers going abroad include: poor condition of service, strike actions, poor research, poor motivation and insecurity challenge. The implication of brain-drain in the effective management of Nigerian universities is huge; the capable hands that would help in administering the universities are let go, this creates room for inexperience and under qualified people to run the universities in the country. Many researchers like Odetunde (2004), Oni (2000) Akindutire (2004) also support this view that brain-drain is another major problem facing the administration and management of the universities.

3.5 Incessant strikes by the universities unions

Strikes action by different unions in the Nigerian universities is another problem preventing effective administration of the universities. Strike simply means a form of protest by employees (mostly under labour unions) through concerted cessation of work due to an impasse with the employers. It is the last resort for employees to have their grievances addressed. However, the incessant strike action is adversely affecting the effective running of universities in Nigeria. For instance, a survey by premium times an online Newspaper revealed that in the last two decades Nigerian universities were shut down fifteen times due to strikes and the period spent spanned about fifty months (still counting). This effect is massive; the most affected area is academic calendar. Once the school is closed for strike there must be adjustment in its existing plans of activities and the implication is that a programme that is designed to four years would have additional month(s) or year(s). This in turn becomes a bottleneck in the smooth running of universities in Nigeria. Okoli, Ogbondah, & Ewor, (2016), Ahunanya and Ubabudu (2006) established that strike actions is one of the major problem facing the university system in Nigeria.

3.6 Institutional Corruption

Institutional corruption is one of the major problems facing the administration of the universities in Nigeria. The entire higher educational system is engulfed in corrupt practices. The budgetary allocation for the administration of university education in Nigeria is some time diverted by officials within the system. There are many forms of corruption in the universities in Nigeria. Some of them include sex for marks, bribery to get position, NYSC mobilization, issuing of fake transcript, illegal employments, promotion staff, formation of cliques and groups, inflating contracts etc SERAP case studies identified other cases of corruption in tertiary institutions to include "bribery to get a position; NYSC mobilisation before graduation; facilitating fake transcripts; short-circuiting employment procedures; auctioning university assets without authorisation; politicised disciplinary action; inflated contracts, admission irregularities and racketeering, result falsification; nepotism; sexual harassment; examination question leakages, abetting examination malpractices; and deliberate poor invigilation of examinations." The report added that there were several unresolved cases of diversion of university funds for personal use; embezzlement; mismanagement; unmerited allocation of hostel accommodation; discrimination in the allocation of staff quarters; certificate/transcript racketeering; improper use of university assets; inflation of cost of contracts; award of contracts to friends or relatives; and admission racketeering by non-staff.

In Ondo State, precisely, the Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA), the institution's former vice chancellor, Prof. Adebisi Daramola and bursar, Mr. Emmanuel Oresgun, were charged with allegation of corruption, fraud, and stealing of funds of the university totaling N156m. Already, the EFCC is prosecuting all the accused who though have denied the allegations leveled against them. In August 2016, the University of Calabar suspended its bursar, Peter Agi, because of alleged fraudulent acts, forgery and threat to life. Following a panel of inquiry set up by the institution, it was decided that the bursar should stay away from the institution for a while. In a letter of suspension signed by the Registrar, Moses Abang, the management of the institution said the bursar was guilty of impersonating UNICAL's vice chancellor on an e-payment platform of the Central Bank of Nigeria, among other issues. In 2016, a budget monitoring committee of the local chapter of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) had accused the management of OAU under Omole of mismanaging N3.5bn intervention fund released to the institution for upgrade of facilities. ASUU had accused the management of the university then of spending the said sum on hostel renovation and construction of new lecture theatres without observing due process and transparency. The funds were part of the N100bn released by the Federal Government in 2013 to universities in response to agitations by ASUU for upgrade of facilities at federal tertiary institutions in the country. But prior to the former vice chancellor's invitation, Elujoba, and the university's bursar, Aderonke Akeredolu, had been invited for questioning by the EFCC for allegedly diverting N1.4bn. Ogunode, & Abubakar, (2020), Ogbondah (2010) and Dare (2008) also submitted in their respective papers that corruption is a challenge facing the higher institutions in Nigeria.

3.6 Political interference in the universities administration

The alarming level of political interference in the administration of public universities in Nigeria is frightening. The visitors of the universities who are the chiefs' executive (president/governor) have reserved powers to appoint the chancellors and constitute the governing council various universities under them select their cronies as members. These appointees in turn interfere in the internal management of the university such selection of VCs and other principal officers of the universities. This practice is seriously jeopardizing the administrations of a university. Universities are very critical institution, it very dangerous to politicize it management. There has been political interference in the establishment of universities in Nigeria (Okoli, Ogbondah, and Ewor, 2016). Ekundayo & Ajayi, (2009) cited Adegbite (2007), observed that another area of political interference is constitution of Visitation Panels by the Visitor at wills instead of the minimum five years intervals, the main aim of which is to witch-hunt or crucifies the vice-chancellors and the university authorities. Also, there is erosion of the statutory functions of the vice-chancellors by the chancellors and pro-chancellors (who are titular heads of the university) as some of them now decide to stay permanently in their offices on campus seeing to the day-to-day administration of some universities and some union officials prefer to see them on issues relating to the internal governance of the university rather than the vice chancellor or designated officials(Ekundayo & Ajayi, 2009).

3.7 Indiscriminate issuance of licenses for establishing new universities

One other phenomenon bedeviling the universities administration in Nigeria is the proliferation of state-owned universities without to consideration to how they would be sustained. The ASUU national president Professor Biodun Ogunyemi observed that Federal and State Governments are establishing universities without adequately funding them. A state that does not have the resources to run one university will apply to establish more. A good example is Kogi State which owes its university staff salaries for months has applied and given approval by NUC to establish one more. Prof. Ogunyemi further lamented that state governments have turned the establishment of universities to constituency project, rather than centre for development. Every governor wants to have a university in his constituency. He cautioned that this trend is grossly affecting the quality of education and if care is not taken university education will go into comatose like public primary schools in the country.

3.8 Universities autonomy dilemma

Despite the fact that The Universities (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Amendment) Act 2003 (otherwise called the Universities Autonomy Act Number 1, 2007) enacted by the National Assembly and signed into law on July 10th, 2003 and was later gazetted by the Federal Republic of Nigerian official gazette Number. 10, Volume 94 of January 12th, 2007 as Act Number. 1 of 2000. The issue of universities autonomy remains a highly contentious spot in administration of universities under federal government between Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the federal government. This standoff has keeps these two critical stakeholders on different leafs on vital issues and it therefore remains a bottleneck that hinders smooth running of universities in Nigeria. Babalola (2014) viewed autonomy for Nigeria universities to mean the right of a university to enjoy the core privileges of academic freedom, substantive independence, and procedural self-independence, subject only to public accountability. University scholars must be free to air out results of findings without fear of intimidation by government and other agencies. In an era where many key university appointments and decisions are made outside the university, meritocracy is eroded and replaced with nepotism, god fatherism, lobbying and political patronage. This usually results to system where the most eligible persons are often frustrated and left without promotions. The survival of the university education system is directly proportional to or to a large extent dependent on the institutionalization of autonomy (Okoli, Ogbondah, and Ewor, 2016). Ajayi and Ayodele (2002), submitted that government involvement in university governance has been a point of strife between the government and the Academic Staff Union of Universities

(ASUU) over some time now. The university system cannot fully developed with the involvement of political actors instead of professional administrators. University autonomy is essential to the advancement, transmission and application of knowledge and this is the more reason the ASUU has been more vociferous in this demand. Babalola et al. (2007), observed that university autonomy and academic freedom in Nigerian has over the years been a recurring issue in the ASUU's demand from the federal government.

3.9 Poor Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) among others.

By Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) we simply mean those funds generated internally or locally by the universities to complement external allocations and grants. With the high number of public universities in the country and the dwindling economy globally, funding of universities is continually becoming an issue to the governments. It is expected that each university should start sourcing for funds internally to complement the little they are receiving from external sources; the era of depending solely on external funds is gone. They can achieve this through commercialization of some services such as renting, running hotels, canteen, bookshops, poultry business, fish and crop farming, operating business centers, internet cafe etc.

3.10 Weak administrators

Weak administrators appointed by the government to head the various universities is also another problem affecting the administration of the universities. Many administrators appointed by the government to head the universities in the country are weak administrative. Some of them do not have the administrative knowledge, skills and the leadership ability to handle such a complex organization. To achieve the universities objectives, there is need for an effective administrators to be appointed to head the universities. The university system need leaders that are competent, that have leadership skills and managerial ability to coordinate and build team to realize the universities goals. According to Mary (2013) many school administrators appointed do not possessed the leadership skills to realize the objectives of the higher education. Ogunode, & Abubakar, (2020), Ogunode, Yirolokun, & Akeredolu, (2019), Ekaette (2001) confirmed that one of the challenges facing the universities in Nigeria is the appointment of weak administrators.

3.11 Poor Capacity Development Lecturers

Poor capacity development is another problem facing the administration of the universities in Nigeria. Many universities in Nigeria are not having effective staff development programme for their academic and non-academic staff and this is affecting their productivities. The inability of many universities to cater for the development of their academic staff is responsible for why many programme in the Nigerian universities have failed accreditation exercise due to the fact the universities do not have the required academic and non-academic staff for the respective programme. When training and development are not enhanced regularly, it leads to delay in promotion of some members of staff. Some of the federal Universities under study were found to have an inadequate staff to student ratio. In some departments, there were only two professors, few Ph.D. degree holders with a large number of masters' degree holders teaching courses meant for senior lecturers and professors. This leads to nonaccreditation of some courses or fluctuation in the accreditation of programs because the growth and development of the academic staff does not correspond with retirement, death and resignation of academics staff particularly lecturers (Bernadette & Ukaegbu, 2017). Basil, Felix, Eno (2013) did a study that examined university lecturers' participation in capacity building programmes in south-south Nigeria and its implication for sustainable development. They discovered that in their study that lecturers' participation in capacity building programmes is significantly low with respect to workshops, seminars, conferences, ICT training and monitoring. There is no significant difference between male and female lecturers' participation in capacity building programmes. The study of Bernadette & Ukaegbu, (2017) discovered that, whereas there are good welfare policy statements in the study area, the level of implementation of these policies were poor. Furthermore, over 90% of the respondents insisted that full implementation of welfare policies would have positive impact on workers' performance to a very large extent. The results further indicated that there have been very few in-house and outside training programmes in the study area. A total of 87% of respondents agreed that poor level of implementation of welfare policies on training and development is a source of discouragement which have negatively affected academic performance of both teaching and non-teaching staff and have led to poor service delivery in our Universities.

3.12 Insecurity Problems

Insecurity problem in Nigeria have prevented effective administration of universities in the country. The insecurity in the country is affecting the administration of educational institutions especially the universities. Nigeria is facing a lot of insecurity challenges. The south is kidnapping, armed robbery and conflicts over oil spills. In the North, insurgency of radical Islamists, ethno-religious, inter-communal violence, whether riots or fighting between insurrectional groups. Among these conflicts challenges, the conflict in the North East requires particular attention as it has caused significant impacts on education service delivery in the affected States and the insurgency of radical Islamists regard education services with hostility. Since 2009, the Boko Haram conflict has affected nearly 15 million civilians and left widespread devastation in North-East Nigeria. The activities of the Boko Haram members have caused the higher institutions and especially the

universities more harm. Many of the universities located in the Northern part of the country have been attacked and many lecturers and students killed. In 2013, unknown assailants abducted the education director of degree programs in Rivers state, February 23, 2013, unknown perpetrators kidnapped a senior lecturer from a federal low-cost estate in Maiduguri, Borno state, September 29, 2013, armed assailants believed to be members of Boko Haram stormed the College of Agriculture in Gujba, Yobe state, killing 65 students and wounding 18, January 16, 2017, two Boko Haram child suicide attackers detonated their devices at the University of Maiduguri, killing at least four people, including one professor, and injuring 15, July 6, unidentified individuals entered the University of Maiduguri and set off explosive devices and In 2012, terrorists [attacked](#) Christians at worship services held in a lecture room and a sports complex at Bayero University in Kano, in 2014. Due to the continuous attack on the Universities in the North, the administration of universities education was disrupted many times and this is affecting the academic programme of the universities.

4.0 Way Forward

The achievement of the universities' objectives depend on the level of administration provided for the universities. Effective administration is key to realizing the goals and aims of the universities. In view of this, to address the challenges identified as preventing the effective administration of public universities in Nigeria., this article recommends: that the government should increase the funding universities, develop manpower planning of the higher institutions, employ more lecturers, provide adequate infrastructural facilities, implement all agreement with unions, ensure effective staff development programme and effective motivation policy.

4.1 Adequate Funding

The administration of universities is capital demanding and is very expensive due to the programme of teaching, researching and provision of communities services. The government should increase the funding of the universities education this will enable the administrators of universities in the country to effectively administered the universities in the country.

4.2 Manpower Planning for Higher Institutions

There is need for manpower planning for the higher institutions in the country. The manpower planning will help to solve the problem of shortage of academic staff in the Nigerian higher institutions in the country.

4.3 Employment of More Lecturers

The government should direct school administrators to employ more academic staff in the universities where there is shortage of academic staff across the country. This will help to improve the quality of university education in the country and also help to reduce the teach-student ratio in many Nigerian universities.

4.4 Adequate Infrastructural Facilities

The achievement of the objectives of the universities education in Nigeria depends largely on the quality and quantities of infrastructural facilities available in respective universities. The universities needs infrastructural facilities like classrooms, libraries, laboratories, hostel accommodation, lecture halls, electricity, internet services, and water to be able to implement the teaching and research programme of the universities. So, the government should provide adequate infrastructural facilities to all the Nigeria universities to aid effective administration.

4.5 Implementation of Agreement

To avoid the strike actions by different union groups in the universities, the government should implement all the agreement reached and signed with the unions in the various universities. This will help to achieve stable academic programme in the universities.

4.6 Effective Staff Development

The government should increase the funding of the universities. This will aid effective staff development programme because more monies would be available for effective administration of the universities.

4.7 Adequate Security

The government should ensure security in the country and adequate security should be provided to all the universities to aid security of lives and properties.

4.8 Fight Institutional corruption

The government should fight all the institutional corruption in the universities by using the various anti-corruption agencies in the country. The school administrators should

4.9 Motivation

The government through the National universities commission should develop good motivation packages for academic and non-academic staff to prevent brain-drain in the Nigerian universities.

5.0 Conclusion

Effective administration is key to the realization of the universities' objectives in Nigeria. Effective administration must be ensure for the universities if the objectives is to be achieved. It is unfortunate that the administration of public universities in Nigeria is plagued with many challenges. This article discussed the problems facing the universities administration in Nigeria. Secondary data was used to support the points raised in the article. The secondary data were sourced from print materials and online publications by recognized institutions and individual author. There are many problems hindering smooth administration of Nigerian public universities. Some of the problems include; inadequate funding, inadequate academic staff, inadequate infrastructural facilities, brain-drain, incessant strike actions by the universities unions,

institutional corruption, insecurity problems, weak administrators and poor capacity development of academic staff, political interference in the universities administration, indiscriminate issuance of licenses for establishing new universities, universities autonomy dilemma, poor Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) among others. To solve these challenges, this article recommends: that the government should increase the funding universities, employ of more academic staff, provide

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