

Higher Education in Nigeria: Challenges and Suggestions

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Abstract:

Nigerian higher education is plagued with many challenges. This paper discusses the various challenges facing higher education in Nigeria. To do this end, the researchers employed the use of secondary data. These data were sourced from online and print materials. Inadequate funding, corruption, inadequate infrastructural facilities, shortage of academic staff, Strike actions, Brain-drain, poor research, weak administrators and insecurity. To resolve the challenges facing higher education in Nigeria, the following have been recommended: adequate funding of higher education, employment of more academic staff, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, motivation of academic staff, appointment of qualified administrators, fight all forms of corruption in higher institutions, provision of adequate security in all higher institutions and implementation all agreement with union groups.

Key words: Challenges, Lecturers, Education, Higher education

1.INTRODUCTION

The history of higher institutions is dated to 1936 when the first higher institutions was established. Okoli.,Ogbondah, and Ewor, 2016 cited Kosemani&Okorosaye-Orubite, (1995) who noted that the Yaba Higher College became the first institution of higher learning to be established in Nigeria. Although, as at 1930 other forms of post-secondary education were introduced in some government departments like the Railway and Agriculture. For example, Agriculture was at Moon Plantation, Ibadan, Samaru near Zaria, Veterinary science was at Vom, and Engineering in Lagos. Within the period, nationalists were getting more vocal in their request for an institution of University rank in Nigeria. From then the higher education have continue to expanding in Nigeria.

Higher education according to National Policy on Education (FGN, 2013), is the Post -Secondary Section of the National education system, which is given of Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Technology including courses as are given by the Colleges of Education, Advanced Teachers Training colleges, Correspondence Colleges and such Institutions as may be allied to them. The objectives of the universities in Nigerian Higher education, including professional education has the following aims: the acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value orientation for the survival of the individual and societies; the development of the intellectual capacities of individuals to understand and appreciate environment; the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community; the acquisition of an overview of the local and external environments (FGN, 2014). Looking at the importance of education and the role it plays in a country, this high demand of education in Nigeria should be met with the attention it deserves, to put Nigeria universities at par with those around the globe.

Ahaotu & Ogunode (2021) observed that higher education is under the supervision of commissions set up by law and which operate as parastatals of the Federal Ministry of Education. For instance, universities are supervised by the National Universities Commission [NUC], while colleges of education are supervised by the National Commission for Colleges of Education [NCCE]. The National Board for Technical Education [NBTE] oversees polytechnic education. These commissions are responsible for policy decisions affecting institutions under their supervision, maintenance of standards through a system of periodic accreditation of courses, distribution and monitoring of government funding, appointment of members of governing councils, and the day-to-day running of the institutions.

The Nigerian higher education is characterized with many challenges (Ogunode & Musa (2020). University education in Nigeria is confronted with several challenges (Ogunode, 2020, Okoli, Ogbondah, and Ewor, 2016). Based on these submission, this paper examines the challenges facing higher education in Nigeria.

2. Challenges Facing Higher Education in Nigeria

There are many challenges facing higher education in Nigerian. This paper will consider the following: inadequate funding, corruption, inadequate infrastructural facilities, shortage of academic staff, Strike actions, Brain-drain, poor research, weak administrators and insecurity.

2.1. Inadequate Funding

Udida, Bassey, Udofia, & Egbona, (2009) submitted that the major issue in educational development is shortage of funds. One of the most serious problems threatening the survival of the educational systems is that of dwindling level of public funding in the face of rising demands and hence rising cost of higher education. This shortage of funds affects job performance and the growth of the institution. Higher educational institutions cannot perform optimally without funding. This situation calls for increased fund initiative from both the government and educational stakeholders so as to sustain the tempo and growth of education industry. The inability of the Nigerian government to objectively accept and implement the 26% funding formula for education recommended by the UNESCO impact negatively on the performance and sustainability of higher education. Thus, it has become obvious that Nigeria's neglect of the funding formula is detrimental to higher educational institution performance and development aspiration as quality performance is the veritable instrument for sustenance of education system. This neglect has further precipitated crises in the entire higher educational systems as effective teaching, research and service are no longer taking place seriously. Akinola (1990) was worried about the funding situation and commented thus: "Our higher institution education systems are in dire need of money.....to cater for both their capital and recurrent needs. For a few years past, the budget have been cut back from year to year by the federal government. This cut back has affected both capital and recurrent expenditures. In many higher institutions capital projects embarked upon are few years ago, are yet to be completed due to lack of adequate funds". Many factors are responsible for shortage of funds in the Nigerian higher education and they include poor financial planning, lack of political will to fund higher education, corruption and drop in national revenue. The education sector in Nigeria is known to be one of the few areas that do not get the right budget allocation. Asides of funds for infrastructure, equipment and other necessities, the salaries of staff are nothing to write home about.

2.2. Corruption

Ogunode (2020) submitted that corruption in the public universities in Nigeria is another problem preventing effective administration of public universities in Nigeria. The high rate of corruption in the Nigerian public universities has hindered effective administration of the universities. Many public universities are in the present condition because of the corruption in the system. Funds

provided for implementation of programme, provision of infrastructural facilities, employment of staff and programme development ended up been looted or diverted into private account. Punch (2020) submitted that much of the little funds that go into the universities are stolen. In the course of the face-off, the government claimed “the fraud in the universities is amazing and you will be shocked. ICPC did a system check recently, and it was so shocking. In fact, the worst two organizations they mentioned are the Teaching Hospitals and our universities.” In 2018, the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project claimed that there were allegations of corruption in several federal universities relating to the unfair allocation of grades; contract inflation; truncation of staff’s salary on the payroll; employment of unqualified staff; certificate scandal; examination malpractice; sexual harassment; and issuance of results for expelled students to graduate.

2.3 Inadequate Infrastructural Facilities

Udida, Bassey, Udofia, & Egbona, (2009) observed that the lack of adequate infrastructures in our higher education has posed serious setback in the achievement of higher education goals. In institution where there are no adequate classrooms, resource rooms, staff rooms, lack of laboratory facilities, computers and the like; proper teaching and learning cannot be effective and efficient in the system. Ogunode (2020) submitted that inadequate infrastructural facilities is a very big problem facing the administration of public universities in Nigeria. Many public universities in Nigeria do not have adequate infrastructural facilities. Infrastructural facilities refers to facilities aiding delivery of academic and non-academic services in educational institutions. Infrastructural facilities include; libraries, laboratories, halls, offices, administrative blocks, hostels, roads facilities, water, electricity, internet etc. The availability of the infrastructural facilities in adequate quantities will support effective administration of educational institutions and the inadequacies will prevent effective administration of educational institutions. Many public universities in Nigeria do not have adequate lectures halls, laboratories and offices for both students and academic staff. 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 deans and heads of departments are not something to write home about. The Students do not have adequate lecture halls and hostels accommodations (Ogunode & Abubakar, 2020). Salisu (2001) in her study of influence of school physical resources on students’ academic performance concludes that, there is significant difference in the academic performance of students in institutions with adequate facilities and those with inadequate facilities. The lack of good buildings or funds to rehabilitate collapsed structures poses threat to the system performance and its sustainability hence education to some extent is falling due to low standard. Poor infrastructural facilities planning, corruption, poor maintenance culture and inadequate funding are factor responsible for inadequate infrastructural facilities in Nigerian higher institutions. A survey by the National university commission in Ogunode (2019) showed that only about 30 percent of Nigeria student population have adequate access to classroom, lecture theatres, laboratories and libraries. The figure indicates the state and a very state of Nigeria universities affairs.

2.4 Shortage of Academic Staff

Ahaotu & Ogunode (2021) opined that another major challenge facing the administrators of higher institutions in Nigeria is the problem of shortage of academic and non-academic staff which revealed wide disparities between Nigerian universities and their counterparts in other parts of the world. For instance, the staff-to-student ratio in Harvard University is 1:4, Massachusetts Institute of Technology has 1:9 ratio and the University of Cambridge has 1:3. Ogunode & Musa, (2020), NEEDS, (2014) noted that inadequate lecturers is a serious problem facing all the higher institutions in Nigeria. Many higher institutions do not have adequate lecturers to deploy for teaching in the various institutions. The shortage of lecturer is responsible for the poor quality of teaching and learning in most Nigerian higher institutions. The problem of inadequate manpower in the higher

institutions in Nigeria is caused by poor manpower planning, inadequate funding, corruption and inadequate teachers' institutions.

2.5 Strike actions

Okoli., Ogbondah, and Ewor, (2016) observed that it has become a known fact that students across various universities in Nigeria are constantly faced with industrial actions embarked upon by the Academic and Non-Academic Staff Unions of various institutions. The disagreement or lack of understanding between government and unions arising from non-implementation of agreement reached, often results in deadlock that usually disrupts academic calendar. As academic activities are suspended for a long period, the students reading abilities fell. Even the previous knowledge acquired is even forgotten by some students. This mostly turns some students into certificates seekers than knowledge seekers. Poor implementation of agreement, inadequate funding, poor and negotiating skills are factors responsible for various strike action in the higher institutions in Nigeria. More so, students riot and other issues contribute to strike action or temporary shut-down of universities which threaten the stability of institutions as well as affect the overall performance of students and the staff in general.

2.6 Brain-drain

Ogunode (2020) opined that another problem preventing effective administration of public universities in Nigeria is the challenge of brain-drain problem. Brain-drain refers to the movement of professionals from developing countries to developed countries for a better job offers. Brain-drain is a situation whereby professional individuals are migrating from their countries to another country to seek greener pasture. Many lecturers and researchers are leaving public universities in Nigeria to other part of African countries and Europe for a better job offer and conducive working environment. Tribuneonline, (2020) reported that the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has warned the Federal Government against encouraging brain drain with a lingering strike and nonchalant attitude towards the yearnings of ASUU. Prof. BiodunOgunyemi, the President, ASUU, said Ethiopia has already recruited 200 professors from Nigeria while South Africa, Ghana, Egypt, etc have a sizeable number of Nigerian professors. In 2006, Ethiopia engaged the services of 600 professors, according to OlusegunAkinsanya, the former Nigeria's Ambassador to Ethiopia. Akinsanya added that over 3,000 Nigerians were living in Ethiopia and that most of them were professionals who were doing very well in their chosen career. A few months ago, Ethiopia came to recruit 200 professors from Nigeria. "I don't want to talk of South Africa. Go to Ghana, Egypt, you will see them there. We treat our scholars with discontent. Each time they step out, they are highly valued and highly-priced. Ogunode (2020) argued that the mass movement of academicians from the Nigerian public universities is affecting the administration of the universities because academic staff are very important for the implementation of universities' programme. Factors responsible for Brain-drain in the Nigerian public universities include; poor motivation, unconducive working environment, insecurity, underfunding and political interferences. The implication of brain-drain in the Nigerian public universities include; shortage of lecturers, poor quality of education and high student-teacher ratio. More so, the brain drain appear normal occurrence in Nigeria as universities loses talents in academia to other field for economic or political reasons.

2.7 Poor Research

Okoli.,Ogbondah, and Ewor, (2016) observed that it is important to make research the hub of university education considering the problems Nigerian universities now face. Research in the higher institutions contributes to the acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value orientation for the survival of the individual and society. Today, this function is saddled with poor attitude of governments towards research and inadequate funding of research programmes. Okafor

(2001) argued along the same line when he stated that lack of funds is affecting research in the universities and that there is no indication that this problems will not continue in the future. The universities are supposed to engage in research, not only to push out the frontiers of knowledge, but to solve the problems of the society. Ogunode, Jegede, Adah, Audu&Ajape (2020) opined that research programme is one of the major programme of the universities. It is a key to the university's development. Research programme of the universities is one of the key indicators used to measure the performance of the universities. The administration of research programme in Nigerian public universities faces many problems such as; inadequate research funding, unstable academic calendar/strike Actions, inadequate infrastructural facilities, brain-drain, insecurity, corruption, poor technological advancement/poor ICT literacy. Others are poor participation of private sector in research development and lack of conducive working (research) environment as problems facing the administration of research programme. Poor research programme for the development of research in higher institutions, inadequate funding, corruption and inadequate infrastructural facilities are factors responsible for poor research programme in Nigerian higher institutions.

2.8 Weak Administrators

Ogunode (2020) opined that the appointment of weak administrators in the Nigerian public universities is another big challenge facing the administration of public universities in Nigeria. Many universities' administrators appointed to head the public universities are not qualified and less exposed to handle the administration and management of universities in Nigeria. Udida, Bassey, Udofia, &Egbona (2009) submitted that some individuals appointed as vice chancellors of some university are weak, not competent and lack administrative potentials; such appointees must possess administrative qualities and must lead by example. The leader must have integrity, must be knowledgeable, and practice modern types of management leadership styles. He or she must be visionary and ready to adjust to situations in the system. The performance of the administrator should be sustained through the proper utilization of material and human resources in the achievement of the institutional goals and objectives. A lot of higher education system managers do not poses the charisma, or good human relations needed for effective and efficient leadership. As a result of the poor leadership and ineffective style of administration, a lot of programme of activities are not carried out in such institutions such as provision of grant for research and publications, staff welfare is neglected, no adequate control of staff and students, no vision for the university. Such leaders also do not have the zeal for supervision and monitoring of institutional activities. This can affect the system's performance in that, workers can result to a nonchalant attitude toward work and hence no sustainability or continuity of good track records of performance in the system.

2.9 Insecurity

Ogunode (2020) observed that insecurity is another problem facing the administration of public universities in Nigeria. Nigeria is facing insecurity challenge and this is affecting the entire educational institutions in the country. The Islamic sect called Boko haram meaning western education is forbidden is attacking educational institutions in the Northern part of Nigeria. Many public universities located in the Northern Nigeria have been victims of continuous attacks. Many students, lecturers and administrators have been killed while others kidnapped. The various attacks on the universities have resulted to school closure leading to unstable academic programme. Ahaotu& Ogunode (2021) Nigerian higher institutions administrators are also battling with the challenges of insecurity in their various institutions. Nigeria is facing numerous securities challenges since the return of democracy in 1999. These securities challenges are directly or indirectly affecting the administration of higher education in the country. For instance, many students and academic staff of higher institutions have been attacked at different times resulting into their death within the campus. The higher institutions environment is not safe for students and lectures.

3. Way Forward

Inadequate funding, corruption, inadequate infrastructural facilities, shortage of academic staff, Strike actions, Brain-drain, poor research, weak administrators and insecurity. To resolve the challenges facing higher education in Nigeria, the following have been recommended: adequate funding of higher education, employment of more academic staff, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, motivation of academic staff, appointment of qualified administrators, fight all forms of corruption in higher institutions, provision of adequate security in all higher institutions and implementation all agreement with union groups.

1. The federal and state government should increase the funding of higher education in Nigeria. More funds should be allocated to research programme in all the higher institutions.
2. More academic staff should be employed in all the higher institutions in the country.
3. The government should provide more infrastructural facilities in all the higher institutions in the country.
4. To prevent brain-drain in the higher institutions in the country, the government should increase the salaries and increase the welfare packages of academic staff in all higher institutions in the country
5. The government should appoint only qualified individuals to head the various higher institutions in the country
6. The government should provide adequate security in all higher institutions in the country
7. The government should deploy all materials and human resources to fight all forms of corruption in the higher institutions in the country.
8. The government should implement all the agreement reached with the various union groups in the higher institution to prevent strike actions

4. Conclusion

Higher education is the education after secondary school. It is an education designed to produce manpower for the social, economic and technological development of the country. It is unfortunate that Nigerian higher education is plagued with many challenges. This paper discusses the various challenges facing higher education in Nigeria. Inadequate funding, corruption, inadequate infrastructural facilities, shortage of academic staff, Strike actions, Brain-drain, poor research, weak administrators and insecurity. To address these challenges facing higher education in Nigeria, the following have been recommended: adequate funding of higher education, employment of more academic staff, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, motivation of academic staff, appointment of qualified administrators, fight all forms of corruption in higher institutions, provision of adequate security in all higher institutions and implementation all agreement with union groups.

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