

Administration of Public Universities in Nigeria: Problems and Solutions

Ogunode Niyi Jacob¹

¹ University of Abuja, Nigeria

¹ ogunodejacob@gmail.com

Abstract

Public universities in Nigeria were established to provide post-secondary education for the Nigerian citizens. The Nigerian public universities were among the best in the world before but the situation has changed. The performance of Nigerian public universities is not encouraging. Many problems have been identified as responsible. Problems of poor administration of public universities have been identified by different scholars as a problem facing the public universities in Nigeria. This article discusses the problems facing the administration of public universities in Nigeria. Secondary data were used in the article. The secondary data were sourced from online and print resources. The article identified; inadequate funding, inadequate academic staff, inadequate infrastructural facilities, brain-drain, insecurity, strike actions, corruption, inadequate data to plan, political influence and weak administrators as the problems facing the administration of public universities in Nigeria. To solve the problems, the following were recommended: increase in the funding of public universities, employment of more academic staff, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, ensure adequate security, fight all forms of corruption, provision of adequate data, grant autonomy to all public universities, motivate all the academic staff, improve on data generation and distribution, implement all agreement reached with union groups in the public universities and appointment of competent administrators for the public universities in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Administration, Problems, Public Universities*

Introduction

Public universities are universities owned by the government. Public universities are universities established to provide post-secondary schools for Nigerian. Public universities are universities established by act of parliament to serve the interest of the general public. Public universities deal with the provision of teaching, research and communities services. 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).

Public universities in Nigeria are grouped into federal and state owned universities. The federal universities are owned by the federal government of Nigeria while the state universities are owned by the state government. The total number of federal and state public universities are 45 and 50 across the country (NUC,2020).

The federal government of Nigeria established the National universities commission to oversee the external administration and supervision of all universities in Nigeria. The administration of public universities in Nigeria takes two dimensions: the external administration and internal administration. The external administration is done through the federal ministries and other regulatory agencies in the country. The external administration handle planning, policy formulation, programme accreditation, supervision, funding and quality control of the universities. The internal administration headed by the school administrators and other principal managers within the universities. The function of internal administration is to ensure implementation of policies, coordinate, supervise and organize the human and materials resources of the universities to accomplish the objectives of the universities.

The realization of the universities' goals and objective depends on effective administration and planning. Administration is key to the development of university education in Nigeria. The Nigerian public universities in recent times have come under attacks for poor performance. The quality of the public universities in Nigeria is going down due to poor administration. This article is aimed to discuss the problems facing the administration of public universities in Nigeria.

Concept of University Administration

University administration refers to the application of the universities' resources to implement the programme of the universities with the aims of realizing the objectives of the universities. University administration is the mobilization and arrangement of both human and materials resources for the achievement of the university's goals. University administration is the effective use of the resources of the university to implement the teaching programme, research programme and the community service programme of the universities. University administration is the deployment of the universities' resources to accomplish the universities' programme. The objectives of university administration include: to implement the programme of the universities as defined; to allocate resources for the implementation of the universities programme; to ensure implementation of teaching programme, to ensure implementation of research programme; to ensure delivery of quality community services programme, to ensure effective staff development, to ensure effective student administration, to ensure smooth implementation of academic calendar and to ensure quality education.

Problems facing Public Universities in Nigeria

The following are the problems facing public universities in Nigeria: inadequate funding, inadequate academic staff, inadequate infrastructural facilities, brain-drain, insecurity, strike actions, corruption, inadequate data to plan and weak administrators.

Inadequate Funding

Inadequate funding is one of the major problems facing the administration of public universities in Nigeria. The budgetary allocation for the administration of public universities in Nigeria is not adequate to implement the programme of universities in Nigeria. The university system requires a lot of funds for effective administration to be able realized it goals. 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 (Ogunode& Abubakar,2020). The poor funding of public universities in Nigeria is responsible for the poor quality of education and decay infrastructural facilities. The inability of the government to objectively implement the UNESCO 26% recommendation for the funding of education in Nigeria is contributing to the poor performance of the public universities in the country. The factors responsible for inadequate funding of public universities in Nigeria include lack of political will, corruption, increase in population, inflation, fall in national revenue and poor financial planning. The implications of underfunding of the public universities include; inadequate infrastructural facilities, shortage of academics staff, poor quality of education, brain-drain and strike action.

Inadequate Academic Staff

Inadequate academic staff is another major problem facing the administration of public universities in Nigeria. Many public universities in Nigeria are understaffed and lack the financial capacity to employ adequate staff. The Nigerian universities are faced with the problem of shortage of lecturers in many departments and faculties especially in programme like the sciences (Ogunode & Abubakar,2020). The shortage of lecturers in many departments and faculties is responsible for high teacher-student ratio in the Nigerian universities. The inadequate academic staff is preventing effective administration of public universities in Nigeria. The Federal Government's needs assessment of Nigerian public universities carried out in (2012) articulated the shortage of qualified teachers in Nigerian universities. According to the reports, only about 43 percent of university lecturers have PhD qualifications. The remaining 57 percent have qualifications below PhD. Only seven universities have up to 60 percent of their teaching staff with PhD qualifications. There are universities with fewer than five professors. For instance, the Kano State University of Science and Technology, Wudil, established 11 years ago and has been turning out graduates, has only one teaching staff with a professor ranking and 25 lecturers who are PhD degree holders. Similarly, the Kebbi State University of Science and Technology, established in 2006, has only two teaching staff in the professor category and five lecturers who have PhD qualifications. The understaffing of universities in Nigeria has serious implications for quality instruction and academic productivity in the institutions. The situation has led to an increasing culture of visiting lecturers in the system. The few available qualified lecturers are recycled as visiting, adjunct, sabbatical and contract lecturers to work in many universities at the same time. Many of them are always on the road travelling from one university town to another and unable to meet their primary obligations with their tenure-employer (NEEDS, 2014, Federal Ministry of Education, 2012). This problem of inadequate teachers in public universities is caused by underfunding of the universities,

corruptions, brain-drain, poor motivation, unconducive working environment and lack of manpower planning. The implication of shortage of academic staff in the Nigerian public universities include high student –teacher ratio, poor learning, poor delivery of teaching, low productivities and poor quality of education.

Inadequate Infrastructural Facilities

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). The factors responsible for inadequate infrastructural facilities in Nigerian public universities include; underfunding, increased in students population, corruption, poor infrastructural facilities planning, poor supervision and inflation. The implication of inadequate infrastructural facilities in the Nigerian public universities include; poor quality of education, poor teaching and learning, low productivities, brain-drain and overcrowdings of lecture halls.

Brain-Drain

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. 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. Biodun Ogunyemi, 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 Olusegun Akinsanya, 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 (Tribuneonline, 2020). 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.

Insecurity

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. Obi, (2015) observed that insecurity and terrorism has been a major challenge to the Nigerian government in recent times. The activities of the Islamic sect (Boko Haram) had led to loss of lives and properties in the country especially in the Northern part of Nigeria. Some of these activities include bombing, suicide bomb attacks, sporadic shooting of unarmed and innocent citizens, burning of police stations, churches, kidnapping of school girls and women, etc. Kidnapping, rape, armed robbery and political crises, murder, destruction of oil facilities by Niger Delta militants alongside the attacks carried out by Fulani Herdsmen on some communities in the North and South have been another major insecurity challenge facing the country. Nigeria has been included among one of the terrorist countries of the world. Many lives and properties have been lost and a large number of citizens rendered homeless. Families have lost their loved ones. Many women are now widows. Children become orphans with no hope of the future. This has implications for national development.

Strike Actions

Strike actions in the Nigerian public universities is another problem facing the administration of public universities in Nigeria. The Nigerian public universities are known for continuous strike actions by different union groups in the public universities. The continuous strike actions by these different union groups are frustrating the administration of public universities in Nigeria. The reasons for the strike actions by different union groups include; underfunding of the public universities, inadequate infrastructural facilities, poor implementation of agreement reached with union groups and poor working condition. The implications of the continuous strike actions on the public universities include; disruption in the academic programme, poor quality of education, bad image for the universities, poor ranking internationally and poor patronage of public universities in Nigeria. Ogunode (2020) did a study that investigated the causes of unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher institutions (A case study of federal university wukari, Taraba state, Nigeria). Data collected showed that that ASUU/NASU Strike, students' election, communal crisis, increase in school fees, cultic conflict, National programme and public holidays are factors responsible for unstable

academic calendar of higher education in Nigeria. It was also established that half bake graduates, poor coverage of syllabus, resources wastage, students' involvement in criminal activities and students prolonged years of graduation are the effects of unstable academic calendar.

Corruption

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 organisations 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. Chinyere, & Chukwuma (2017) identified dimensions of corruption in Nigerian universities to included students, lecturers, non-academic staff and administrators. The shapes of corruption among students included bribing of lecturers for unmerited grades, cultism, examination malpractice, attacks on lecturers for stopping students from indulging in examination malpractice, fiscal extortion from innocent students by fellow students who form themselves into "lecturers' boys". Forms of corruption among lecturers included demanding huge amount of money, sex from female students for high grade, etc. Among non-teaching staff, the shades of corruption included monetary extortion from students before they see their results, demanding of money from unsuspecting parents in the guise that they are lecturers with a promise to secure admission for their children/wards, they also act as agents for lecturers, receiving money from students for higher grades after examination. At the administrator's level, shades of corruption included misappropriation and misapplication of fund meant for capital projects, offer of admission to undeserving students for a fee while deserving candidates are by-passed, amongst others. No effective university administration can take place under corrupt system.

Inadequate Data to Plan

Inadequate data on university education in Nigeria is another problem facing the planning of public universities in Nigeria. There is limited data on university education in Nigeria. The data available are not current and adequate and this is affecting the administration of the public universities. Administration needs data to plan and take decision concerning programme of public universities. The factors responsible for inadequate data on university education include; poor funding of data generating agencies in the country, inadequate staff, insecurity, weak institution and poor

supervision. Victoria & Owuama (2016) conducted a study that aimed at determining the constraints to planning and implementation of higher education programmes was carried out, with emphasis on the six higher institutions in Rivers State. The result of the study revealed among others that inadequacy of funds, planning without accurate statistical data, political influence, and misappropriation of funds and shortage of qualified manpower were major constraints. The findings also revealed that there were significant difference between male and female unit heads on the perception of constraints to planning and implementation of higher education programmes.

Political Influence

Another big challenge facing the administration of public universities in Nigeria is the political influence. The public universities have been designed to function with political officer holders or politician in the country. The school administrators of public universities are answerable to the governing council constituted by the government to manage the affair of the public universities in the country. Ogunode & Abubakar, (2020) observed that the activities of these governing councils is affecting effective administration of the public universities in Nigeria. The alarming level of political interference in the administration of public universities in Nigeria is frightening. The visitors of the universities who are the chief executives (president/governor) have reserved powers to appoint the chancellors and constitute the governing council of various universities under them and 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 universities in Nigeria.

Weak Administrators

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.

Nigerian Higher Educational System need leaders who can position it to an envying height of success and progress, this contributing to society's quest for self reliance (Udida, Bassey, Udofia, & Egbona.2009) cited Ujomu. 2001). Nwachukwu ,Stella & Obada (2018) revealed that the lack of institutional leaders' values like integrity, effectiveness, competence, honesty, accountability and fairness explains the unsuccessful and ineffective management of universities in Nigeria.

Ways Forward

To solve the challenges, the following were recommended:

- a) Increase the funding of public universities in the country;
- b) Employ more academic staff in all public universities in Nigeria;
- c) Provide adequate infrastructural facilities to all the public universities in the country;
- d) Provide adequate security in all public universities in the country;
- e) Direct all its anti-corruption agencies to monitor all the funds released to the public universities for implementation of their programme and for capital development;
- f) Improve the capacity of data generating agencies in the country to ensure generation of current and adequate data for planning of public universities in Nigeria;
- g) Motivate all the academic staff by increasing their salaries and welfare packages;
- h) Grant autonomy to all the public universities in the country;
- i) Ensure agreement reached with different union groups in the public universities are implemented to avoid strike actions in the public universities; and
- j) Ensure qualified and competent administrators are appointed to head public universities in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Public universities are universities owned by the government. The public universities are established to provide post-secondary school education to Nigerian youths. The public universities are not performing well as expected due to many problems facing the universities. This article identified inadequate funding, inadequate academic staff, inadequate infrastructural facilities, brain-drain, insecurity, strike actions, corruption, inadequate data to plan, political influence and weak administrators as some of the challenges of public universities in Nigeria. To solve the challenges, the following were recommended: increase in the funding of public universities, employment of more academic staff, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, ensure adequate security, fight all forms of corruption, provision of adequate data, grant autonomy to all public universities, motivate all the academic staff, improve on data generation and distribution, implement all agreement reached with union groups in the public universities and appointment of competent administrators for the public universities in Nigeria.

Acknowledgment

-

References

- Chinyere, A.P, & Chukwuma, O (2017) Corruption and Administration of Higher Education Institutions in Nigeria.
- Federal Ministry of Education (FME) 2011 *Digest of Educational Statistics*. FME, Abuja.
- Federal Ministry of Education (FME) 2012 *Reports on Need Assessment of Nigerian Public Universities*. FME, Abuja
- NUC (2020) Prof-Rasheed-Defend Nuc fed versaties budget before N-assembly. <https://www.nuc.edu.ng/prof-rasheed-defends-nuc-fed-varsities-budgets-before-n-assembly/>
- Nwachukwu, P. O., Stella, A. E., & Obaoda, A. U. (2018) Educational Leadership and Management (ELM): Institutional Leaders Value Functions and Effective Management of Universities.
- Ojogwu, C. M. (2001), Supervision as an instrument for maintaining standard and quality control in school in current issues in educational Management in Nigeria. Being a lead paper presented at the first annual National conference organized by the association for encouraging qualitative education in Nigeria at Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT).
- Obi, C. (2015). Challenges of Insecurity and Terrorism in Nigeria: Implication for National Development (February 28, 2015). *OIDA International Journal of Sustainable Development*, 8(2), pp. 11-18,
- Ogunode, N. J., & Abubakar, L. (2020) Public Universities Administration in Nigeria: Challenges and the ways forward. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Sciences and Advanced Technology (IJMSAT)*, 1(12), 25–35
- Punch. (2020). Ending FG/ASUU perennial face-off. <https://punchng.com/ending-fg-asuu-perennial-face-off/>
- Tribune Online. (2020). Ethiopia Recruits 200 Nigerian Professors Amid Strike — ASUU. <https://tribuneonlineng.com/ethiopia-recruits-200-nigerian-professors-amid-strike->
- Udida, I. A., Bassey, U. U, Udofia, I. U. & Egbona, E. A. (2009) system performance and sustainability of higher education in Nigeria.
- Victoria, C. O., & Owuama, D. N. (2016). Constraints in planning and implementation of higher education programmes in rivers Nigeria. *European Scientific Journal*