



**MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA:
CHALLENGES AND THE WAYS FORWARD**

Afolabi Iyabode Omolola¹, Ogunode Niyi Jacob¹

¹nicelolly68@gmail.com, ²ogunodejacob@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

University management is key to the realization of the universities objectives. University management ensures that universities programme are properly coordinated toward the actualization of universities goals. In Nigeria, the management of public universities is faced with many challenges. The article discusses the challenges facing the management of public universities in Nigeria. To achieve this, the researchers employed the use of secondary data to support the various points raised in the article. The secondary data were sourced from online and print media. The following challenges were identified as the challenges facing the management of public universities in Nigeria: inadequate funding, inadequate lecturers, inadequate infrastructural facilities, brain-drain, strike actions, academic corruption, insecurity and political inferences. To address the various challenges facing the management of public universities, this article hereby suggests the following: adequate funding of public universities, employment of more lecturers, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, provision of security, de-politicization of the public universities and motivation of lecturers.

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1.0 Introduction

The National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004), defines Higher Education as 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. According to

Adeyemi (2001), Higher Education refers to a system which embraces much of the country's research capacity and reproduces majority of the skilled professionals that are required in the labour market. The National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004) outlined the following as the objectives of higher education:

- (a) the acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value orientation for the survival of the individual and societies;
- (b) the development of the intellectual capacities of individuals to understand and appreciate environment;
- (c) the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community;
- (d) the acquisition of an overview of the local and external environments (FGN, 2004)

In Nigeria, the university education is grouped with the higher education. The university education is the education that deals with teaching, researching and provision of community services. Noun (2006) submitted that the university is the apex of all tertiary institutions. It is expected to make optimum contribution to national development by:

- (a) Intensifying and diversifying its programmes for the development of high level manpower within the context of the needs of national requirements.
- (b) Making professional course content to reflect our national requirements.
- (c) Making all students, as part of a general programme of all-round improvement in university education, to offer general study courses such as history of ideas, philosophy of knowledge and nationalism.

For effective management of higher education in Nigeria, the Federal government established some agencies and parastatal under the Federal Ministry of Education. The agencies include National Universities Commission (NUC), the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) (NEEDS, 2014). The National Universities Commission (NUC) is a parastatal under the Federal Ministry of Education. The Commission was established in 1962 with the task of developing and managing university education in Nigeria. Its functions include: granting approval for all academic programmes in Nigerian universities; granting approval for the establishment of all higher educational institutions offering degree programmes; and ensuring quality assurance, through regular accreditation, of all academic programmes in universities (NEEDS, 2014).

The management of universities in Nigeria takes two forms. The external management and the internal management. The external management is handled by the various agencies and commissions established by the government to oversee the management of the various institutions in the country. The internal management is handled by the various principal officers appointed by the government within the higher institutions as managers to supervise and manage the institutions with the aims of realizing the objectives.

The performance of the Nigerian public Universities in recent time have not been encouraging. The output of the universities is one of the indicators used for measuring the quality of the universities across the World. According to Noun (2006) Concern has been raised about the decline in the quality of education in Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education. This is evident by the quality of

graduates produced by these institutions.

Saint, Hartmet and Strassner (2003) lamented that the Nigerian university system is performing poorly in the area of teaching and learning in terms of labour market absorption and employers' assessment of graduates. For Mohammed and Gbenu (2007) and Obayan (1999) the quality of education offered by higher education institutions in the recent times has deteriorated substantially while Babalola (2007) described the situation in our tertiary institutions as "institutional failure" because of skill mismatch. He said skill mismatch is a major concern in Nigeria where tertiary education graduates acquire skills that are not demanded by the labour market.

Aare Afe Babalola (SAN), has said that the quality of education in Nigeria had degenerated to the extent that many graduates cannot defend their certificates. Babalola, who expressed displeasure at the growing declining standards of education, particularly university education, called for urgent action to correct the trend before it was too late. He went further to said "Today, Nigeria produces graduates who cannot write simple and correct sentences, graduates who do not understand the difference between transitive and intransitive verbs, graduates who cannot defend their certificates (Punch, 2021).

Education stakeholders in Nigeria have blamed the problems affecting the public universities to poor management. There are many challenges facing the management of public universities in Nigeria. This article is aimed to discuss some of the challenges facing managerial challenges facing public universities in Nigeria.

1.2 Purpose of the Article

The objective of this article is to discuss challenges facing the management of public universities in Nigeria.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Concept of University Management

Educational management is essentially concerned with educational planning and administration. Educational planning is the exercise of foresight in determining the policies, priorities and cost of an educational system. Educational management can be conceptualized to mean a deliberate and systematic process of making plans to source, assemble, allocate and use resources to achieve the aims and objectives of the educational system. The scope goes beyond the school system to include micro and macroeconomics in the national economy (Noun 2006).

The task function of educational management include instructional functions, staff or personnel services, student services and financial and physical resource management, school community relations. According to Noun (2006) the purpose of educational management among others include

- (a) ensure adequate and effective planning of all educational services;
- (b) provide efficient administrative and management control for the maintenance and improvement of the system;
- (c) ensure quality control through regular and continuous supervision of instructional and other educational services and;
- (d) provide adequate and balanced financial support for all educational services.

Educational management cover early child education, primary school education, secondary school education and the higher education which include the university education.

University management is act of planning, organizing, coordinating both human and materials resources for the realization of the universities objectives. University management is the application of university resources to achieve university goals and objective through effective planning, organizing and coordinating. University management involves planning the directions of aims of objectives of universities, Organizing resources to achieve university objective, Organising available resources— People, time, material and Controlling, and implementing the process. Setting and improving organisational standards. University management implies the practical measures for ensuring university system work to achieve the goals or objectives of the university.

Ekundayo, & Ajayi,(2009) submitted that the Management of university education can be looked at from two dimensions; the external and the internal levels. At the external level, this is the control by the federal government through the National Universities Commission (NUC), a body charged with the coordination of university management in the country. Ekundayo, & Ajayi,(2009) quoted Ibukun (1997), who posited that the main objectives of the NUC are to ensure the orderly development of university education in Nigeria, to maintain its high standard and to ensure its adequate funding. On the other hand, the internal management of each university is represented by a simple organogram. The first is the Visitor who is usually the Head of State or the Head of Government that established it (The President in case of federal universities and the Governors in case of state universities). He usually comes to grace the convocation ceremonies where he uses the occasion to address the academic communities on matters of the moment (Ekundayo, & Ajayi,2009, Adegbite, 2007). The second is the Chancellor, who is the titular head of the university, who by law, in relation to the university, takes precedence before all other members of the university and when he is present, presides at all meetings of the convocation held for conferring degrees (Ekundayo, & Ajayi,2009).

Besides, at the ape of the management structure within each university is the Governing Council, headed by the Chairman (Pro-Chancellor) which is charged with the administrative functions in the areas of goal setting, policy formulation, staff development, general discipline, budget approval and liaison activities with the government. In addition to this, there is the Senate, headed by the Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar as the Secretary. The Senate regulates the academic activities of the university following the general guidelines provided by the NUC (Ekundayo, & Ajayi, 2009).

2.2 Challenges facing the Management of Public Universities in Nigeria

The challenges facing the management of Public universities in Nigeria include the following: inadequate funding, inadequate lecturers, inadequate infrastructural facilities, brain-drain, strike actions, academic corruption, insecurity and political inferences.

2.2.1 Inadequate Funding

Inadequate funding is a major challenge to the effective management of public universities in Nigeria. Adequate fund is very important to the management of public universities. No higher institutions can survival without adequate funds. The university system is complex to manage and managed. Ogunode, Abubakar & Ajape (2021) observed that the availability of adequate funds aids the administration and management of university education. It helps to realize its objectives and goals. Adepoju (2002) remarked that money is an absolute input of any education system. It provides the essential purchasing power with which education acquires its human and physical inputs. According to Saint (2003), the

university system has not had the financial resources necessary to maintain educational quality amid significant enrolment explosion. (Udida, Bassey, Udofia, & Egbona.2009) observed that 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. Udida, Bassey, Udofia, & Egbona (2009) cited 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".

2.2.2 Inadequate Manpower

Another challenge facing the management of public universities in Nigeria is inadequate staff. Both academic and non-academic staff are in inadequate in some public universities in Nigeria and this is affecting the effective management of public universities in the country. (NEEDS, 2014) submits that the most recent assessment of manpower needs of Nigerian public universities was conducted in 2012 by an inter-ministerial committee set up by the Federal Government. The needs assessment summary report identified manpower shortage as one of the reasons why Nigerian universities have been unable to compete favourably with universities in many other parts of the world. According to the report, a combination of infrastructural and manpower challenges is responsible for the sharp decline in scholarship in Nigerian universities. On manpower challenges, the report indicated that as at November 2012, there were 37,504 academic staff in 74 public universities in Nigeria. Considering the number of staff vis-à-vis the student population, the report revealed an unmanageable lecturer-to-student ratio. For example, at the National Open University the academic staff-to-student ratio was 1:363, at Lagos State University the ratio was 1:144, and at the University of Abuja the ratio was 1:122. Kano State University, which was 11 years old at the time of the needs assessment period, had one professor and 25 lecturers with PhD degrees, while Kebbi State University had two professors and five lecturers with doctorate degrees. These statistics 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. Inadequate academic staff is a challenge to the higher institutions in Nigeria according to (Ahaotu & Ogunode 2021; Ehichoya & Ogunode2020; Ogunode & Abubakar 2020; Ogunode, & Abubakar, 2020m; Ogunode , Ahaotu & Ayisa 2021). No any meaningful effective university management can take place without adequate academic staff.

2.2.3 Inadequate Infrastructural Facilities

Inadequate infrastructural facilities is another problem facing the management of the Nigerian public universities. Ogunode, Jegede, & Abubakar, (2021) defined infrastructural facilities as those social capital that aids delivering of teaching, researching and other academic services in the educational

institutions. Infrastructural facilities includes classrooms, offices, lectures halls, sport ground, light, water, good roads, ICT facilities etc and they observed that many academic and non-academic staff in the Nigerian universities do not have offices to discharge their academic services effectively due to inadequate infrastructural facilities in many universities in the country. Many academic staff shared offices and some do not even have while many non-teaching staff seat under the trees and roam about from one office to the other because they don't have office to sit. Many academic staff do not have constant light in their offices and internet services to support their online teaching programme. Ogunode, Jegede, & Abubakar, (2021) quoted Obemeata (1991) who submitted in his study that office spaces for academic staff and lecture rooms or halls are inadequate in our universities Salisu (2001) carried out a study on influence of school physical resources on students' academic performance and 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. Ebehikhalu & Dawam (201) and Likoko, Mutsotso and Nasongo (2013) have that lack of adequate physical facilities for teaching and learning have negative effect on the quality of graduates produced. They are of the opinions that these facilities are educational inputs that have strong relationship with high academic performance of students. Inadequate infrastructural facilities is preventing effective public universities management in Nigeria. Ogunode , Ahaotu & Ayisa (2021), Ahaotu & Ogunode (2021), Ehichoya & Ogunode (2020), Ojo, (2018), John (2016), Okoli, Ogbondah, & Ewor, (2016), Ogunode & Abubakar (2020), Ogunode, & Abubakar, (2020m) submitted that inadequate infrastructural facilities is a major problem facing the higher education in Nigeria.

2.2.4 Brain-drain

The Nigerian higher institutions are also faced with rapid faculty exodus or brain drain. Many lecturers have abandoned higher institutions for other sectors of the economy where professionals and scientists receive higher salaries and greater social recognition. Odetunde (2004) observed that, there was mass exodus of many brilliant lecturers to the business world and others left Nigeria for better services. Ekundayo, & Ajayi, (2009) cited Smah (2007) who reports that Professor Joseph Stiglitz, 2001 Nobel Prize winner in Economics, who, while delivering a lecture at the first Dr. Pius Okadigbo memorial lecture series in Enugu said that there is a particular university in the U.S. that has over 25 Nigerian professors. He submitted that the above pointer is instructive for any serious-minded government that wants to address the issue of brain-drain. According to Ekundayo, & Ajayi, (2009) cited Akindutire (2004) submits that institutional deterioration and salary erosion during the past decade have prompted substantial "brain-drain" of academic staff and impeded new staff recruitment. Bangura (1994) discovered that between 1988 and 1990, over 1000 lecturers left the federal university system in Nigeria. Ekundayo, & Ajayi, (2009) cited Saint, Harnett and Strassner (2003) who observed that various factors have combined to cause these staffing difficulties. One has been the relatively low level of academic salaries during the past decade and the declining financial attractions of university employment in comparison to other opportunities. Another has been the rising workloads associated with deteriorating staff/student ratios. The mass movement of the best brains from the various higher institutions in Nigeria is preventing managers of the institutions from having adequate personnel's to deploy for various academic activities in the various institutions.

2.2.5 Incessant Strike Actions

Various strike actions embarked upon by the various union group in the Nigeria public universities is

also a major problem preventing effective management of public universities in Nigeria. These various strike action have done more harm to the higher institutions than good. The effectiveness of strike action have resulted to disruption of academic programme of the institutions. Ogunode (2020) did a study investigated the causes of unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher institutions (A case study of federal university Wukari, Taraba state, Nigeria). Data collected were analyzed and showed that ASUU/NASU Strike, students' election, communal crisis, increase in school fees, cultic conflict, National programme and public holiday are factors responsible for unstable academic calendar of higher education in Nigeria. It was also established that half-baked 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. Incessant strike actions by unions/groups in the universities is preventing effective management of public universities in Nigeria.

2.2.6 Academic Corruption

Corruption is another challenge preventing effective management of public universities. The limited funds made available for the administration and management of higher institutions some time are looted and diverted to private account. Chinyere, & Chukwuma (2017) identified dimensions of corruption to include students, lecturers, non-academic staff and administrators. They went further to list the shapes of corruption among students to include 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". Chinyere, & Chukwuma (2017) observed that forms of corruption among lecturers included demanding huge amount of money, sex from female students for high grade, etc. Corruption among non-teaching staff, according to Chinyere, & Chukwuma (2017) include 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 (Chinyere, & Chukwuma 2017). Okoli, Ogbondah, & Ewor, (2016) and Dare (2008) in Ogbondah (2010) observed that in spite of the inadequacy of allocations to the public university system, any fund made available often goes down the drain through the corrupt practices of those entrusted with the implementation of university programmes due to inadequate monitoring of university income and expenditure, such is the grim state of affairs, thus the future will need a paradigm shift. Corruption is responsible for the poor quality of education in many public universities in Nigeria. Universities development cannot be attained under corrupt system. Strike action/unstable academic calendar have been acknowledged as a major challenge to the university education in Nigeria (Ogunode, Ahaotu & Ayisa 2021; Ahaotu & Ogunode 2021; Ehichoya & Ogunode 2020; Okoli, Ogbondah, & Ewor, 2016; Ogunode & Abubakar (2020; Ogunode, & Abubakar, 2020m).

2.2.7 Insecurity

Another challenge facing the management of public universities in Nigeria is insecurity. Many public universities have been attacked and many lecturers and students killed. The attack on the public universities in Nigeria have led to closed down of many universities leading to disruption of 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. Insecurity challenges is posing great problem for university management in Nigeria (Ogunode, & Abubakar, 2020m; Ogunode & Abubakar 2020;, Ogunode, & Abubakar, 2020m).

2.2.7 Political Interference

Political interference is another major problem affecting effective management of the public universities in Nigeria. The government interfere with the activities of the public universities through their appointing politicians as governing councils. According to Adegbite (2007), 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. Besides, 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) argued that it has been observed that universities these days are not totally free from the hand of politics outside the university system. Government of the day, most especially in the state-owned varsities, interfere a lot in terms of selection and choice of the chief executive, deans, departmental heads, directors of programmes and above all the selection of vice-chancellors. A situation whereby the members of the university are not totally free to choose who their head without government intervention become would not augur well for the university system.

3.0 Ways Forward for effective Management of Higher Institutions in Nigeria

The higher institutions are very important to the development of the entire country. The government ensure that the higher institutions in the country are properly managed. To address the various challenges facing the management of higher institutions, this article hereby suggests the following: adequate funding of higher institutions, employment of more lecturers, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, provision of security, de-politicisation of the higher institution and motivation of lecturers.

1. The government should increase the funding of the higher education in the country.
2. The government should employ more academic and non-academic staff in all the public universities in the country.
3. The government should provide adequate infrastructural facilities to cope with the current increased population enrolment in Higher education and provision of adequate funds for the construction and rehabilitation of collapsed buildings.
4. The government should fight all forms of insecurity in the country. The government should provide

adequate security to all the educational institutions in the country especially educational institutions in the Northeast Nigeria.

5. The government should grant full autonomy to all the higher institutions in the country especially the universities.

6. To improved management effectiveness of public universities in the country, the government should review the salaries and welfare packages of academic staff and non-academic staff.

4.0 Conclusion

The need for effective university management cannot be understated because the universities are saddled with the responsibilities of developing and producing of high-level manpower within the context of the needs of the nation. It has been seen that the university system, which is the bedrock of development in Nigeria is bisected with myriads of problems. These include: inadequate funding, inadequate lecturers, inadequate infrastructural facilities, brain-drain, strike actions, academic corruption, insecurity and political inferences. However, for meaningful management of public universities in Nigeria, the article hereby suggests the following: adequate funding of public universities, employment of more lecturers, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, provision of security, de-politicization of the public universities and motivation of lecturers.

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