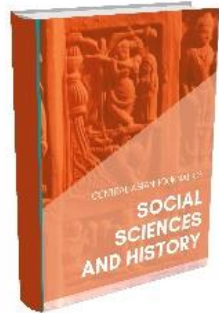




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Higher Education in Nigeria: Problems and Solutions

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ABSTRACT

This paper discussed the problems faced by the higher education in Nigeria. Many literatures were sorted and reviewed from both primary and secondary sources. These resources were from both physical libraries and online literatures. The paper identified that inadequate funding, inadequate academic staff, inadequate infrastructural facilities, brain-drain, insecurity, strike actions, corruption, political influence, Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) and inadequate data to plan, were the major problems facing the development of higher education in Nigeria. Many suggestions were advanced to solve these problems such as increment in higher education funding, employment of more academic staff, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, motivation of academic staff, provision of adequate security in all higher institutions, generation of current higher education data and granting autonomy to the higher institutions especially the universities to prevent political influences in the system.

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Introduction

Ogunode, Akinjobi, & Musa (2022) defined higher education as an organized educational system designed for global community of people with the aims of carrying out teaching, research and community service activities. Obanya (1999) in Ogunode, observed that higher education **includes**

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post-secondary institutions such as the polytechnics and colleges of education. “Higher Education” includes all forms of professional institutions drawing from the available pool of persons who have completed a various forms of secondary school education: Institution of the military, the police, nurses, agriculture, forestry, veterinary workers, catering services, tourism, secretarial services and other possible combinations of programme. Higher education deals **with** teaching, researching and providing community services. Higher education in Nigeria **includes** Colleges of education, polytechnics, mono-technics, advance professional institutions and the universities. Ogunode, (2020c) viewed Higher education as the post-secondary school education designed for the production of manpower. Higher education is an education that awards certificates after the completion of the programme. Higher education is the education that deals with teaching programme, research programme and community service programme. Higher education is the peak of educational institutions and it is an organized educational system that is meant to support the social, economic and political development of the country (Ogunode, 2020c).

The Nigerian higher education is the largest in Africa (**Ogunode, Akinjobi, & Musa** 2022). The Nigerian higher education is plagued with many problems (Ogunode 2020c; NEDS, 2014). This paper examines the various problems facing the higher education in Nigeria.

Problems Facing Public Higher Education in Nigeria

The following are the problems facing public higher education in Nigeria: inadequate funding, inadequate academic staff, inadequate infrastructural facilities, brain-drain, insecurity, strike actions, corruption, political influence, Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) and inadequate data to plan.

Inadequate Funding

Ajape, Ogunode, Jegede (2020); Ahaotu & Ogunode (2021); Ogunode, **Ukozor** & Iroegbu, (2022) and Ogunode, Akinjobi, & Musa, (2022) submitted that inadequate funding is one of the major problems facing the administration of public higher institutions in Nigeria. Ogunode (**2020a**) observed that the budgetary allocation for the administration of public universities in Nigeria is not adequate to implement the programme of universities in Nigeria. 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. Wahab (2022) observed that Nigeria has not been able to meet international standards regarding budgetary provisions for education and even has been doing far less than some of her neighbouring countries. In six years, Nigeria budgeted N3.6 trillion out of N55.3 trillion for education. The period covers the year 2016 to 2021. Wahab (2022) noted that in 2016, out of the total budget of N6.06 trn, the sum of N369.6 billion or 6.7% of the budget was allocated to public education. In 2017, N550 bn or 7.38% was allocated to education out of N7.29 trn budget, while in 2018, N605.8 bn or 7.04 % was given to education out of N9.2 trn budget. In 2019, N620 bn or 7.05% was allocated to education out of the budget of N8.92 trn, while in 2020, N671.07 bn or 6.7% was given education out of N10.33 trn budget. In 2021, N742.5 bn or 5.6% was allocated to education out of a budget of N13.6 trn. On the other hand, according to reports by the World Bank, Ghana allocated 23.81% of its national budget for education in 2015, 22.09% in 2016, 20.1% in 2017 and 18.6% in 2018. For South Africa, it has kept increasing allocations to the education sector from R246 billion or 16.7 % in 2018, R310bn in 2019, R

387bn in 2020 and projected that it hit R416 bn by 2023/24 (Wahab (2022), Vanguard, 2022). The factors responsible for inadequate funding of public universities in Nigeria according to Victoria & Owuama, (2016) and Ogunode (2020a) and Okani, Ogunode & Ajape (2021) include lack of political will, corruption, increase in population, inflation, fall in national revenue and poor financial planning and 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, NEEDS, 2014). Ogunode (2020c) observed that the shortage of academic staff 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. NEEDS (2014) observed that **they** reported that 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. The understaffing of universities in Nigeria has serious implications for quality instruction and academic productivity in the institutions. NEEDS, (2014) and Federal Ministry of Education (2012) report noted that 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. This problem of inadequate teachers in public universities is caused by underfunding of the universities, corruptions, brain-drain, poor motivation, un-conducive working environment and lack of manpower planning. The effects of shortage of academic staff include high **student-teacher** ratio, poor learning, poor delivery of teaching, low productivities and poor quality of education (Ogunode & Adamu 2021; Ogunode & Musa 2021 and NEEDS 2014).

Inadequate Infrastructural Facilities

Inadequate infrastructural facilities is a very big problem facing public higher institutions in Nigeria (Okebukola, (2018); Ogunode, Akinlade & Musa, (2021); Ogunode, **Ukozor** & Iroegbu,(2022); Ishaya & Ogunode (2021); Ogunode & Ishaya 2021a). Ahaotu & Ogunode (2021) observed that many public universities in Nigeria do not have adequate infrastructural facilities. Infrastructural facilities **refer** 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 **lecture** halls, laboratories and offices for both students and academic staff. Ebehikhalu, & Dawam (2017) and Ehichoya, & Ogunode (2020) and Ogunode, Jegede & Abubakar, (2020) submitted that many academic and non-academic staff do not have offices and **paradventure** they **have**, one is **being** 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 **hostel** accommodations (Ogunode, Yiolokun, & Akeredolu, 2019; Ogunode & Abubakar, 2020). The factors responsible for inadequate infrastructural facilities in Nigerian public universities include; underfunding, **increase** 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 (Ogunode & Atobauka, 2021a). Brain-drain according to Ogunode (2020c) refers to the movement of professionals from developing countries to developed countries **for 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. Biodun Ogunyemi, the former President, ASUU, noted that Ethiopia 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 (Tribuneonline, 2020). Factors responsible for Brain-drain in the Nigerian public universities according Ogunode (2020c) and Ogunode & Atobauka, (2021a) include; poor motivation, unconducive working environment, insecurity, underfunding and political interferences and the implication of brain-drain include; shortage of lecturers, poor quality of education and high student-teacher ratio.

Insecurity

Insecurity is another problem affecting the activities of public higher institutions in Nigeria. Nigeria is facing insecurity challenge and this is affecting the entire educational institutions in the country (Ogunode & Musa, 2020; Ogunode, Ahmed, Gregory & Abubakar (2020)). Many public universities located in the Northern Nigeria have been victims of continuous attacks (Ogunode, Okwelogu, Enyinnaya & Yahaya 2021). Ogunode, Jegede & Abubakar (2020); Ogunode, Jegede, Adah, Audu, Ajape (2020); Ogunode, **Ukozor** & Iroegbu,(2022) and Ohiare **Udebu, Ogunode & Rauf** (2021) observed that 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. The insecurity affecting the higher institutions has led to unstable academic calendar, destruction of infrastructural facilities, and suspension of teaching, research and community services. Obi, (2015) and Ogunode, Okwelogu, Enyinnaya & Yahaya (2021) 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 students, lecturers and non-teaching staff lives and properties have been lost and a large number of citizens rendered homeless.

Strike Actions

Strike actions is another problem hindering the development of higher institutions in Nigeria (Ogunode 2020a; Ogunode& Musa 2020; Ogunode, **Ukozor** & Iroegbu,(2022); Ogunode, **Ukozor** & Jegede 2022). The Nigerian public universities are known for continuous strike actions by different union

groups in the public universities. 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. Also, Ogunode (2020) identified 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. Lawal & Ogunode (2021) noted that unstable academic programme, reduction in quality of education, responsible foreign education, capital flight, learning of foreign culture, brain-drain, social vices among students and resources/educational wastage were the effects of strike on higher institutions in Nigeria. Ogunode (2020c) observed that 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. Also, Ogunode, **Ukozor** & Jegede (2022) noted that that strike actions in the Nigerian higher institutions had led to the suspension of the teaching programme, research programme, community service programme and programme accreditation of the various higher institutions. Ogunode, **Ukozor** & Jegede (2022) concluded that strike actions led to poor rating of higher institutions, reduction in internally generated revenue of the higher institutions, reduction in the quality of higher education, prolonged academic calendar, poor academic performance of students and brain-drain.

Corruption

Corruption in the public universities in Nigeria is another problem preventing effective administration of public higher institutions in Nigeria (Godwin 2017; Ogunode 2020c; Ogunode & Ahaotu 2021; Ajape, Ogunode, Jegede 2020). 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 (Ogunode, Ahaotu & Jegede, 2022). 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. Ololube (2016) and Ogunode, Josiah & Ajape (2021) concluded that the effects of corruption on the public university administration in Nigeria include reduction of funds for administrative functions, shortage of infrastructural facilities, shortage of academic staff, poor quality of education, resources wastage, increase in administrative cost, hampering development of public universities and resulting to poor image of public universities in international communities.

Political Influence

Another big challenge facing the administration of public universities in Nigeria is the political influence (Ogunode & Ajape 2021; Ogunode, & Omenuko, 2021). The public universities have been designed to function with political **office** holders or **politicians** 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 & Musa, (2020)** observed that the activities of these governing councils **are** 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 **as** selection of VCs and other principal officers of the universities. This practice is seriously jeopardizing the administrations of universities in Nigeria. **Ogunode & Musa, (2020a)** concluded that political influence is manifested in the administration of public tertiary institutions in the following ways: employment/recruitment of staff, the appointment of school administrators (VCs, Bursar, and Registrar), planning and establishment of public universities, location of universities, appointment of council members, expansion of National Universities Commission powers and admission of students into the various public universities. **Ogunode & Musa, (2020a)** identified corruption, overconcentration of public universities, poor leadership, uneven development of public universities, and poor ranking of public universities as effects of political influence on the administration of Nigerian public universities.

Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS)

Lawal & Ogunode (2021) observed that Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) was introduced by the federal government and made it compulsory for all agencies, ministries and the higher institutions to enroll for their salaries and other **payments**. There had been resistance by ASUU to the introduction of the IPPIS into the university system. But the Federal Government continually insisted that the payment system was for transparency and neither intended to trample upon university autonomy nor designed to subsume the university into the civil service. But the union insisted that the system would harm the universities. ASUU President, Biodun Ogunyemi, said, "We challenge them to tell us anywhere in the world where IPPIS is implemented in the universities. IPPIS will shut the door against foreign scholars, contract officers and researchers that we need most dearly. We are opening new universities every day. Ask them how many competent scholars they have in the pool. They have to poach from existing universities." The ASUU developed and offered an alternative payment system, the University Transparency Account System, which it said would equally meet the transparency and accountability requirements of the IPPIS. But after a series of mutually destructive name-calling and blackmail, both parties appear ready for constructive dialogue. Strike **occurs** due to so many reasons such as negotiation, procedural matters, probationary period of service, disciplinary procedure, principles of redundancy, professional examinations, various unpaid claims, staff loan, pension and gratuity scheme; salaries and wages, leave, acting allowance, inconveniences allowance, out of station

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expenses, medical scheme, sickness benefit etc (Ohiwerei and Omo-Ojugo, 2008).

Inadequate Data to Plan

Inadequate data on higher education in Nigeria is another problem facing the planning of public higher institutions in Nigeria (Ogunode 2020c; Ogunode, & Omenuko, 2021; Ogunode & Ajape 2021). There is limited data on higher 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 according Ogunode & Ajape (2021) 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 and discovered that among others factors, 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 programme.

Solutions

To solve the challenges facing the higher education in Nigeria, the following were suggested:

- 1) The government should increase the funding of public higher institutions in the country;
- 2) The government should direct the various higher institutions to employ according to their needs;
- 3) The government should provide special fund for the infrastructural facilities development in the various higher institutions;
- 4) The government should increase the salaries of academic and non-academic staff in all the higher institutions to prevent brain-drain challenges **and corruption of all kinds** in the system;
- 5) The government should provide adequate security in all higher institutions in the country;
- 6) The government should ensure all agreement with different unions groups are implemented to avoid strike actions in the various higher institutions
- 7) The government should direct all her anti-corruption agencies to monitor all the financial resources released to all the higher institutions in the country to prevent looting and diversion;
- 8) The government should grant full autonomy to the higher institutions to prevent political influence of the system; and
- 9) The government should improve the capacity of data generating agencies in the country to ensure generation of current and adequate data for all higher institutions to enable for effective planning of higher education in Nigeria;

Conclusion

Higher education is the key to the socio-economic and technological advancement of any country. Higher education is the institutions saddled with the responsibilities of manpower production and development. It is expected that the issue of higher education should be a priority to the government. It is unfortunate that Nigerian higher education is beset with many problems such as inadequate funding, inadequate academic staff, inadequate infrastructural facilities, brain-drain, insecurity, strike actions, corruption, political influence, Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) and inadequate data to plan. It is high time for the government **woke up and addressed** all the problems

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facing the higher education in Nigeria by the increment of the funding of higher education, employment of more academic staff, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, motivation of academic staff, provision of adequate security in all higher institutions, generation of current higher education data and granting autonomy to the higher institutions especially the universities to prevent political influences in the system.

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