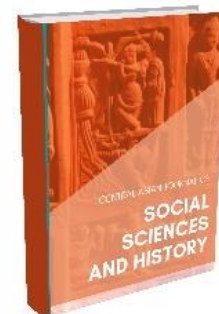




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A Critical Review of Problems Facing Higher Education in North-East Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria

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Abstract:

Higher education is the education after secondary school education. One of its objectives is for human resources development and training. Higher institutions in Nigeria are spread across the entire geo-political zone. The North- East political zone is home to many higher institutions both private and public. The public higher institutions in the zone are faced with many problems. This paper examined the problems public higher institutions are facing in North- East political zone of Nigeria. Qualitative and quantitative data were used in the paper. The concluded that, inadequate funding, insecurity, shortage of academic staff, corruption, inadequate infrastructural facilities, Brain-drain and strike actions were some of the problems higher institutions in the North- East political zone were faced with. In order to address these problems, the paper recommended that both federal and state government should increase the funding of public higher institutions in the region, more academic staff should be recruited and more infrastructure facilities should be provided. Lecture should be motivated and agreement reached with trade unions should be implemented and anti-corruption agencies should be deployed to higher institutions in the zone with aims of fighting corruption in the institutions.

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Introduction

Nigeria positions as the tenth biggest country on the planet, and by a long shot the biggest country in Africa. Found north of the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa, Nigeria is verged on the east by Cameroon, on the upper east by Chad, on the north by Niger Republic, and on the west by the Republic of Benin. Nigeria is separated geo-politically into six districts: North-Central, North-East, North-West, South-East, South-South and South-West, with the North-East being the most educationally backward and the most vulnerable to insecurity, poverty, illiteracy and lack of social amenities (Ogunode, Adegboyega & Olatunde-Aiyedun, 2022).

North-East political zone is significant to the development of Nigeria. The zone is highly populated which meant readymade market. World-Bank (2017) observed that in the North East and North West, two-thirds of the population is in farming and wage jobs are only 10 percent of total employment (compared to only one in five workers in South West in farming and one in four in wage work). Whereas 40 percent of the labor force in the North has never attended school, in the South the proportion of the labor force without any education is around 20 percent. In agriculture in particular, considered an important growth sector for the country, nearly 45 percent of the labor force has never attended school.

Higher education is designed in Nigeria to among other thing produce manpower for the socio-economic and technological advancement of the country. Higher education has been defined by different people (Ogunode, Okwelogu & Olatunde-Aiyedun, 2021). Higher education is an advance education system designed for the production of manpower and to improve the development of the societies through advanced teaching, researching and provision of community services. Higher education is an education meant to transform the societies through the production of qualified manpower and constant teaching, researching and community services. *Higher education* is any of planned and organized types of education given in postsecondary institutions of learning which focus more on teaching, researching and community service. *Higher education* is third level education after secondary school education. It takes places at advance institutions such as universities. *Higher education* is *tertiary education* and planned education leading to award of an academic degree. *Higher education*, also called post-secondary education and third-level education that occurs at a university, college, or institute after secondary school education (Ogunode & Aiyedun, 2020). The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) in the National Policy on Education (NPE) viewed tertiary education as the education given after Post Basic Education in institutions such as Universities and Inter-University Centres such as the Nigeria French Language Village, Nigeria Arabic Language Village, National Institute of Nigerian Languages, institutions such as Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs), and Colleges of Education, Monotechnics, Polytechnics, and other specialized institutions such as Colleges of Agriculture, Schools of Health and Technology and the National Teachers' Institutes (NTI).

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) in the National Policy on Education also stated that the goals of Tertiary Education include to: Contribute to national development through high level manpower training; provide accessible and affordable quality learning opportunities in formal and informal education in response to the needs and interests of all Nigerians; provide high quality career counseling and lifelong learning programmes that prepare students with the knowledge and skills for self-reliance and the world of work; reduce skill shortages through the production of skilled manpower

relevant to the needs of the labour market; promote and encourage scholarship, entrepreneurship and community service; forge and cement national unity; and promote national and international understanding and interaction (NPE, 2013).

The objective of higher education also include; to provide post-secondary school education, to advance teaching in a specialize programme of learning; to advance research with the view of providing solutions to current challenges facing humanity; to provide life learning programme opportunities for the people; to aid the production of manpower to all the sector of the economy locally and globally; to provide community service that would impact of the communities positively; to unite and cement national unity and international cooperation. Higher education in North-East geo-political zone is faced with many challenges. It is against this back ground that this paper aimed to discuss the challenges facing higher education in North-East geo-political zone of Nigeria.

Literature Review

Problems Facing Higher Education in North-East Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria

Inadequate funding, insecurity, shortage of academic staff, corruption, inadequate infrastructural facilities, Brain-drain and strike actions

1. Inadequate Funding

Higher education in the Nigerian North-east is faced with the problem of inadequate funding. Both the state and federal higher institutions are not properly funded. Local media reported the visit of the ASUU officials to one of the state owned higher institution and the ASUU official lamented the poor funding of the institutions (Dailytrust, 2021). Also, the federal higher institutions located in the zone are underfunded (Ogunode, Olugbenga, & Ezema, 2022; Ogunode, Ugochukwu & Iroegbu, 2022). Ogunode and Adanna, (2022); Ogunode, Johnson and Olatunde-Aiyedun, (2022) observed that the budgetary allocation for the management of federal universities in Nigeria which including the North-east zone is not adequate. Ogunode (2020) observed that the university system requires a lot of funds for effective administration to be able realized its 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, Ahme, Gregory & Abubakar 2020; Ogunode & Abubakar, 2020). The poor funding of public universities in Nigeria is responsible for the poor quality of education and decay infrastructural facilities. Ogunode (2020) and Ogunode, Abubakar and Ajape (2021) outlined 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. Olowonefa, Ogunode and Ohibime (2022), and Ogunode (2020) also stated that 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.

2. Insecurity

The latest effort by both the state and federal government in tackling the problem of insecurity in the North especially in the North-East Nigeria is helping to restoring normalcy in the academic calendar of higher institutions especially the universities. For the past ten years, insecurity have been a major challenge in the zone. Ogunode, Okwelogu, Elechukwu and Yhaya (2021) and Ogunode (2020) observed 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. Garba, Ogunode, Musa and Ahmed (2022) submitted that the insecurity problem in the North-east states have affected the academic programme of tertiary institutions across the region. The continuation attacks by Boko Haram members and bandits in different occasions have led to the suspension of academic programme in the zone. Also, Musa (2018) noted that the attacks on University of Maiduguri have led to suspension of teaching programme several times. Higher institutions are closed down whenever there is an insecurity problem within the campuses caused by either internal or external actors. Ogunode, et al. (2021) posited that the attacks on tertiary institutions in Nigeria and attacks on academic staff across the country has led to disruption of academic activities of the institutions.

3. Shortage Academic Staff

Higher institutions especially the universities in North-East zone are also faced with the problems of shortage of academic staff. Ogunode, Akinjobi and Musa (2022); Ogunode, Akin-Ibidiran and Ibidiran (2022); Ajemba, Ahmed, Ogunode and Olatunde-Aiyedun (2021); Ogunode and Ndayebom (2022) observed that in Nigeria one of the major challenges facing the higher institutions in Nigeria is lack of adequate personnel. Ogunode (2020) submitted that 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). Ogunode and Adamu (2021), and Ogunode (2020) opined that 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 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. NEEDS (2014) observed that 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.

4. Corruption

Corruption in the management of some higher institutions in the region is another major problem affecting the development of higher institutions in the North-east geo-political zone. There are many corruption allegations against some principals officers in some of the higher institutions across the zone. For instance, Abdullahi (2020) reported allegation of corruption against the management of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University (ATBU), Bauchi while Dailynewstime (2022) reported of Allegations of Corruption, Maladministration at FUDMA. Guardian (2021) also reported that the former vice chancellor of Federal University, Gusau, was detained by the anti-graft agency after he honoured an invitation in relation to his involvement in a case of abuse of office, corrupt practices and contract scam. A competent source at the anti-graft agency disclosed that he had fraudulently obtained the sum of Two Hundred and Sixty Million Naira (N260, 000,000) from a contractor, Alhaji Shehu Sambo, owner of Ministaco Nigeria Limited, on the pretext that the University was going to award his company a contract worth N3, 000,000,000 (Three Billion Naira) for the construction of perimeter Wall Fence around the institution which never materialised in 2018 (Guardian, 2021). Corruption is a general problem in the administration of university education in Nigeria (Ololube (2016), Ahmodu and Sofoluwe (2018), and 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) also 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. Ogunode, Akinjobi and Olatunde-Aiyedun (2022) noted that the effects of corruption on the public university administration in Nigeria include the following: 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.

5. Inadequate Infrastructural Facilities

Another major challenge facing the higher institutions in North-East zone is the problem of shortage of infrastructural facilities. Facilities are very critical for the development of higher education. Infrastructural facilities according to Ogunode (2020) are facilities aiding the 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 (Ogunode 2020). Ogunode, Ajape and Jegede (2020), and Olamoyegun, Olatunde-Aiyedun and Ogunode (2022) lamented that 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). Iroegbu, Abashi and Ogunode (2021) submitted that some public universities in the region are faced with shortage of facilities such as male and female hotels, lecture halls, laboratories, and libraries. Others are unstable power supply, poor internet services and inadequate water supply. Baba and Abubakar (2015) observed that the nature of the proximity of north-eastern states of Nigeria

to countries like Cameroun, Chad and Niger, it is expected that the economy of the region would enjoy greater growth and development. But this is not the case in this region of the country. Decaying nature of facilities ranging from collapse roads and inadequate electricity and water supply in the region are strangulating the velocity of economic growth of the region. Ogunode, Somadina, Yahaya and Olatunde-Aiyedun (2021) noted that inadequate infrastructural facilities in Nigerian public universities include; underfunding, increased in students population, corruption, poor infrastructural facilities planning, poor supervision and inflation are factors responsible for inadequate redeployment of infractural resources in the zone. 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.

6. Brain-Drain

The problem of brain-drain is another major challenge to the higher institutions especially the universities in the zone. Musa (2014) submitted that many teachers and lecturers are leaving the religion because of insecurity problems. Brain-drain according to Ogunode (2020) is 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. Due to the high rate of insecurity in the zone many academic and non -academic staff are leaving the North-east zone. Generally, brain-drain problem is a major problem facing the Nigerian higher education (Ogunode & Abubakar, 2021). Report by Tribune (2020) submitted 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). Ogunode (2020) lamented that 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 mass movement of academicians from the Nigerian public universities is affecting the administration of the universities because academic staffers are very important for the implementation of universities' programme. Factors responsible for Brain-drain according to Ogunode and Ishaya (2021), and Ogunode (2020) in the Nigerian public universities include; poor motivation, unconducive working environment, insecurity, underfunding and political interferences and the implication of brain-drain in the Nigerian public universities include; shortage of lecturers, poor quality of education and high student-teacher ratio.

7. Strike Actions

Dailypost (2019) reported that Academic activities at the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi have been paralyzed following the five-day national warning strike embarked upon by the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU) and the Non-Academic Staff Union of Universities (NASU). The two unions under the umbrella of the Joint Action Committee (JAC) of ATBU said that they are withdrawing their services following the directives by their national leadership in order to press home their demands from the federal government. Okoli, Ogbondah, and Ewor (2016); Ogunode and Musa (2020); Ogunode 2020; and Ogunode and Isaac (2021) observed that strike actions in the Nigerian public universities are not a new thing rather it has become part and parcel of the system. 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 according Ogunode, Jegede, Adah, Audu, Ajape (2020); Ogunode, Ugochukwu and Jegede (2022); Ogunode, et al. (2021); and Olatunde-Aiyedun, Ogunode and Ohiosumua (2021) included that underfunding of the public universities, inadequate infrastructural facilities, poor implementation of agreement reached with union groups and poor working condition and 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.

Recommendations

To solve the challenges, the following were recommended:

1. Federal and state government should increase the funding of public higher institutions in the region;
2. Employ more academic staff in all public higher institutions in the region;
3. Provide adequate infrastructural facilities to all the public higher institutions in the zone;
4. Provide adequate security in all public higher institutions in the region and address all issues causing insecurity in the zone;
5. Direct all its anti-corruption agencies to monitor all the funds released to the all public higher institutions in the region;
6. Motivate all the academic staff by increasing their salaries and welfare packages;
7. Ensure agreement reached with different union groups in the all public higher institutions in the region;

Conclusion

This article highlighted some problems experienced in higher education, especially the public and private universities in the North-East political zone of Nigeria. Qualitative and quantitative data were reviewed in the paper. It was concluded that, inadequate funding, insecurity, shortage of academic staff, corruption, inadequate infrastructural facilities, brain-drain academic system and strike actions were some of the problems faced by higher institutions in the zone. In order to address these problems, the paper recommended that the Federal Government should increase the funding of public higher institutions in the region for a conducive learning environment. This may help to retain lecturers and non-teaching staff to remain in the zones despite the security challenges, and may also encourage the enrolment of new students from other states in Nigeria when adequate infrastructures are available.

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