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Subsidy Removal and Academic Staff Job Performance in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

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Abstract:

The paper examined the impact of subsidy removal on academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Secondary data were used to support various points raised in the paper. The secondary data were collected from online and print publications. The paper concluded that subsidy removal in Nigeria negatively affected academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions across the country. Based on this discovery, the paper recommended that government should provide buses for all tertiary institutions to aid movement of academic staff, Government should increase the salaries of academic staff and increase budgetary allocation of research programme in tertiary institutions.

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Introduction: The Nigerian economy has been subsidized in various ways for many years and this includes petrol, education, electricity, forex etc. Petrol subsidies began in the 1970s and became institutionalized in 1977, following the promulgation of the Price Control Act which made it illegal for some products (including petrol) to be sold above the regulated price. While the concept of subsidy itself is noble, its administration in Nigeria has been plagued with serious allegations of corruption and mismanagement. Subsidy removal is the termination and willingness of government or institutions to stop partial or full payment on goods and services enjoyed by its citizens or staff through reduction of prices or non-payment before and allowing the citizens or staff to bear the full burden of payment

(Kasimu and Ogunode,2023). Subsidy removal is the act of allowing people to pay fully or partially for services and products they once enjoyed privileged of not paying for fully or partially. Ogunode and Aregbesola (2023a) viewed subsidy removal as an official elimination of subsidies on products formerly subsidized. They also captured subsidy removal as the decision of government or institutions to stop payment of subsidies on products or services previously subsidized. Subsidy removal is the stoppage of subsidy regime in an institutions or country. Subsidy removal is the policy of liberating the prices of goods and service to be regulated by the forces of demand and supply (Ogunode et al 2023a).

The objectives of subsidy removal as capture by Ogunode and Omolewa (2023) includes; to increase government savings and revenue, to aid infrastructure facilities development, to stop corruption in the management of subsidy payment, to liberate the economy to be more competitive, to increase investment in other critical sectors of the economy, to eliminate wastages. Subsidy was removed from petroleum products in Nigeria by the new administration that came to power in May 2023 headed by His Excellency, Bola Ahmed Tinubu. The removal of subsidies on petroleum products affected all educational institutions especially the tertiary institutions which is the most complex and most expensive form of education globally.

Tertiary institutions according to Ogunode, Edinoh and Okolie (2023) is an education designed for post-secondary education. Tertiary education is a social agents of progress and development in the society and aids technological advancement. Tertiary education is defined by National Policy on Education (2013) 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). Also, tertiary education or higher education according to Alamo (2018),covers a wider range of higher learning institutions including the university. These higher learning institutions could be organized in different ways, commonly within a university and in a separate institution as university and other tertiary learning institutions.

The goals of tertiary education according to the FGN National Policy on Education (2013), shall be 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 selfreliance 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.

Tertiary education is structured to engage the services of academic staff, non-academic staff and researchers. Ogunode, Jegede, and Abubakar, (2020c) viewed Academic staff as faculty members that are key components of tertiary institutions, especially in the universities. Academic staff as the name implies are professionals who handle the teaching, and research programmes of higher institutions and also perform other academic services. The role of academic staff in the development of higher institutions cannot be underestimated because the academic staff are the implementers of instruction in educational institutions.

Functions of academic staff according to Ogunode et al (2020c) includes; teaching at undergraduate and graduate level in areas allocated by the Head of Department and reviewed from time to time by the Head of Department; carrying out research and producing publications, or other research outputs, in line with personal objectives agreed in the Staff review process; to obtain research funding support; to engage with the broader scholarly and professional communities; to supervise or assist with supervision of undergraduate, teach graduate (Masters) or research graduate (MPhil/PhD) students; to contribute to the development, planning and implementation of a high-quality curriculum. According to Ogunode and Adamu (2021), academic staff assists in the development of learning materials, preparing schemes of work and maintaining records to monitor student progress, achievement and attendance. According to Uchenna, Maureen and Anthony(2018) and Goodall(2013), the teaching role involves preparing and delivering lectures, supervising students in industrial training, final year projects, postgraduate students, marking assessments and grading scripts. Other functions include the development and promotion of innovative teaching methods, consultation with students and production of teaching materials for students. The research role involves carrying out investigations on the identified problem(s), presentation of the findings of such investigations in conferences/seminars and publishing the findings in journals and/or textbooks. The third role involves rendering services both to the school and the community at large. Such services include heading a department, faculty, committee, external supervision, advisor of student societies, and members of other recognized committees at departmental, faculty and university levels –for example; sports, graduation and convocation. Teaching and research are the core functions of a lecturer and their qualities can be improved by hiring the best scholars and empowering them with good incentives. Academic staff are employed to perform specific job functions and tasks in a tertiary institutions. The job performance of academic staff is crucial for the development of tertiary institutions.

Academic Staff Job Performance

Academic staff job performance is the total performance of teaching, researching and community services responsibilities an academic staff has carried out and still carrying in the institutions that are employed at a particular time (Ogunode and Eimuhi 2023). Academic staff job performance is the general record of tasks carried out by an academic staff to be compared to the assigned responsibilities and functions given to them. Academic staff job performance can also be seen as the measuring of specific and general tasks given to faculty in institutions and which they are expected to carry out within a specific timeline (Ogunode et al 2023). The job performance of academic staff are numerous but limited to only three namely; teaching, researching and community service programme.

Impact of Subsidy Removal on Academic Staff Job Performance

Teaching Programme

Teaching is the act of imparting knowledge on someone or a group of people. It is the process of behaviour modification. Teaching programme of tertiary institutions cover a lot of educational activities meant to improve students' understanding. Teaching programme in tertiary institution is ranked number one due to its importance to the development of tertiary institutions. Teaching programme is carried out in all tertiary institutions and it is the only method of passing instruction to students. Teaching programme implementation involves many things. Academic staff are the implementers of teaching programmes in tertiary institutions. Subsidy removal in Nigeria affected academic staff movement and this also affected teaching programme implementation. Ogunode and Aregbesola (2023),Darlington and Monday (2023)and Okonkwo (2023)submitted that the removal of

fuel subsidies has a negative effect on various services that rely heavily on transportation and affected academic staff movement to universities to deliver lectures in their various universities across the country. With the removal of fuel subsidies, the cost of diesel and petrol used in public and private vehicles has risen. As a result, transportation companies, including buses, taxis, and motorcycles have increase their fares to offset the higher fuel costs. This has directly affected many academic and non-academic staff who bear the burden of increased transportation expenses.

Research Programme

Research is regarded as the second most important part of the academic programme after the theoretical background. They are carried out to advance the social, economic and technological development of their immediate community and society at large; research is conducted by both staff and students in the university system. Students do their research work as part of their academic programme while staff do research based on their individual interests and specializations. Academic research enhances the intellectual base of researchers while also priming them for promotions and societal recognition. Because of the significance of research, universities are expected to invest heavily on research and conduct research on pressing society challenges (Akinwale, Ogundari, Olaopa and Siyanbola 2012; Babalola, 2014; Ogunode and Ade (2023). Ogunode, Jegede, Adah, Audu, and Ajape (2021b) and Paul (2015) submitted that the conduct of research is one of the basic functions of tertiary institutions. Research is mostly conducted in higher institutions to solve extant problems pertinent to the society (Ajoku, 2006 and Afolayan 2009; Yusuf, 2012; Akin 2013). Subsidy removal in Nigeria also affected Research programme of tertiary institutions in different ways. For instance, Ogunode and Ukozor (2023) opined that subsidy removal in Nigeria have led to increased cost in carrying out research programme in most tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Kasimu, and Ogunode (2023) noted that researchers are also affected by the removal of the fuel subsidy, as they have to pay more for transportation to and from workplace. Many researchers rely on public transport, such as buses, taxis and motorcycles, which have also increased their fares due to the higher cost of fuel. Some researchers may have to spend more than half of their salaries on transportation alone, leaving little for other expenses such as food, rent and health care. Also, Ogunode and Chukwuemeka (2023) maintained that subsidy removal in Nigeria have led to reduction in publication of finding in both local and international journals. Research publications is one of the functions of academic staff and researchers. Publications in journals both local and international are used to promote and assess the academic staff job performance and productivity. Project clue (2023) observed that the effects of subsidy removal on academic research include disruptions of seminars, presentations, and conferences due to the high cost of transportation and other extra costs of making such effects visible. Furthermore, some academic researchers who do not get support from cooperating organizations may even stop researching since they do not have enough funds to fuel their continuous research.

Community Services Programme

Ogunode, Iyabode and Olatunde-Aiyedun (2022) defined community service programme as the third cardinal programme of the tertiary institutions. Community service programme is an organized and planned service programme of higher institutions for the benefit and betterment of their host community. Community service programme of higher institutions are community inclined services initiated by the institutions to develop the communities. Kasimu and Ogunode (2023) lamented that the cost of providing community service by universities in Nigeria have gone high due to subsidy removal

on fuel. For instance, there is an increase in the cost of providing health care services through Medical Colleges and allied programmes to host communities because of increase in transportation cost. These free medical services, included free eye screening, diabetes and high blood pressure checks. Universities also provided organised medical outreaches towards sensitizing the public on prevalent diseases like sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), diabetes, hepatitis, high blood pressure, counselling outreach programmes such as lifestyle, family & interpersonal relationships and awareness on sickle cell disease. Also cost of providing sanitation services to host communities have been increase because of subsidy removal. Also, the cost of implementing community service that involves the universities in providing skills acquisition centers that targeted the women, youths and vulnerable groups with trainings and workshops in various agricultural practice, arts and crafts.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper discussed the impact of subsidy removal on academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It was concluded that subsidy removal in Nigeria negatively affected academic staff job performance in tertiary institutions across the country. Based on this discovery, the paper recommended that government should provide buses for all tertiary institutions to aid movement of academic staff, Government should increase the salaries of academic staff and increase budgetary allocation of research programme in tertiary institutions.

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