Universities Management in Nigeria: Problems, Prospects and Solutions

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Abstract: Nigerian higher education is the largest in Africa. The Nigerian higher education include 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, Polytechnics, and other specialized institutions such as Colleges of Agriculture, Schools of Health and Technology and the National Teachers' Institutes (NTI). The public universities in Nigeria are not performing well. The management of public universities is plagued with many problems. This paper examined the various problems hindering the effective management of public universities. Secondary data and primary data were employed in the paper. The paper identified inadequate funding, inadequate academic staff, inadequate facilities, insecurity, strike actions, brain-drain and corruption as challenges hindering management of public universities in Nigeria. Based on these problems, it was recommended that the government should increase the funding of public universities.

Keywords: Academic, Brain-drain, Management, University, Public, Strike.

INTRODUCTION

Management is the process of planning, coordinating, controlling, leading and organizing the efforts of organizational staff and using the organizational resources to achieve the set goals. Nwachukwu (1988) defined management as the coordination of all the resources of an organization through the process of planning, organizing, directing and controlling in order to attain organizational objectives. Management according to Mgbodile (1986) simply means the process or method whereby a group of people at the top level of the government plan, organize, communicate, co-ordinate, control and directs the actions and activities of those who work in an organization in order to achieved the stated objectives of the organization. Management according to Peretomode (1996) is a social or interaction process involving a sequence of coordinated events – planning, organizing, coordinating and controlling or leading in order to use available resources to achieve a desired outcome in the fastest and most efficient way. Obi (2003) management involves the strategy of innovation, initiating change, creative problem solving, and decision making. It also involves actively seeking out alternatives and opportunities, reformulating goals, and priorities, redepolying resources, negotiating and resolving conflicts. It involves dynamic or active leadership diplomacy, statesmanship and a high degree of risk taking and entrepreneurship.

Educational management According to Akpakwuru (2012) is the ability of educational managers to judiciously use human, material, time and financial resources towards achieving the goals of education. The educational goals of any nation can be attained through congenial school management which includes proper planning, organizing, coordinating, staffing, budgeting, controlling, maintenance of sound school discipline among staff and students in the secondary schools, administrators are charged with the management of finance, time, human and material resources in order to achieve the aims and objectives of their institutions. Educational management covers early childhood and basic education, secondary school education and
tertiary education which include the universities

Aiyedun et al. (2021) opined that public tertiary institutions are institutions established by the law of the parliament to provide a public higher education for the people within the country. Tertiary Education is 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) (FRN, 2013).

The goals of Tertiary Education 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 prepares 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 (FRN, 2013).

Tertiary Educational institutions shall pursue these goals through: Quality student intake; quality teaching and learning; research and development; high standards in the quality of facilities, services and resources; staff welfare and development programmes; provision of a more practical based curriculum relevant to the needs of the labour market; generation and dissemination of knowledge, skills and competencies that contribute to national and local economic goals which enable students to succeed in a knowledge-based economy; a variety of flexible learning modes including full-time, part time, block release, day-release, and sandwich programmes; access to training funds such as those provided by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF), Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TET Fund); Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) that is well structured, coordinated and supervised; maintenance of minimum educational standards through appropriate regulatory agencies; an all-inclusive credible admissions policy for national unity; supporting affordable, equitable access to tertiary education through scholarships and students’ loans; inter-institutional co-operation and linkages; and dedicated services to the community through extra-mural and extension services (NPE, 2013). The realization of the objectives of tertiary education hinges on the effective management availability of human and material resources.

University management is the act of systematically planning, organizing, controlling, coordinating and supervising both human and materials resources of the university for the realization of the university’ programme. University management is the process of planning, coordinating, controlling, leading and organizing the efforts of university staff and using the university’ resources to achieve university’ set goals.

Ekundayo and Ajayi (2009) posited that 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 and Ajayi (2009) and Ibukun (1997), observed 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 while Ekundayo and Ajayi (2009) and Okojie (2007) submitted that the NUC activities in improving quality of university education in the country include: Accreditation of courses, Approval of courses and programmes. Maintenance of minimum academic standards, Monitoring of universities, giving guidelines for setting up of universities, Monitoring of private universities, Prevention of the establishment of illegal campus and implementing appropriate sanctions.

Ekundayo & Ajayi, (2009) observed that on the other hand, the internal management of each
Adequate funding

Funding is the life wire of any university system. Funding is key to effective management of universities. Without adequate funding no any meaningful university management can take place. It is sadden to hear that public universities are facing problem of adequate funding. Ogunode (2020) opined that inadequate funding is one of the major problems facing the administration of public universities in Nigeria. The budgetary allocation for the administration of public universities in Nigeria is not adequate to implement the programme of universities in Nigeria. The university system requires a lot of funds for effective administration to be able to realize it goals. The annual budgetary allocation for the administration of universities in Nigeria is grossly inadequate. The inability of the federal government to stick to the UNESCO 26% of national budget for education is affecting the management of Nigerian universities (Ogunode, 2020; Ogunode and Abubakar, 2020;Abubakar et al; 2020). The poor funding of public universities in Nigeria is responsible for the poor quality of education and decay infrastructural facilities. Ogunode & Onyekachi(2021) posited that the inability of the government to objectively implement the UNESCO 26% recommendation for the funding of education in Nigeria is contributing to the poor performance of the public universities in the country. The factors responsible for inadequate funding of public universities in Nigeria include lack of political will, corruption, increase in population, inflation, fall in national revenue and poor financial planning. The implications of underfunding of the public universities include; inadequate infrastructural facilities, shortage of academics staff, poor quality of education, brain-drain and strike action.

Inadequate Academic Staff

Adequate academic staff and non-academic staff are critical to effective university management. University managers needs adequate and qualified academic and non-academic staff to be able to effectively manage the universities. Ogunode and Adamu (2021) described academic staff as teaching staff in the higher institutions. Academic staff are the implementer of the school curriculum and lecture presenter. Academic staff are the teachers and deliver of instruction in the higher institutions. Academic staff are the knowledge and character builders imparter in the higher institution. The academic staff are the engine room of the higher institutions. They are the pillar and foundation of the higher institutions. The academic staff determines the quality of the higher institutions as well as proper solutions to Nation Economic and social problems e.g. Boko
haram and food security, COVID 19 and the economy. It is unfortunate that as important as academic staff to the survival of the university system that many public universities in Nigeria are faced with the problems of inadequacy of staff. Ogunode and Abubakar (2020) submitted that inadequate lecturers is a serious problem facing all the higher institutions in Nigeria. Ehichoya and Ogunode (2020) opined that many higher institutions do not have adequate lecturers to deploy for teaching in the various institutions. The shortage of lecturer is responsible for the poor quality of teaching and learning in most Nigerian higher institutions. Abubakar et al. (2020) also observed that teachers are fundamental to effective delivering of teaching programme in the educational institutions. Ogunode and Adamu (2021) identified; low productivities, poor quality of teaching, overcrowdings, poor quality of education as the effects of shortage of academic staff in the Nigerian public higher institutions.

Inadequate Facilities

Ajape et al; (2021) and Ogunode (2020) noted that inadequate infrastructural facilities is a very big problem facing the administration of public universities in Nigeria. Many public universities in Nigeria do not have adequate infrastructural facilities. Infrastructural facilities refers to facilities aiding delivery of academic and non-academic services in educational institutions. Infrastructural facilities include; libraries, laboratories, halls, offices, administrative blocks, hostels, roads facilities, water, electricity, internet etc. The availability of the infrastructural facilities in adequate quantities will support effective administration of educational institutions and the inadequacies will prevent effective administration of educational institutions. Many public universities in Nigeria do not have adequate lectures halls, laboratories and offices for both students and academic staff. Many academic and non-academic staff do not have offices and para-venture they have one is been shared by five to six lecturers. The offices of the deans and heads of departments are not something to write home about. The Students do not have adequate lecture halls and hostels accommodations (Ebehikhahlu&Dawam 2016; Akeredolu et al;2019); Ogunode &Abubakar,2020). The factors responsible for inadequate infrastructural facilities in Nigerian public universities include; underfunding, increased in students population, corruption, poor infrastructural facilities planning, poor supervision and inflation. Ogunode and Jegede(2021) observed 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.

Insecurity

Ogunode (2020) opined that insecurity is among the problems facing the administration/ management of public universities in Nigeria. Nigeria is facing security challenge and this is affecting the entire educational institutions in the country. The Islamic sect called Boko haram meaning western education is forbidden and attacking educational institutions in the Northern part of Nigeria. Many public universities located in the Northern Nigeria have been victims of continuous attacks. Many students, lecturers and administrators have been killed while others kidnapped. The various attacks on the universities have resulted to school closure leading to unstable academic programme. Obi, (2015) observed that insecurity and terrorism has been a major challenge to the Nigerian government in recent times. The activities of the Islamic sect (Boko Haram) had led to loss of lives and properties in the country especially in the Northern part of Nigeria. Some of these activities include bombing, suicide bomb attacks, sporadic shooting of unarmed and innocent citizens, burning of police stations, churches, kidnapping of school girls and women, etc. Kidnapping, rape, armed robbery and political crises, murder, destruction of oil facilities by Niger Delta militants alongside the attacks carried out by Fulani Herdsmen on some communities in the North and South have been another major insecurity challenge facing the country. Nigeria has been included among one of the terrorist countries of the world. Many lives and properties have been lost and a large number of citizens rendered homeless. Families have lost their loved ones. Many women are now widows. Children become orphans with no hope of the future. This has implications for national development.
Strike actions

Ahaotu and Ogunode (2021) opined that another problem facing the administrators of higher institutions in Nigeria is the issues of incessant strike action by different unions in higher institutions. Labour unrests by different unions in the Nigeria higher institutions is slowing down the realization of the goals of the higher institutions as well as growth and development. Administrators in Nigerian higher institutions cannot boast of stable academic calendar for a year without strike by one union or the other. Many school administrators have ideas for transformation and innovation for their schools but the strike actions are not allowing them to fully apply the plans and programmes they have for their respective institutions. Okoli, Ogbonadah and Ewor (2016); Ajape et al; (2020) and Lawal& Ogunode, (2021) identified another negative effect of strike actions on the higher institutions is that it reduces the quality of education because at the end of the day scheme of work for that semester may not be covered and the students will be push forward to go and write exams. Another major causes of strike actions by different union groups in the Nigerian higher institutions is the non-implementation of agreement reached with the government.

Brain-drain

Ogunode (2020) viewed Brain-drain as to mass movement of professionals especially the academic staff from developing countries to the developed countries for a better job offer. Brain drain is one of the major factors responsible for poor implementation of teaching programme in Nigerian higher institutions. Many experienced academic staff, professors especially, have been moving out of Nigerian higher institutions to developed countries like USA, Germany, UK etc. for better offer. This is affecting the quality of teaching in the higher institutions in the country. For effective teaching to take place, there is need for adequate professional and experienced lecturers in every higher institution. Ogunode and Atobauka (2021a) posited that poor salary is one of the key causes of brain-drain problem in the Nigerian higher institutions. The monthly salaries that academic staff are receiving is less compare to what other academic staff are been paid in other countries across the World. The inability of the government to adequately fund the various higher institutions in the country is responsible for the poor salaries and other financial benefits given to academic staff in the Nigerian higher

Corruption

Ahaotu and Ogunode (2021) Musa et al. (2021) and Ogunode (2020) opined that corruption in the public universities in Nigeria is another problem preventing effective administration/management 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 (Ogunode, 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 (Ajape et al; 2021). 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.” Chinyere and Chukwuma (2017) in their research observed that corruption has dimensions in Nigerian universities and the dimensions included students, lecturers, non-academic staff and administrators. They listed examples corruption among students to 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”. They also listed forms of corruption among lecturers to included demanding huge amount of money, sex from female students for high grade, etc while among the 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. Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (2018) submitted 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.

Prospects

Based on the discussion so far, the following prospects were made for improvement;

a) Collaboration of international agencies with Universities in Nigeria. Collaboration is cardinal to ensuring and maintaining the quality of Nigeria education system. Higher education would only have a better future if Nigerian universities begin to explore ways of diversifying international collaborations.

b) Emergence of NASUU, SSANU and NASU. The three prominent unions must come together to tackle most of the problems hindering the development of universities in Nigeria.

c) There is need for universities in Nigeria to adopt emerging technology, especially quality management learning system which among others could enhance students learning experience and therefore increase quality of education.

Solutions

To solve the challenges, the following were recommended:

a) Increase the funding of public universities in the country;

b) Employ more academic staff in all public universities in Nigeria;

c) Provide adequate infrastructural facilities to all the public universities in the country;

d) Provide adequate security in all public universities in the country;

e) Direct all its anti-corruption agencies to monitor all the funds released to the public universities for implementation of their programme and for capital development;

f) Motivate all the academic staff by increasing their salaries and welfare packages;

g) Ensure agreements reached with different union groups in the public universities are implemented to avoid strike actions in the public universities.

Conclusion

Universities are keys to the social, economic and technological advancement of the country. University education is design to produce manpower for the development of the country. The universities must be managed well to be able to realize her objectives. It is unfortunate that public universities in Nigeria are facing management problems. This paper identified inadequate funding, inadequate academic staff, inadequate facilities, insecurity, strike actions, brain-drain and corruption. To address these problems, the government should increase the funding of public universities in Nigeria.

References


