

An Overview of Educational Management in Nigerian Private Universities: Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract

Case Studies

No other form of social institution is as important as education in the transformation and modernization of society. The National Policy on Education (1977 revised 1981) stipulates that “education should help to instill in Nigerian citizens, sense of unity, patriotism and love of the country ... and foster in them, a sense of national belonging”. Thus, education plays a very important role in the socio-economic and technological development of any nation including Nigeria. To this end, it is vital for every society to develop an educational management system through which it inculcates in the citizens, those vital characteristics necessary for the survival of the society. In doing this, the role of “Private Universities” cannot be over-emphasized. An overview of the educational management system in Nigerian Private Universities will therefore address the relevant issues, including challenges and prospects, in order to achieve set objectives of the National Policy on Education.

Keywords: Educational Management System, Nigerian Private Universities, National Policy on Education.

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INTRODUCTION

Good educational management system has become imperative for sustainable educational development in Universities all over the world. It even seems more so in Private Universities where qualities of educational standards are found to be higher in comparison with Public Universities. In the course of delivering good educational management in Universities, there are bound to be some challenges which, if not properly managed, may constitute formidable cog in the wheel of socio-economic and educational, progress of any nation. This study therefore identifies and critically examines the challenges generally regarded as common phenomena in the educational management system particularly as they affect Private Universities in Nigeria. The study will also overview, and evaluate the resources that are currently available, as well as identify and examine the missing link between what is currently on ground and what prospects should be necessary to foster greater and greater progress in the educational management in Nigerian Private Universities.

Statement of the Problem

Educational Management in Nigerian Private Universities has been a topic of research by various eminent scholars who have copiously examined the subject matter in various perspectives. Nevertheless, a crucial aspect of the study revolving on challenges and prospects confronting Private Universities in Nigeria is yet to be fully examined hence this present study.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:-

- (i) examine the importance and role of Private Universities in educational development in Nigeria;
- (ii) identify and examine the challenges facing educational management in Private Universities in Nigeria;
- (iii) Highlight and assess the prospects for improved and sustainable educational management in Private Universities in Nigeria.



LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews the literature on the topic of the study including (i) the Universities, (ii) Education, (iii) Educational Management System in Nigerian Universities (iv) Leadership; (v), Challenges, and (vi) Prospects.

(i) The Universities

A university is conceptualized as any institution of higher education and research that awards both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in various academic disciplines of human endeavours (Uche, 2016). Further, Uche (2016) cited Sanyal (1995), who posited that “a University is an institution of higher learning, participating in the evolution of knowledge which provides facilities for teaching and research, and authorized to hold examinations and grant academic degrees”. A University is also viewed as “an institution consciously devoted to the pursuit of knowledge, the solution of society’s problems, the critical appreciation of achievements and the training of men at the highest level” (Uche, 2016). Universities all over the world therefore occupy a pivotal position in society, and they are highly instrumental to the economic, technological, social, and political development of a nation. According to the Manual on University Management by the National Universities Commission (NUC), universities are created to satisfy specific or general educational needs of a nation through teaching of students, conduct of research and dissemination of knowledge together with other community service activities”. With regard to the universality of universities, Erero (1991) posited that Nigerian Universities share with their counterparts world-wide, the tripartite goals of teaching, research, and public service. In order to achieve the desired educational goals of any nation, public and private universities are established to function *pari-pasu* globally. From these conceptual definitions, it is clear that the University is an institution of education at the highest level, where knowledge is pursued, problems are solved, teaching and research are carried out and degrees are awarded after training.

Private Universities

A University is established either as a ‘Public’ University or as a ‘Private’ University. This means that a University is either owned by Government (State or Federal) or by private individuals or by religious organizations who establish faith-based Universities. It also means that, a private university is a university that is predominantly owned and funded by private means through the owner’s capital as opposed to public universities which are predominantly *funded* by public means through a national or sub-national government. Private universities are becoming very popular and acceptable to the general public as they continue to play a significant role in the overall educational system in many countries across the globe including Nigeria. Private universities assist in the delivery of higher education services (Allen, 2007; Uche, 2016). In other words, private universities participate in the delivery of higher education services to the public. With increase in the number of private universities, available data revealed that the number of enrollment into private universities has continued to soar across

West African region of the continent including Nigeria (Messah & Immaculate, 2011). Furthermore, the data as revealed by Tagoe (2010), shows that private institutions which are more in number than non-private universities, take up a total of 26% university enrollment in Ghana and 8.3% in Nigeria (Uche, 2016). To this end, growth of private universities has occurred in many parts of Nigeria.

Objectives of Universities

In Aluko’s (1994) views, the objectives of Universities are to:

- (i) ensure that university goals are pursued intelligently and diligently;
- (ii) conceive the University as a transformation institution, transforming inputs into outputs of a higher order;
- (iii) watch what happens within its rivals at home and abroad, and seek to adjust.
- (iv) find solutions not only to the problems of the university system but also to the larger problems of the country.
- (v) enhance its management through the acquisition of skills, techniques as well as imbibing the right attitude.

It is no longer contentious that quality university education is a rare commodity in contemporary Nigerian society, hence Universities in Nigeria are publicly or privately established. In order to achieve the objectives of education in Nigeria, University educational leaders and managers therefore need to manage and steer the ship of quality education by “ensuring a more effective coordination of the complex processes and structures which are internal to the university, and by successfully harnessing resources from the external environment” (Sanda, 1992).

(ii) Education

Uche (2015) recalls that “Section One of the 1981 (Revised) Federal Republic of Nigeria’s National Policy on Education categorically states, among others, that “Nigeria’s philosophy of education is based on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and equal educational opportunities for all citizens”. Describing education as a dynamic instrument of change, the Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education states, *inter alia*, that:

The Federal Government of Nigeria has adopted education as an instrument

Par excellence for effecting national development ... to foster the much needed

Unity of Nigeria, imbalances in inter-state and intra-state development have to

be corrected. Not only is education the greatest force that can be used to bring

about redress, it is also the greatest investment that the nation can make for the

quick development of its economic, political, sociological and human resources.

Education will continue to be highly rated in the national development plans,

because education is the most important instrument of change as any fundamental

change in the intellectual and sociological outlook of any society has to be preceded

by an educational revolution.

Capturing the importance of Education in Nigeria, Uche (2015) cites the Editorial Comments of “The Nigerian Education Times No.21 of Sept-Oct,2008” that remarked as follows:-

The importance of education cannot be overemphasized. Indeed, it is the pivot on which the wheel of a nation's development revolves and this has necessitated various development goals set up by the international community. In the frantic effort to tackle the problem of poverty, gender discrimination, poor governance, economic and social insecurity, poor working conditions, dehumanization and continued disregard for the dignity of man, the government was prompted to be part of the world effort in the pursuance of Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals. ... Globally, education is taken to be central to all human development and the derivatives from good educational system facilitate the running of a good healthy delivery system, a dynamic economic system, a vibrant industrial and technologically driven economy, enlightened cooperative and selfless citizenry operating a good political system for the benefit of the majority. In view of this, it is expected of the government to demonstrate absolute commitment to everything that would make education delivery prompt in terms of quality and quantity. The target is that every citizen should be literate and numerate within a reasonably stipulated time frame. The contention now is that governments at both the federal, state and local government levels are not demonstrating enough commitment to education. ... There is no doubt, positive attitude from the government will attract positive solution to the variegated problems bedeviling education in Nigeria and the country will be better for it. Now is the time for the government to change its attitude to education. (P.3)

Excerpt from “The Nigerian Education Times No.21 of Sept-Oct,2008” (p.3)

The above editorial comments call for an examination of the educational management system, its achievements and challenges.

(iii) Educational Management System In Nigerian Universities

Management as an attitude, reflects a willingness to debate issues and resolve them through the use of appropriate techniques and procedures (Uche, 2015). Educational Management System according to Uche (2012), is an application of appropriate managerial skills and techniques in dealing with people and/or situations in decision-making in fulfillment of the University's objectives. However, to Koontz

and Weirich (1988), “educational management is ‘the process of designing and maintaining an environment in which individuals, working together in groups, accomplish efficiently selected aims’. In furtherance to this, Uche (2015) cites Yahaya, (1991) as listing the functions of Educational Management to include setting aims and objectives, planning how a goal can be achieved, organizing available resources (people, time, material) so that it can be economically achieved in a planned way as well as controlling the process to ensure that the goal is achieved, and setting organizational standards. In order to achieve the objectives and goals of Universities, the use of Committee System is adopted to facilitate sound policy decisions towards good educational management for the University. The next section of this study discusses the role of Committee System in educational management in Nigerian Universities.

The Role of Committee System in Educational Management in Nigerian Universities

A similar study reveals that there is need for the use of Committee System if the objectives of Educational Management in Universities are to be accomplished. Adefiwtan (2006:5) cited in Okotoni and Adegbam (2013:5) describes Committee as “a group of people gathered together to take action on an administrative task, that is, a group of persons to whom some organizational matters are committed. Concerning University Administration, Okotoni and Adegbam (2013:5) further cites Eno-Ibanga and Akpakwu (2009) as deposing that

“in university administration, Committee system encourages participation of large number of staff and that the use of participatory system of governance in the university is of immense importance, ... Furthermore, committee system is a vital and indispensable tool for improving decision making process in the university management and it brings about group judgment on an issue, consequently protecting the University or its Chief Executive (Vice-Chancellor) from errors arising out of the decision of an individual”.

In the university system, Administrative Committees and Academic Committees are set up to discuss specific functions and make recommendations that can help the University in arriving at an effective educational management for the University.

Nigerian Private Universities and Their Educational Management System: Challenges and Prospects

Uche (2019) recall that it is noteworthy at this juncture to draw attention to the very powerful speech delivered by His Royal Eminence, *Chief Dr. R.A. Adedoyin*, Honourable Chancellor, President and Founder of Oduduwa University, Ipetumodu, one of the most outstanding and world renowned

Private Universities in Nigeria. The speech was delivered at the “Maiden Convocation and Fourth Founder’s Day Ceremonies of the University” on 21st November, 2013 an excerpt from which is as follows:-

“Education is the bedrock of every society. It is an indispensable, tool for

the transformation of every society. It is the best legacy we bequeath to

our children and posterity. It is the most and the wisest investment for

tapping and utilizing human and material resources. Education is no

more luxury or a mere social need; it is a necessity for the onward

march of humanity. History will therefore record in gold the efforts

and commitments of those who invest in provision and promotion of

education In fact, one of the surest ways of salvaging Nigeria

from her present economic and social predicament is to stimulate

the development, growth and stability of the private sector.....

“Washington once said: ‘.We may be as separate as fingers but one as a

hand in our efforts to attain our noble goals” derivable from Educational

development, and that ‘unless men of wisdom and foresight see themselves

as interdependent in the pursuits of the lofty goals of our society, there will

be no meaningful development and social stability.(Adedoyin, 2013).

(Source: Speeches Delivered at the Maiden Convocation and Fourth Founder’s

Day Ceremonies of OduduwaUniversity, Ipetumodu, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria, 21/11/13, (p.5)

In view of the importance of Educational Management in Nigerian Private Universities as emphasized in Adedoyin (2013), the need to examine the challenges that derail their progress, and identify the prospects that could enhance them, has become imperative.

(iv) Leadership

Uche (2015) in his studies titled: Nigeria and the Imperative for Good Leadership and National Development in the 21st Century” observes that Leadership as a concept has been defined by various scholars from various perspectives. In Ogunsola’s (1989) views cited in Uche (2015), leadership is the responsibility of leading through planning, executing,

coordinating, directing, controlling, mobilizing, and manipulating at different points and levels in the hierarchical organization of society, starting from its nucleus and micro-level - the family, to the macro or national level. Leadership relationships according to him, are not restricted to the vertical structure because they can also be horizontal as found in socio-cultural organizations in the society Leadership has also been viewed as the ability to influence people and their behaviours; set goals for a group, formulate policy to the goals, create social norms in the group, and get the people to strive willingly towards the achievement of goals with zeal, confidence, and enthusiasm (Okotoni, 2011). Emphasizing the importance of leadership in an organization, Okotoni (1996) posited that out of three major factors of production, namely money, material, and manpower, manpower is the most important because the success of any organization depends largely on the quality of its manpower and leadership to plan, organize, manage, and direct activities towards the achievement of the set goals. In his analysis, Uche (2015) concluded that from these expressed views, some basic components of leadership appear to be necessary in leadership. First, the influence upon which relationship is based should be multidirectional, meaning that influence can flow upward and downward, and the influence attempts must not be coercive. Second, leaders including those in the Public or Private service (particularly Private Universities) should promote and purposefully seek changes that must be substantial and reflect their mutual purposes. For the purpose of this study, leadership denotes those who make and implement University Management decisions. They include the Governing Council, the Management Committee, the Principal Officers i.e. the Vice-Chancellor and his Deputies, the Registrar of the University, the University Librarian and the Bursar. Leadership plays a crucial role in Educational Management in Nigerian Private Universities. However, evaluation of the performance of the leadership in an organization or in the University system leads to the identification of “Good Leadership” or “Poor Leadership” We shall examine these two concepts in relation to Private Universities in the section that follows. ,

(V) Private Universities’ Leadership:

For the purpose of this study, Private Universities’ Leadership include the Chancellor/President/Founder of the University, University Governing Council, Principal Officers of the University (i.e. the Vice-Chancellor, the Registrar, the Librarian, and the Bursar), University Management Committee, and University Senate. They are those who formulate University Management Policies. Leaders including those in the Public or Private service (particularly Private Universities) should promote and purposefully seek changes that must be substantial and reflect their mutual purposes. Furthermore, leadership is vested with the responsibility and authority for decision-making policy with respect to the University’s objectives, educational philosophy and policies, plans, programmes, standards, finance, staff and students’ affairs. Besides, Private University Management System is also regarded as an activity, a method, a skill, or a process of getting things done. Leadership plays a crucial role on Educational Management in Nigerian Private Universities. To this end,

Uche (2016) identifies some characteristics that differentiate good leadership from poor leadership.

(Vi) Good Leadership:

(i) The characteristics of good leadership are that it functions with high intelligence, social interest and maturity, strong motivation to accomplish goals, respect for people and interest in them (Davis, 2010).

(ii) Good leadership provides necessary framework for a healthy and growing social and economic system. In addition, the importance of good leadership at all levels of government has also been emphasized in Okotoni (1996) and Uche (2004).

(iii) Men and women of vision who can energize the Nigerian masses with great inspiration; men and women committed to selfless service; creative individuals and thoroughly self-disciplined (Bassey, 1995).

(iv) Good leadership promotes general welfare and happiness of the people within its jurisdiction; it defends the organization from both internal and external aggression; it protects the lives and property of the people and provides essential services – health, water, electricity, etc - which are indispensable to the welfare and happiness of the community.

(v) Good leadership is the key determinant to social, cultural, technological transformational, and educational development. Bassey, (1995) According to Uche (2016), citing Bassey (1995), this is because it comprises men and women of unquestionable character; men and women who can live above the momentary and often compelling urge to amass wealth at the expense of the public; men and women of vision who can energize the Nigerian masses with great inspiration; men and women committed to selfless service; creative individuals and thoroughly self-disciplined (Bassey, 1995).

(vi) Good leadership functions with high intelligence, social interest and maturity, strong motivation to accomplish goals, respect for people and interest in them (Davis, 2010).

(vii) In order to harness the human and natural resources for an effective educational management in Nigerian Private Universities, the importance of good leadership cannot be over-emphasized.

(viii) Good leadership of Nigerian Private Universities brings positive changes, in the university educational management system.

(ix) Educational Management in Nigerian Private Universities, to a large extent, depends on good leadership with vision, energy, and drive, to enhance effective educational management in Nigerian Private Universities. (Uche 2015).

(xi) Achebe (2009), emphasizes that “without good leadership, none of the other problems stands a chance of being tackled, let alone solved.”

(Vii) Challenges

Poor Leadership and Its Negative Effects

Poor leadership is one of the major challenges

militating against progress in educational management in Nigerian Private Universities.

(i) While Okotoni (1996) contends that the success of any organization depends on the quality of its leadership, Uche (2015) argues that poor leadership is ineffective because it manifests negatively on the people, and impedes efficiency in its functions.

(ii) A leader who adopts psychologically repressive approach in governance and management gives rise to defensive behaviours among the followers.

(iii) Poor leadership leads to ineffective management technique in a university environment (Uche, 2012).

(iv) Bassey (1995) expressed his dismay over poor leadership in Nigeria as follows:

A once wealthy nation, capable of providing Leadership in Africa

and the Black World has been reduced to a beggar nation on the verge of bankruptcy because of mismanagement motivated by greed,

dishonesty and lack of moral rectitude. Indiscipline has become so

rampant and infested every facet of our national life. The bungling,

arbitrariness, wastefulness, officiousness, extreme laxity, intolerance

and divisiveness which have characterized our national life in the

recent past can be traced directly to the type of leadership

we have had (pp 2-3)

(v) In Uche's (2015) views, Bassey's observations when Nigeria had her independence are as true today as they were then.

(vi) In a similar vein, Okotoni (2011) has remarked that “what has been observed over the years is that leaders who have been entrusted with public funds and responsibilities lacked probity and accountability as they threw honesty into the dustbin and made credibility and trustworthiness a laughing stock.”

(vii) Poor Leadership and its negative effects are serious challenges because it is clear from the analysis that there is a gap between what Nigeria's leadership are expected to do and what they are doing at present,

Quantity and Quality Of Personnel

Emphasizing the importance of personnel in an organizational and administrative structure of universities, Okotoni (1996) explained that the success of any organization depends largely on the quantity and quality of its personnel. According to Okotoni (2010), organizational “goals and objectives can only be achieved through people which constitute the greatest assets of an organization, yet, people in organizations are the most difficult to manage.” In order to get

the desired results, Okotoni advocated for good interpersonal relationships, work ethics, accountability and communication. These characteristics are also crucial in relation to university administrators who are assigned with the responsibility of managing students' crises in the universities.

Funding Of Universities in Nigeria

Aluede, et al, (2005: 17-22): depose that "funding of universities in Nigeria has for many years depreciated". Lending credence to this assertion Komolafe, (2008) declares that:

"Despite UNESCO's suggestion to all nations, to allocate 26 percent of their annual budget to education, regrettably, most African countries (including Nigeria) are not close to its benchmark, and worse still, no conscious effort is made to achieve this. Since year 2000 to date, Nigeria has only achieved about 12 per cent budget allocation to education. ... Today, education is bedeviled with diverse problems." (p.14)

Thus, Nigerian Government's abdication of their financial responsibilities to education in Nigeria has created much problems and crippled development of facilities in terms of infrastructure, capital projects, instructional facilities, libraries, student accommodation and welfare, supply of basic needs of electricity and water to students, and research funding for academic staff. Looking at the disastrous consequences of these shortcomings, another eminent scholar, Ambassador Babagana Kingibe also declared that "Nigeria is sitting on a political time bomb" and quoting an excerpt from the World Bank 1995, Kingibe revealed that:

"the entire output of scientific publications from all Nigerian Universities stood at 711 compared to 3,413 for South Africa; 5,446 for Brazil and 14,883 for India. Yet another World Bank Report showed that in 2,000, the entire Federal University system in Nigeria spend only 1.3 per cent of its total budget on research." (pp 9-10)

While private universities are funded by proprietors and students through school fees and levies, public universities are funded by the federal government (for federal universities) and state governments (for state universities). Although some private universities are well funded by their proprietors, some of them are also poorly funded and they have poor infrastructural facilities. All public universities are suffering from inadequate funding from government. This gives rise to inadequate and poor infrastructural facilities in public universities. The implication of inadequate funding of public universities by government is that when students' demands are not reasonably met, students embark on rioting. In contrast to federal universities, private universities are fully responsible for

funding, controlling, and developing their universities.

National Universities Commission: There is an intervention of the National Universities Commission in ensuring that the federal, state, and private universities meet the benchmark for high academic, staffing, and structural standard comparative to federal universities and indeed universities the world over. The Commission carries out accreditation exercises of academic programmes in all universities.

(v) Prospects

(A) Knowledge Management and Professionalism:

Private universities in Nigeria look forward to many prospects including the integration of educational management with knowledge management in private universities.

Delivering a lecture on the topic: "Knowledge Management and Professionalism: Key to Survival of Universities in Nigeria", former Governor of Akwa Ibom State in Nigeria, Obong Attah, Victor stated that "Knowledge management for a university is a system or programme designed to create, capture, share and take advantage of knowledge towards the success of the university in terms of achieving its vision and mission by making best use of knowledge." (Attah, V., 2019). This is very important for universities in general but private universities in particular.

(B) World-Class University Educational System:

For education to be reckoned with, or classified as of world standard, the need for world-class university educational system cannot be ignored among the Private Universities in Nigeria. According to Akingbola (2009: 9-10)

"a world-class university educational system must be equipped with world-class facilities, from academic complexes to research facilities, to various instructional aids that reflect state of the art technology. ... Since universities produce the brain workers that drive the economy, a world-class system must focus considerably on such knowledge-intensive areas as Research and Development, and Information Technology. ... A world-class university system is the product of a world-class academic faculty, peopled by professors, scientists, and other professionals of engineering and technology." Akingbola (2009: 9-10)

The numerous usefulness in Private Universities endeavouring to become world class university includes the fact that it facilitates quick and sustainable social transformation and modernization of a country's education considered as of international quality. Another prospect that is very crucial in the life of private universities is the need to attain world standard in their educational management system.

Findings

The findings reveal that there are some major challenges militating against educational management in Private Universities. These challenges arise due to several factors including poor leadership, and no financial support from



Government, the consequences of which include high level of infrastructural decay and academic decadence in the university system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The need for Private Universities to be managed by responsible and honest leaders cannot be over-emphasized.
2. Private Universities need to have huge financial support with which to successfully manage their Universities. They should endeavour to source for funds from both public and private sectors.
3. Private Universities should establish credible Financial Management System in their Universities so as to properly, honestly, and effectively manage the funds available to them.
- 4 Private Universities should realize the need for knowledge management and professionalism in their Universities and encourage massive participation in them by their staff.
- 5.. Given the role of Universities in the development of education all over the world, Private Universities should work towards achieving a global or world-class status.
6. Private Universities should embark on massive research, development, and information technology programme.
7. Private Universities should implement recommendations which, according to Oyekanmi, (1998), are made in the Report of the World Conference on Higher Education titled "Higher Education in the 21st Century: Vision and Action" held by UNESCO (United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) in Paris, France, in 1998. The recommendations stated that "National and institutional decision-makers should place students and their needs at the centre of their concerns, and should consider them as major partners and responsible stakeholders in the renewal of higher education."

CONCLUSION

It is obvious that the relevance of Private Universities in the world educational development cannot be denied. However, in order to achieve their objectives, educational management in the Private Universities must be handled by experienced administrative, honest and visionary leaders. Challenges being currently encountered by them must be fully addressed to pave way for greater successes in the management of their educational system.

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