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Institutional Variations and Management Problems of Postgraduate Studies in Nigerian Universities that Delay Graduation.

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Introduction

Since Nigeria's Independence in 1960, the social demand for education at the secondary level has been so great that the rapid expansions at this level yawned for corresponding expansions at the tertiary level. To cater for the teeming products of the secondary level academically, the Nigerian government began to expand places at the tertiary level so much that by today, Nigeria has about ninety-four accredited universities owned by the Federal government, State governments, and Private people.

The first university in Nigeria, the University College Ibadan (UCI), was established by the British Colonial Government in 1948, as an affiliate of the University of London. It became autonomous in 1962 and was re-named the University of Ibadan. The University of Nigeria, Nsukka, was established on October 7, 1960, a few days after Nigeria's independence. It thus became the first indigenous university in Nigeria. The University of Lagos, the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and the University of Ife, Ile-Ife (now re-named Obafemi Awolowo University), were founded in 1962. The sixth university to be established in Nigeria is the University of Benin founded in 1972. These six universities usually represent the first generation universities in Nigeria. Seven universities were established between 1975 and 1977. These are the Universities of Jos, Calabar, Maiduguri, Sokoto, Port-Harcourt, Ilorin, and the Bayero University, Kano. These universities, popularly known as the Third National Development Plan universities, are usually referred to as the second generation universities in Nigeria. Eighteen universities were established in the 80s, and the others in the 90s and beyond. Some of these universities are owned by the State Governments. It would be recalled that the 1979 Nigerian Constitution classified Education in the Concurrent Legislative List, thus making it possible for State Governments to establish their own universities. This resulted in the establishment of at least one university within the boundaries of each of the thirty-six States of Nigeria. These universities, including Private universities established in the 80s and beyond, are referred to as the third generation universities in Nigeria.

The Federal Government controls all the universities through the National Universities Commission (NUC). The NUC coordinates university administrative and academic programmes and policies to ensure uniformity of standards. The NUC is also responsible for financial allocation to all Federal-owned universities from Federal Government sources, while the State-owned universities are solely financed by their various State Governments. Private universities are solely financed by their owners.

People believe that the growth trend of universities in Nigeria is expansive rather than developmental in nature and that this trend has created all sorts of administrative and academic problems in the institutions some of which delay graduation (Saint, Hartnett and Strassner, 2004; Oghenekohwo, Adekola and Olufunmilayo, 2007). Critics (Izren, 1987; Okoli, 1996; Duze, 1997; Imahe, 2001; ASUU, 2002; CEDR, 2007) claimed that rapid proliferation of universities in Nigeria per se, is not a major problem but argued that the crux of the matter is rather the poor planning and implementation of

university policies and programmes. Either way, the consequence is that the available human and physical resources in Nigerian universities become increasingly insufficient to meet the educational needs of the students by the day. Besides, the unprecedented increase in enrolment for postgraduate studies in Nigeria without a corresponding increase in the services and resources provided has further reduced the already inadequate resource-base in the universities, thus making it more difficult for students to graduate at the stipulated time. The problem of this study therefore, is to find out if these problems that delay graduation were peculiar to the university attended in terms of ownership, generation, and location.

The theoretical framework for this study is the Production Theory in Education which rests on the “Input-process-output” model. The Production Theory portrays a technical relationship between the inputs and the outputs of a production line. Blaug (1970) stated that a production function defines a boundary in the input-output space, specifying the maximum physical output that can be obtained from every possible combination of physical inputs, given the existing level of technical knowledge. This means that the Input/Output graph of a given process produces a normal growth curve. The theory highlights two major points- one is that the quality of output is a direct function of the quality of inputs, while the other holds that there is a maximum output that can be obtained from every possible combination of inputs. This implies that there could be points of diminishing returns as well as points of negative returns, which no enterprise would be glad to record. This brings in the question of the efficiency of the system. Because it is difficult to define inputs and outputs in education in any real measurable terms as it is done in profit-oriented ventures, the efficiency that is applicable to the education system is the technical efficiency (Levin, 1971). He identified two types of efficiency – allocative and technical. While allocative efficiency requires the production unit to choose a combination of inputs in such a way that the marginal product per unit cost of input is the same for all inputs, technical efficiency requires the organizing of available resources in such a way that the maximum feasible output is produced by the enterprise.

Education, therefore, can be viewed as a production process which uses scarce human, physical, and financial resources in the production of educated persons. Since these resources have alternative uses, the economic concept of the Production Theory can also be applied to education’s planning and operations. It therefore becomes imperative that efficiency be deliberately pursued at production by all to ensure maximum productivity in Education. To this extent, the student should be the focus of the resource allocation process at any level of education because he is not only the output but constitutes an input also (Duze, 2005; Ogenekowho et al., 2007). The process that leads to the output should also take place over a defined period of time. The production process is thus a complex cycle of events involving the allocation and utilization of resources in a given period of time to attain set goals. The level of success will depend on how well every need has been met as at when required.

Today, university lecturers and other educators continuously “fight” government for better teaching/learning facilities. Postgraduate students now scramble for seats in over-crowded and poorly-ventilated lecture rooms. Classrooms, laboratory spaces, and hostel rooms are no longer enough. Library, medical, seminar and tutorial facilities have become grossly inadequate. Materials and equipment for research work are insufficient and broken down due to lack of proper maintenance. Qualified and experienced lecturers and supervisors of research work at this level can no longer cope with the large numbers of supervisees. Brain-drain of experienced staff is hitting hard on research activities. Each year the enrolment mounts up while the facilities ‘go down’ and break down without

maintenance or replacement. Books and equipment with high foreign exchange content are in short supply, libraries are obsolete and laboratory facilities have grossly deteriorated. Teaching and research facilities have become real problems in all universities.

The implication of these is that Nigerian universities are not benefiting from recent improvements in the world knowledge industry. This adversely affects individual publications in journals or books and in research studies. This also means that they are not really contributing their own quota to world knowledge as they should. Research, which is the crux of postgraduate study, is basic to higher education. If Nigerian universities must play their role of technology transfer adequately, they must carry out researches. In the past, research grants were easily available to any qualified applicant but today, they have become forgotten issues due to the dwindling Nigerian economy. Thus, lack of funds is a major handicap to graduation.

Materials and manpower are two main factors that determine the survival of any nation and the manner in which a nation handles them determines to a great extent its capability in catering for its citizens. The implication is that education, being a means of sustainable national development, not only has to provide materials and manpower but also has to have them at a proportion that would ensure effective and efficient goal attainment at any given time. Thus, if graduation is delayed, it translates into wastage in the system and with the physical flow of needed manpower in the labour force disrupted efficiency and effectiveness are jeopardized which in event hinder economic growth.

Invariably, most vital in achieving set goals and objectives among other things, are the implementers of the policies and programmes in any organization. In education, these are mainly the teachers. They have to be competent and committed to their duties. The school is known to be the teacher's workshop. It is in this workshop that all the policies and programmes are executed. The teacher is the pivot around which all the other agencies of education operate. The policies of the government on education, all the expenses and preparations of government, private individuals and parents, all the involvement of the community, and all the efforts of the students become operational, effective, and meaningful only with the activities and manipulations of the teacher. Thus the key to any change in education lies with the teacher in the classroom. In the universities, these are the lecturers, research supervisors, research fellows, and deans/directors of academic planning and programmes and the vice-chancellors. The place of the non-academic or supportive staff is in the offices, the libraries, the laboratories, and the workshops. Their job is to facilitate the work of the academic staff in administration, in the use and operation of equipment and their maintenance, and the general up-keep of materials and facilities and school plant. Both groups especially the academic staff are usually specialists in their own areas for effective and efficient goal achievement of the system. We therefore set out to seek whether the problems encountered by postgraduate students that delayed graduation were peculiar to the manner in which the institutions were administered by virtue of ownership, generation, and location. To direct the thrust of this investigation, three null hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study.

Hypotheses

H_{01} : There is no significant difference in the perceptions of postgraduate students studying in

Federal-owned and State-owned Nigerian universities on management problems that hinder graduation.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the perceptions of postgraduate students in first, second, and third generation Nigerian universities on management problems that hinder graduation.

Ho₃: There is no significant difference in the perceptions of postgraduate students in Northern, Eastern, and Western Nigeria universities on management problems that hinder graduation.

Method

The research design is ex-post-facto. It looked at the facts as they had already occurred and there was no manipulation of variables. The population was all the 2,178 postgraduate students on full-time programmes in Nigerian public universities during the 2005/2006 academic year. The sample size comprised a total of 452 postgraduate students selected through stratified random sampling from twenty-five randomly selected public Nigerian universities. This was made up of 311 and 141 postgraduate students studying in Federal-owned and State-owned universities respectively; 247, 132, and 73 in first, second, and third generation Nigerian universities respectively; and 98, 186, and 168 students in the Northern, Eastern, and Western Nigeria universities respectively.

Data were generated through an instrument designated Institutional Variables and Postgraduate Studies Management Problems Questionnaire (IPGSMPQ) developed by the investigator and validated by a team of experts in Educational Management. Section A of the instrument elicited demographic information while Section B, containing thirty-three items, measured the students' perception of management problems that delayed graduation in Nigerian universities. Responses were based on a Likert-type 4-point scale where 4 points were assigned to Strongly Agree (SA), 3 to Agree (A), 2 to Disagree (D), and 1 point to Strongly Disagree (SD). Mean scores of 2.50 and above were accepted as being positively disposed to the case investigated. The reliability of the instrument, $r = 0.88$, determined through test re-test method administered to forty postgraduate students not involved in this study was found satisfactory.

The instrument was administered in person and with the help of well-briefed third parties to the postgraduate students in the sampled Nigerian universities and retrieved the same day. Retrieval was 100% because we observed that the postgraduate students were very eager to pour out their grievances, as if to say someone has come to their rescue at last. The t-test and ANOVA were used for data analysis at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The relevant data for testing hypotheses One, Two, and Three formulated in this study were derived from responses to Section B of IPGSMPQ, analyzed, and results presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Distribution of Sample Size and Corresponding Scores for Institutional Variables of Study, where Total Sample Size (N) is 452

Variables	Levels	Sample Size				Null Hypotheses
		n	%	Scores	Mean Scores	
Ownership of University	Federal					

State311

14168.81

31.19992

4833.19

3.43OneGeneration of UniversityFirst

Second

Third247

132

7354.65

29.20

16.15916

505

2883.71

3.83

3.95TwoGeographical Location of UniversityNorth

East

West 98

186

16821.68

41.15

37.17350

727

6423.57

3.91

3.82Three

Hypothesis One

The relevant data for testing Hypothesis One has been presented in Table 1. Analysis showed that 311 (68.81%) of the 452 respondents were from Federal-owned and 141 (31.19%) from

State-owned universities in Nigeria, with computed respective mean scores of 3.19 and 3.43. The data were subjected to the t-test statistic and the result of analysis presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Ownership of University and Management Problems. t-test Analysis.

Variables	N	E X	X	E x ²	(E x) ²	df	Cal-t	Tab-t	Decision p ≤ 0.05
Federal									

State311

141992

4833.19

3.431076602

131003972196

1874894500.0561.960Not significant

The result in Table 2 showed that the calculated t-value of 0.056 was numerically less than the critical t-value of 1.960, therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. This meant that postgraduate students in Federal-owned and State-owned Nigerian universities did not differ significantly in their perception of management problems that delay graduation in Nigeria. This implied that ownership of university was not a discriminating factor.

Hypothesis Two

The relevant data for testing hypothesis two has been presented in Table 1 which showed that out of the 452 respondents, 247 (54.65%) belonged to first generation Nigerian universities, 132 (29.20%) to

second generation, and 73 (16.15%) to third generation, with respective mean scores of 3.71, 3.83 and 3.95. To test the hypothesis of three equal means, the One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was applied to the data and the result presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Generation of University and Management Problems. Summary Table of ANOVA

Source of Variation	df	SS	MS	F _{cal}	F _{critical}	Decision $p \leq 0.05$
Between Groups						

Within Groups

Total

449

45116

2963.4

2979.48.00

6.60

-1.213.00Not significant

The result in Table 3 showed that the calculated F value of 1.21 was less than the critical F value of 3.00, thus the null hypothesis was retained, meaning that there was no significant difference between the three groups. This meant that postgraduate students in first, second, and third generation Nigerian universities did not differ significantly in their perception of management problems that constitute stumbling blocks to graduation, implying that the generation of the Nigerian university was not to any significant extent, a discriminating factor.

Hypothesis Three

The relevant data for testing Hypothesis Three has been presented in Table 1. This showed that 98 (21.68%), 186 (41.15%), and 168 (37.17%) of the 452 respondents, were from Northern Eastern, and Western Nigeria universities respectively with respective mean scores of 3.57, 3.91, and 3.82. To test the significance of three equal means, the One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was applied to the data, and the result presented in Table 4.

Table 4 : Location of University and Management Problems. Summary Table One-way ANOVA

Source of Variation	df	SS	MS	F _{cal}	F _{critical}	Decision $p \leq 0.05$

Between Groups

Within Groups

Total2

449

45135.48

6878.68

6914.1617.74

15.32

-1.163.00Not significant

The result in Table 4 showed that the calculated F value of 1.16 was less than the critical F value of 3.00. The null hypothesis was therefore retained. This meant that there was no significant difference between the three groups, implying that postgraduate students in Northern, Eastern, and Western Nigeria universities did not differ significantly in their perception of management problems that constitute stumbling blocks to postgraduate studies. This implied that the location of Nigerian universities was not a discriminating factor.

Discussion

Hypotheses One, Two, and Three, investigating institutional variables of ownership of university, age (generation) of university, and geographical location of university respectively, were all retained. This meant that the perception of postgraduate students about management problems they encounter that delay graduation with respect to ownership of the university did not differ significantly. This implied that Federal-owned universities were not, after all, superior to State-owned universities as many people believe in terms of catering adequately for the academic and other needs of the students. This finding therefore punctured the notion in Nigeria that Federal-owned universities were better than State-owned universities in all intents.

Also, the age of the university was not a discriminating factor. Postgraduate students in first, second, and third generation universities did not differ significantly in their perception of management problems encountered at postgraduate studies in Nigeria which hindered graduation. These findings agreed with Imahe's (2001) study and Ukoli's (1995), ASUU's (2002) observations, and Oghenekohwo et al. (2007) study that teaching and research facilities had never really taken root in any new university in Nigeria, and that whatever used to be in the older universities no longer existed, thus bringing both old and new universities down to the same footing. However, Ukoli (1995) rejected the notion that new Nigerian universities were mediocre universities, but stressed that all Nigerian universities were neither centers of excellence nor centers of mediocrity, but operated under the constraints of prevailing dwindling economy coupled with poor management of available human and physical resources.

The results also revealed that postgraduate students in Northern, Eastern, and Western Nigeria universities felt the same about management problems that hinder their studies. This finding indicated that the geographical location of Nigerian universities was not to any significant extent, a discriminating factor in the management problems that delayed graduation. This implied that university administrators in all Nigeria universities tend to carry out their duties and functions more or less in the same manner. This observation may not be divulged from the fact that Nigerian universities are under the control of one Body, the NUC, and that university administrators must have been working under the general guidelines given by the NUC. These findings also reflect Ukoli's (1995), Okoli's (1996), Imahe's (2001), Adu's (2003), Saint, et al. (2004) and CEDR's (2007) observations that in all Nigerian universities, irrespective of geographical location, students were experiencing similar problems of gross inadequacy in the provision of physical and human resources, as well as poor management of university programmes.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, we concluded that differences in institutional variations did not significantly influence students' perception of management problems that constitute stumbling blocks to postgraduate studies in Nigerian universities. This is to say that management problems contributed largely in delaying graduation in Nigerian universities, ownership, generation of university, and location of university, notwithstanding. Nigerian universities were neither centers of excellence nor centers of mediocrity today, but functioned under the constraints of a dying economy and poor management of educational funds, policies and programmes. This is essentially the result of a system whose production function has continued to be plagued by technical inefficiency.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn in this study, it was recommended that Nigeria should at this time consolidate in "empowering" the already existing public universities instead of engaging in further proliferation of universities, and that the economies of scale should be made to bear on existing Nigerian universities. Also, there is urgent need that the technical efficiency of the Production Theory in Education, which requires that available resources be organized in such a way that the maximum feasible output is produced by the educational system at the postgraduate level should be seriously pursued by the managers of education. This will not only help reduce the wastages in the educational system at this level but also ensure timely quality and quantity output of this critical human capital necessary for sustainable national development.

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