
ASSESSMENT OF THE INTEGRITY OF THE NIGERIA UNIVERSITIES

BY

AKOLO IGUNBOR

DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING, FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES,
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY, NIGERIA

Abstract

This paper has conceptually assessed the integrity of the Nigeria Universities. An in-depth exploration of existing literatures was made to buttress the views expressed by the researcher and prior researchers as regard the subject matter evaluated. The aspects evaluated include nature of staff appointments in Nigerian universities, the endemic effect of students and lecturers plagiarism, sexual harassment and amongst others.

The study employs the desk top review methodology by examining existing literature on the topic in order to get adequate firsthand information. Observations made from the literature gleaned into shows that the Nigerian universities have long decreased standard wise and thus put the system into a near state of jeopardy in the eyes of the international communities. It is therefore suggested that Federal government of Nigerian urgently embark on drastic steps to prevail against the ugly trends in University especially the in-coming government of General Muhammadu Buhari and professor Yemi Osinbajo led administration.

Keywords: Integrity, corruption, plagiarism, sexual harassment, education standards.

Introduction

The Collins Theausarus Dictionary defined integrity as truthful, honest, upright up to standard. While the Oxford advance learners' dictionary defines integrity as the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles. The University is a place where integrity is taught and learnt for the well – being of the society. But a close assessment of the Nigerian University indicates that this is lucidly far from the very truth.

The Nigeria Universities are some of the governments and private own institutions established for the purpose of higher learning and rendering of other services that are academic related. The processes heralding the establishment of tertiary institutions like the Universities are usually not easy to come by. In the past, the Nigeria Universities used to be very highly respected for standard of learning and inculcating disciplines into the products, that is, the students in order to ensure they are properly prepared for future challenges.

Contrary to expectations today, what the Nigeria Universities used to be when evaluated retrospectively has changed in diverse ways. The reason for this changes are either culturally, politically, religiously, morally based or at most apportion to other best unknown factors which if one may wish to ascertain hinge on corruption, falling standard, lost in ethics and values among others. Also, majority of the factors that have bedeviled the integrity of the Nigeria Universities range from method of appointment, corruption on the part of the academic and non-academic staff of the Universities, poor students- lecturer relationship which often necessitates to what in Local parlance is called “blocking”, lecturers plagiarism of textbooks and journals with the aim of financial benefits and promotion, uncontrollable students cheating habit especially during examinations either in undergraduate or postgraduate levels. It was in recognitions of the weak nature of learning and dispensing knowledge replete in the Nigeria Universities that the coordinating minister of finance and economy of Nigeria, Dr (Mrs) Ngozi Okonjo Iweala blatantly said in the public discuss that the Nigerian graduates are unemployable. Another factors that has destroyed and still destroying the integrity of Nigeria Universities is the prevalence of sexual harassment and victimization of female students by Universities Dons and non- academic staff. Against this back drop, this study examines the integrity of the Nigerian University. The rest of this paper is divided into section B, being the literature review and section C, conclusion and recommendations.

Literature Review

Methods of appointments and the integrity of the Nigerian University

In many Nigerian government universities, there have been general complaints and observations about the Nigerian university workers' understanding of academic freedom. Academic freedom does not mean that one cannot be controlled when there is poor job performance, constant flouting of rules and regulations, high rate of indiscipline and no regard for the constituted authorities.

The method of appointments in Nigerian government universities is causing a lot of concern to those who have education at heart. Ifedili (2009), states that there was suppression of excellence and diligence and promotion of mediocrity in the appointments and promotions in Nigeria federal universities. The universities do not seem to employ based purely on merit but based on who backs the candidates. The present educational management condones favoritism and nepotism. It will be an understatement to say that approximately seventy percent of workers are employed based on staff relationship or political affiliation or tribe.

Many of these have no integrity, not committed and academically and experience wise -not qualified.

There are many good job seekers but because there is no godfather to talk for them, they remain unemployed while the wrong people are employed. This type of system breeds lawlessness and low productivity. Many people flout the rules and they cannot be disciplined because they are protected by those who brought them into the system or by their Unions or the supervisor may be afraid of being kidnapped or being injured which is one of the present challenges faced by the Nigerian university administrators. There is high rate of insecurity in the present day management of the Nigerian universities. This insecurity is manifested in the form of kidnapping, cultism, terrorism by the Islamic Sect called Boko Haram, corruption, natural disaster, ritual murdering, violence etc. These challenges instill fear in the lives of the supervisors and these greatly affect their job performances. Poor supervision has been alleged to increase lateness to work, leaving many files unattended, poor record keeping, laxity at work, leaving classes untaught, absenteeism, wasting resources, young mothers bringing their children to the workplace who often distract them etc. Ogbeide (2000) recommends that redundant academic officers and personnel should be flushed out of the system to make university system more productive.

Some of the managers selected to head various parts of the university are never appointed based purely on merit but on the ground that they would be faithful. This is the reason why many seem to find it difficult to control their subordinates. Levitt (1974) pointed out that the process by which a manager is selected is a critical element in managerial success. This determines talents, competences, attitudes, styles, personality which were appropriate for the task and problems of new situation the worker would enter. Some heads of departments are inexperienced and it boils down to some experienced subordinates telling them what to do. Poor supervision has been alleged to have caused lateness to work, leaving many files unattended, poor record keeping, leaving many files unattended, laxity to work, leaving classes untaught, absenteeism, wasting of resources etc.

Recently, in 2014 to be precise, Governor Adams Aliyu Oshiomole of Edo State in Nigeria made an impromptu visit to government primary and post primary schools in the state. This was as a result of the stakeholders' complaints, that majority of teachers in his state including some school administrators had shown great irresponsibility in the performance of their duties despite the huge amount of money invested into *education*. *One would not blame him for taking on the spot decision to dismiss the culprits*. It will be an understatement to say that if such visit is made to Nigerian universities, the result will repeat itself. It is unfortunate to note that those who are in the position to supervise shun their responsibilities either due to lack of knowledge or not having confidence in them or afraid of their lives or inadequate time due to other work load or due to inexperience or inadequate funding etc.

Plagiarism as it affects the integrity of the Nigerian University

The Latin roots for the word, *plagiare*, according to Sharkey & Culp (2005) means to kidnap. To plagiarize therefore involves an action of taking by force that which belongs to someone else. It is the theft of someone's intellectual property. Hence, Hexham (1999) notes that the common definition of plagiarism is theft. Wilson (2007) as cited in Grantham (2009) outlined different types of plagiarism as: copying an entire source and

Presenting it as one's own; copying sections from a source without proper acknowledgement; paraphrasing materials from a source without proper acknowledgement; presenting another

person's work with or without their knowledge; buying an essay/paper from a research service, another student or an online site.

Adebayo (2011) while examining common cheating behaviour among Nigerian university students equally found out that paraphrasing materials without source acknowledgement was practiced by 63.6% of the respondents. In a study by Adeniyi & Taiwo (2011), majority of the respondents seemed to blame lecturers especially in the area of student plagiarism as they affirmed that lecturers play little role in guiding students. Although plagiarism is often associated with students, the plague actually cuts across different sectors of the society as sometimes lecturers who are supposed to guide students are themselves caught in the act. Adeyemo (2013) for instance affirms the outright dismissal of four university lecturers at the University of Calabar Nigeria for plagiarism. Chiedozie (2012) also reports the case of a United States-based Nigerian lecturer who sued the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Dr. Lamido Sanusi, for allegedly plagiarising his works. Plagiarism is, therefore, not limited to a particular class of people, country, colour or gender as it can be seen in different sectors of the society. Sharma (2011) maintains that plagiarism prevention needs close institutional and teacher's cooperation. This is understandable because, no matter how much an institution wants to uphold academic integrity, it cannot do so without the lecturer who relates directly with the students. It is in line with this that Rabkin as cited in Young (2012) argues that cases of plagiarism are teachable moments. In other words, every act of plagiarism should provide an opportunity for a lecturer to guide a student on how to cultivate academic virtue by doing the right thing.

Poor research and infrastructural decay as it affect the integrity of the Nigerian Universities

In the early years in Nigeria, it was glaringly obvious that the university was regarded as the single most important industry for the production of high-level manpower and the capstone of the entire educational system. University training according to Ume (1979) aims at raising the intellectual tone of society, cultivating the public mind, purifying the national taste, supplying the principles of popular aspirations and giving enlargement and sobriety to ideas of the age. It is not surprising then that stakeholders in University education tend to guard jealously the integrity of the university and the quality of graduates produced. It is on record that Nigerian Universities have been producing high quality graduates in the past. As affirmed by Daisi (1997), many graduates from the nation's universities have distinguished themselves in their areas of specialization so much so that some of them are now professors in the best universities across the globe. This attestation is quite resounding in that quality entrants were developed into quality graduates. Due to the declining quality in recent years, however, the accolade attached to Nigerian Universities seems to have faded away. This can be seen by the flood of criticisms that becloud the admission procedures and quality of graduates produced. In his keynote address delivered at the first education summit of Oyo State held in Ibadan, Okebukola (2006) decried the quality of graduates produced in Nigerian Universities especially in the last four years and thumbed down the quality of those that would graduate in the next three years. Similarly, Adebayo (2007) commented that the non-inclusion of any of the nation's universities in the world best 500 universities is unsatisfactory and worse still, Nigeria ranked number 44 after Ghana, Kenya and South Africa in the ranking of African Universities. Previous studies in this area (Nwokocha, 1997; Ige, 1997; and Jemibewon, 1997) have pointed out that many entrants into the Nigerian Universities are deficient in academic quality. Indeed Nwokocha (1997) called the attention of the stakeholders in University education in Nigeria to the purported letter written by the British Council alerting the British Universities in general terms that Nigerian degrees are no longer comparable to

honours in the United Kingdom no matter which university has awarded the degree and in what discipline. Ige (1997) revealed how he stumbled on the examination scripts of some undergraduates in one of the nation's universities and described the performance of such undergraduates as deplorable.

In another development, the NUC (2004) assessment study on labour market expectations of graduates from Nigerian Universities revealed that there were scores of unemployed graduates roaming the streets and more embarrassingly, those who were lucky to secure employment had to undergo remedial training in order to bridge the huge knowledge and skills gaps left over from university training. This tends to negate the tenet of University education which is essentially an industry established to produce a quality workforce for national development. Nigeria has unilaterally opened its doors to foreign programmes and the commercial presence of institutions has benefited from such arrangements for a long time. The negative impacts of the foreign educational providers in some cases are provision of poor quality programmes, insufficient commitment and monitoring of the delivery by partner institutions, different quality standards, indifference or general ignorance to national criteria, local needs and policies, issues comparability of quality of education, faculty staff, and lack of clear information. Cultural differences and issues relating to recognition of qualifications are also present. Other new challenges faced by authorities come with the technology mediated provision of higher education, fraudulent qualifications and practices.

Recent development in the Nigerian university system seems to indicate that all is not well as was expected with the quality assurance in Nigerian universities system. The scenario appears worrisome when viewed against the background that Nigeria once served as the hub of university education in the West-African sub-region. This development revolves round a lot of factors ranging from the collapse of essential infrastructure to explosion in student enrolment without a corresponding increase in funding. Nigerian universities cannot meet their expectations especially in terms of the quality of teaching and research. Lack of adequate funding has clearly impaired the performance and standard of Nigerian universities as the vicious circle of inadequate funds, helplessness, frustration and recriminations is continually fed in a mutually reinforcing manner (Kayode, 2002).

Babalola (2001) reported that Nigerian universities are currently in crisis. He further stressed that there is less money to spend on teaching, research and community services. Libraries are ill equipped, laboratories lack essential apparatus, classrooms are dilapidated and office accommodations are a mirage. Many Nigerian universities even lack lecturers in the right quantity and of proper quality.

Sexual harassment as it affects the integrity of the Nigerian University

In a study assessing integrity in the Nigerian students of Mbarara University of Science and university system, major stakeholders of the Technology have experienced sexual university system comprising of university victimization on campus. 20 In Ethiopia, a administrators and senior academics study carried out among female students of identified sexual harassment/victimization higher institutions in Mekelle town of of female students as one of the factors northern Ethiopia showed prevalence of eroding the integrity of the university system m sexual victimization in a life time, since and rated the ability of the universities to entering college and in the academic year the curb sexual harassment/victimization of study was done as 45.4% (95%CI: 42.4, 48.4), female students at a lowly 28.3%.

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