

# **A MARCH TO THE FUTURE: ADDRESSING ISSUES OF UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION IN POST-SUBSIDY NIGERIA**

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## **Background**

It is my immense pleasure and honour to be at the alluring Federal Capital Territory of Abuja, precisely at the fast-pacing University of Abuja, for this commemorative public lecture. It is always a welcome idea to give honour to whom it is due and the Vice-Chancellor of the great University of Abuja, Prof. Abdul Rasheed Na'Allah, is a man of honour about whom the University of Ilorin is proud. The story of glory actually started from the better by far University where our amiable two-time Vice Chancellor cut his academic teeth in the 80's.

Let me specially appreciate our dignitaries whose presence here has added more colour to this lecture. I acknowledge the Honourable Minister of State for Education, the Registrar of Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), the ag. Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission (NUC), the Executive Secretary of Tertiary Education Fund (TETFund), members of the Governing Council of the University and the distinguished guests.

I recognise the organisers of this Public Lecture, El-Mavericky Centre for Educational Research, for the thoughtfulness that birthed this programme and I believe that this is a welcome development. I also appreciate the support and cooperation of the entire University of Abuja Community for the enabling environment created for the Vice-Chancellor to bloom like the flower in rain and achieve the milestones he has recorded at the University of Abuja, after his far-reaching pioneering efforts at Kwara State University.

Since the end of a journey is the beginning of another one, my fervent belief is that as Prof. Na'Allah is rounding off this important assignment, another one is already in the wings as his vast experience is still very much needed in shaping the future of our dear country. If we must march to the future, we must make some deliberate steps today and they begin from doing rights and doing things right justly and judiciously. I congratulate the Vice-Chancellor on the job well done so far and I still pray that he lands the plane of his Administration successfully after flying it professionally for the past five years.

## **Introduction**

When Nigeria attained her political Independence on October 1, 1960, it was a dream come true for the fathers of modern Nigeria who had fought tooth and nail to achieve the joyous moment. The feeling was that colonialism was the obstacle on the path of Nigeria's progress and with Independence, Nigeria would soon be propelled to the zenith of development and the most populous African country would be competing favourably with other great nations of the world. As no development could be conceived or achieved outside the framework of education, the significance of education was emphasised right from the start as the gateway to national transformation.

It was because of the all-important role of education that it immediately became a major focus of Nigeria's development efforts. By improving and reforming the colonially inherited education systems, it was strongly believed that the paradigm that would accelerate Nigeria's progress. Crucial to the attainment of this progress was the need for relevant manpower with the requisite competencies that would catapult Nigeria to her deserved lofty position in the global community of countries. So, the first three years of Independence were devoted to the establishment of universities, after the previously established University College of Ibadan in 1948.

To wit, barely two weeks after Independence, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, opened its gate for the first set of students on October 17, 1960 with 220 students. Two years after, Ahmadu Bello University was formally opened on October 4, 1962 while teaching commenced on October 10 with 426 students and 98 academic staff in Arts, Science, Law, Engineering, Education, Architecture, Agriculture, Veterinary Medicine and Administration. At the same time, University of Ife was opened in October 1962 with 244 students and 51 academic staff. In the same vein, after the Federal Parliament passed the Lagos University Act in April, 1962, the University of Lagos opened on October 4, 1962 at its temporary site at Surulere on Lagos Mainland. By December 27, 1962, the University of Ibadan became an autonomous university after the Federal Parliament passed a bill to establish it as such (Fafunwa, 2010).

What is glaring in the foregoing is that as early as 1960 that Nigeria attained her political Independence, university education had been rightly considered a desideratum without which the independent Nigeria could not move to the future. This was apparently why the government at

the time moved fast in that direction with a view to ensuring that educational opportunities were provided for Nigerians in order to achieve the fundamental purposes for which most universities are established. Globally, universities are established

1. to inspire and enable individuals to develop their capabilities to the highest potential levels throughout life, so that they grow intellectually, are well equipped for work, can contribute effectively to the society to achieve personal fulfillment;
2. to increase knowledge and understanding for their own sake and to foster their application to the benefit of the economy and society;
3. to serve the needs of an adaptable, sustainable, knowledge-based economy at local, regional and national levels; and
4. to play a major role in shaping a democratic, civilised inclusive society (Oloyede, 2022).

From such a humble beginning of just five universities at the first few years after Independence, university education has grown tremendously in Nigeria, just as the issues surrounding its efficient delivery. This paper attempts to highlight the issues affecting university education generally and administration especially in Nigeria. The challenges are many but some of them are exacerbated by the economic implications of the oil subsidy removal by the Federal Government on May 29, 2023 through a presidential proclamation.

### **The Context of Fuel Subsidy Removal**

Fuel subsidy has been a vexed issue of significant debate in Nigeria for many years. It concerns the practice of subsidising or reducing the cost of petroleum products, particularly gasoline (petrol) and diesel, to keep retail prices artificially low for consumers. Fuel subsidy was first introduced in 1973 in order make fuel more affordable for the general population and to reduce the burden of high fuel prices on consumers. With the passage of time, the process became a huge burden for the government and few people with access to power and influence exploited the window to enrich themselves at the expense of the public. While those who benefited from it would not want it removed as it is their cash cow, the average Nigerian would also resist its removal because it would translate to the high cost of petrol and impose additional burden on him.

Many Nigerians know that the subsidy regime in Nigeria had been fraught with the problems of corruption, inefficiency, cost escalation, round tripping and fiscal burden on the government to the extent that all the major presidential candidates in the 2023 general elections promised to remove it. However, removing it is like performing a surgery that would excise a body part that had become discomfiting as no one ordinarily wants to lose a limb. To illustrate the enormous cost involved, fuel subsidy cost the Federal Government \$10 billion in 2022 with about 40% of the entire revenue of Nigeria spent on fuel subsidies in the year. Besides, additional billions of dollars were lost through corrupt practices in the payment of subsidies (Onyeiwu, 2024).

With the announcement of subsidy removal by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on May 29, 2023, market forces reacted immediately and fuel costs increased by between 150% and 200% (N500 to N600). The impacts of the subsidy are varied and they have economic, social and political dimensions (Adedimeji, 2024).

Economically, fuel subsidy removal should contribute to fiscal savings for the government, allowing room for funds to be redirected to priority sectors such as education, infrastructure and healthcare. For instance, the N3.92 trillion allocated to petrol subsidy between January 2020 and June 2022 surpassed the combined federal budgets for healthcare, education and defence for the 30-month period. If that subsidy was removed, that would make a huge impact on the critical sectors if the funds were properly utilised. Between 2006 and 2018, about N10 trillion was spent on fuel subsidies, a significant drain on government's finances.

Socially, the immediate implication of fuel subsidy removal is unrest and agitation as a result of a sharp increase in the costs of goods and services. The potential for protests was high and lamentations rent the air with people realising the drastic reduction of their purchasing power. This backlash was nipped in the bud through the assurances of the government and the palliatives in terms of essential commodities provided to the vulnerable members of the society. This was contrary to what happened in 2012 after former President Goodluck Jonathan removed subsidies and fuel prices increased from N65 (\$0.14) to N130 (\$0.30) per litre. The development created social unrest and two weeks of protests, known as Occupy Nigeria, were launched, which eventually forced the government to reverse the decision.

Politically, while it could be easily understood by the educated Nigerians that subsidy removal is in the best interest of the country, the masses who would mainly care about prices would blame the government for inflicting hardship on them. The subsidy removal would be interpreted as an anti-poor policy and make the ruling party unpopular, if not well handled. But the situation was better handled and the government was able to communicate its sincere intentions to the satisfaction of those who may have wanted to exploit the situation for political advantage.

The context of post-subsidy removal is that of heightened economic reality, social concerns and political sensitivity. The socio-economic condition of the country is tense with limited salaries being increasingly incapable of meeting basic needs of average families. It also means that the resources that are being expended on running universities have more than doubled with funding having a multiplier effect on other factors affecting university administration and governance.

### **Major Issues in University Administration in Nigeria**

A concept that derives from the Latin expression, “universitas magistrorum et scholarium”, or community of scholars, a university is a citadel of learning devoted to the advancement of knowledge and human capacity development. It is an institution of higher learning that has authority to award degrees at undergraduate and graduate levels with research facilities or “an organised institution for the purpose of imparting instruction, examining students, and promoting higher education through conferment of degrees in specialized and all areas of learning” (Jekayinfa, Yusuf, Yahaya & Yusuf, 2010 p.47). Universities are established to promote learning, deepen teaching, conduct research, enhance service, engender development and drive innovation. In Nigeria, the tripartite mandate of universities comprise teaching, research and community service.

According to the National Policy on Education (2004), the aims of university education in Nigeria are as follows:

1. To contribute to national development through high-level relevant manpower training.
2. To develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and the society.
3. To develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments.

4. To acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society.
5. To promote and encourage scholarship and community service.
6. To forge and cement national unity; and
7. To promote national and international understanding and interactions.

In order to achieve these aims, the Federal Government has approved the establishment of many universities with the state governments and corporate bodies/private individuals also contributing their quota to the development of the critical manpower needs of Nigeria. There are 62 federal, 63 state and 148 private universities in Nigeria making 273 universities. The extent to which these universities will be able to achieve their mandates is dependent on a number of factors which affect university administration. These factors included ownership.

### **Ownership**

The liberalisation of university ownership starting with state-owned universities in 1979 and privately-owned universities in 1999 has posed enormous challenges to university administration in Nigeria. While the initial motive would often be laudable, with the passage of time, ownership itself becomes part of the problems as owners lose focus of what should be the goal of establishing universities. As observed by Faniran (2010 p.167), “of late, emerging state universities are political creations which were just established to be used for campaign purposes. The announcement of the establishment of such universities, more often than not, would have been made at political rallies before committees are set up for the planning of such universities”.

If universities are established for scoring cheap political goals, there is no way they would have the resources to run them effectively. Proprietors of universities need to be conversant with the philosophy, aims, goals and objectives of universities before dabbling into it. Cases abound where Vice-Chancellors of private universities are not allowed to function as they should do because of the overbearing posture of the proprietors, which ultimately affect administration. As Fafunwa (2010 p. 23), observes, there are cases where state governments establish universities without making adequate planning for funding them. According to him, “it is relatively easy to put up 100 or more edifices within a short period of time. It is quite another thing to furnish and

equip the workshops, laboratories and libraries and pay decent wages to those who work in these institutions. This aspect is not vote-catching or considered worthy of praise-singing.”

## **Funding**

Funding is one of the most critical issues that university administration is confronted with. This is because the whole life, operations and standard of a typical university depend on funding in terms of staffing, infrastructure, teaching, research and service. Without proper planning, a university will be gasping for breath if it does not have appropriate funding. In Nigeria, funding remains a challenge as budgetary allocations significantly vary year in year out.

***Table 1: Nigerian Budgetary Allocation to Education (2010 -2024)***

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Budget (#Trillion)</b> | <b>Education Allocation (# Billion)</b> | <b>Percentage of Budget (%)</b> |
|-------------|---------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| 2010        | 5.160                     | 249.09                                  | 4.83                            |
| 2011        | 4.972                     | 306.30                                  | 6.16                            |
| 2012        | 4.877                     | 400.15                                  | 8.20                            |
| 2013        | 4.987                     | 426.53                                  | 8.55                            |
| 2014        | 4.962                     | 493.00                                  | 9.94                            |
| 2015        | 5.068                     | 392.20                                  | 7.74                            |
| 2016        | 6.061                     | 369.60                                  | 6.10                            |
| 2017        | 7.444                     | 550.00                                  | 7.38                            |
| 2018        | 8.612                     | 605.80                                  | 7.03                            |
| 2019        | 8.830                     | 620.50                                  | 7.03                            |
| 2020        | 10.33                     | 691.07                                  | 6.70                            |
| 2021        | 13.08                     | 742.52                                  | 5.60                            |
| 2022        | 17.13                     | 923.79                                  | 5.44                            |
| 2023        | 20.52                     | 1.79 (trillion)                         | 8.80                            |
| 2024        | 27.5                      | 2.18 (trillion)                         | 7.85                            |



One major grouse that staff unions have with their governments is that of funding including payment of entitlements. The usual excuse by the government is that there is problem with money. The reality in our view is not paucity of funds in the system but what I call misplaced priority. Our governance structure is too money driven. At present, salaries of some political and public office holders are as follows:

- The President N14,058,820 per annum (p.a.);
- the Vice President N12,126,290 p.a.;
- Ministers, SGF, HoS, Chairmen of Constitutional bodies N7,801,640:00 p.a.;
- Ministers of State and members of Constitutional bodies N7,536,683 p.a.;
- Special Advisers including speech writers N7,091,493 p.a.

This only represents the annual basic salaries these officeholders take. It did not include their entitled allowances such as accommodation, furniture, duty tour allowance, estacode, medicals, severance gratuity, leave and motor vehicle loan and what goes to their domestic staff among others (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Remuneration Package for Political Office Holders**

|  | President           | V/President         | Senate President    | Speaker             | Governor            | Dep. Governor       | LG Chair          | LG Vice Chair       |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| <b>1. Annual Basic Salary</b>            | <b>3,514,705.00</b> | <b>3,031,571.50</b> | <b>2,844,242.50</b> | <b>2,447,110.00</b> | <b>2,233,705.00</b> | <b>2,112,215.00</b> | <b>908,312.00</b> | <b>853,056.00</b>   |
| 2. Regular Allowance                     |                     |                     |                     |                     |                     |                     |                   |                     |
| (i) Motor Vehicle fuelling & Maintenance | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | 75% - 681,234     | 75% -TBP 639,792.00 |
| (ii) Special Assistant                   | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP               | TBP                 |
| (iii) Personal Assisitant                | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | 25% - 227,078.00  | 25%- 213,264.00     |
| (iv) Hardship                            | 50% (1,757,350.50)  | 50% (1,515,786.25)  | TBP                 | TBP                 | 50% (1,111,852.50)  | 50% (1,056,107.50)  | -----             | -----               |
| (v) Domestic staff                       | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | 75% - 681,234     | 75% -TBP 639,792.00 |
| (vi) Entertainment                       | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | 45%- 408,740.00   | 45%- 383,875        |
| (vii) Utilities                          | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | 30%- 272,078      | 30% - 255,916.80    |
| (viii) Consistency                       | 250% (8,786,762.50) | 250% (7,578,931.25) | 250% (6,210,606.25) | 100% (2,477,110.00) | 200% (4,447,410.00) | 200% (4,224,430.00) | 25% - 227,078.00  | 25%- 213,264.00     |
| (ix) Security                            | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP                 | TBP               | TBP                 |

|                                       |                             |                            |                            |                            |                            |                            |                            |                          |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| (x) Newspapers/Periodicals            | TBP                         | TBP                        | TBP                        | TBP                        | TBP                        | TBP                        | TBP                        | TBP                      |
|                                       |                             |                            | Legislative aides (TBP)    | Legislative aides (TBP)    |                            |                            |                            |                          |
|                                       |                             |                            | House Maintenance (TBP)    | House Maintenance (TBP)    |                            |                            |                            |                          |
| 3. Other Allowances                   |                             |                            |                            |                            |                            |                            |                            |                          |
| i. Accommodation                      | TBP                         | TBP                        | TBP                        | TBP                        | TBP                        | TBP                        | TBP                        | TBP                      |
| ii. Furniture                         | TBP (every 4yrs)            | TBP (every 4yrs)           | TBP (every 4yrs)           | TBP (every 4yrs)           | TBP (every 4yrs)           | TBP (every 4yrs)           | 300%-2,724,936.00          | 300%-2,559,168.00        |
| iii. Duty Tour Allowance (per night)  | TBP                         | TBP                        | TBP                        | TBP                        | TBP                        | TBP                        | #20,000                    | -----                    |
| iv. Estaacode (per night)             | TBP                         | TBP                        | \$1300 per night           | \$1200 per night           | TBP                        | TBP                        | \$450 per night            | -----                    |
| v. Medical                            | TBP                         | TBP                        | TBP                        | TBP                        | TBP                        | TBP                        | TBP                        | TBP                      |
| vi. Severance Gratuity                | <b>300% (10,544,115.00)</b> | <b>300% (9,094,717.50)</b> | <b>300% (7,452,727.50)</b> | <b>300% (7,431,330.00)</b> | <b>300% (6,671,115.00)</b> | <b>300% (6,336,645.00)</b> | <b>300% (2,724,936.00)</b> | <b>300%-2,559,168.00</b> |
| vii. Leave (10%)                      | 351,470.50                  | 303.157.25                 | 351,470.50                 | 351,470.50                 | 351,470.50                 | 351,470.50                 | 90.831.00                  | 83.305.60                |
|                                       |                             |                            | Recess (10%) 248,424.25    | Recess (10%) 247,711.00    |                            |                            |                            |                          |
| 4. Loan (Optional) Motor Vehicle Loan | 400% (14,058,820.00)        | 400% (12,126,290.00)       | 400% (9,936,970.00)        | 400% (9,908,440.00)        | 400% (14,058,820.00)       | 400% (14,058,820.00)       | 400% (14,058,820.00)       | 400% (14,058,820.00)     |

It is therefore imperative that to overcome the challenge of funding, university administrations have to think outside the box by not expecting all funds to be provided by the government or proprietors alone. Where tuition fees are paid, appropriate charges that will match the quality of the education provided should be introduced. The tentacles of universities also have to be spread to attract research funds, grants, donations and endowments for members of the public. In essence, overcoming the challenge of funding requires increased government investment in education, diversification of funding sources for maximum impact, effective management of funds by the administrators, public-private partnerships and attracting quality staff that can attract quality funding and grants to the university (Okebukola, 2003).

### Governance and Management

While it is easy to blame governments for poor funding, the issue of funding is not just the problem affecting universities. Governance and management have crucial roles to play for the success of universities as they determine the institution's direction, policies, and resource allocation. There are problems associated with governance in a university governance and

management face significant challenges, affecting the quality of education and research. There are roles to be played by the Governing Council, the Vice-Chancellor, the Senate, the Congregation, the Convocation, the staff and the students. It is when each stakeholder plays its roles well that everything will synchronise and make the system operate maximally.

However, effective governance and management of the university are constrained by political interference, poor leadership, corruption, lack of transparency, limited participation and rigidity. All these impacts negatively on the system through declining academic standards, brain drain, strikes, student unrest and systemic inefficiency. To overcome the challenges associated with governance and management, efforts must be made to put the round pegs in round holes right from the constitution of the Governing Council to the appointment of Vice-Chancellors. The university law should be respected regarding academic autonomy, transparency and accountability, staff and student discipline, stakeholder participation and adherence to due process in everything.

Using the federal university as an example, the critical stakeholders have the responsibilities to fulfill their parts of the bargain as illustrated by Oloyede (2019):

**Table 3: Governance Responsibilities in Federal Universities in Nigeria**

| <b>Visitor (Government)</b>  | <b>Council</b>  | <b>Senate</b>  | <b>Vice-Chancellor</b>   | <b>Students</b>   |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visitation (within 5 years)</li> <li>• Publication of Report and White Paper on Visitation</li> <li>• Instant reconstitution of Council when dissolved {s.2(3) and s.5(2)} of 2003 Act</li> <li>• Proper Funding               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unit-based</li> <li>• Lump sum</li> <li>• External</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Superintendence</li> <li>• Monitoring</li> <li>• Policy formulation</li> <li>• Quality of input (Students, Staff and Material) and output (Graduates, Research and Development)</li> <li>• Quantity</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching</li> <li>• Learning</li> <li>• Research</li> <li>• Development</li> <li>• Student Support</li> <li>• Creativity</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality management</li> <li>• Coordination</li> <li>• Quality recruitment based on merit and equity</li> <li>• Welfare</li> <li>• Production of Research and Development</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passion for studies</li> <li>• Vigilance</li> <li>• Ethical behavior</li> <li>• Productivity</li> <li>• Mission</li> </ul> |

|  |  |   |   |  |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Security</li> <li>• Municipal Services</li> <li>• Enactments</li> <li>• Patronage</li> <li>• Target Setting</li> <li>• Quality of Council membership</li> <br/> <li>• Respect for University autonomy, culture and tradition</li> <br/> <li>• Support and demand for service</li> </ul> | <p>(Measurable)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity (inclusiveness)</li> <br/> <li>• Funding (creative, ethical, mobile and sustainable)</li> <br/> <li>• Quality Principal officers</li> <br/> <li>• Equity</li> <br/> <li>• Framework for due process, prudent transparent management of resources</li> <br/> <li>• Dynamism and creativity</li> <br/> <li>• Value addition</li> <br/> <li>• Implementation of white paper</li> <br/> <li>• Respectability and Contentment</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ample infrastructure</li> <br/> <li>• Vibrancy</li> <br/> <li>• Objectivity</li> <br/> <li>• Independence</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality Admission Process</li> <br/> <li>• Fairness and justice in the day-to-day running of the university</li> <br/> <li>• Easy and friendly student's registration process</li> <br/> <li>• Timely treatment of memoranda and matters arising</li> <br/> <li>• Self-respect</li> <br/> <li>• Culture of discipline</li> <br/> <li>• National coverage and internationalization</li> <br/> <li>• Excellent service delivery</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambassador</li> </ul> |
|--|--|---|---|--|

### Infrastructure and Facilities

Many Nigerian universities lack adequate infrastructure and facilities for modern teaching and learning. The equipment for cutting-edge research is missing in many of our universities.

Samples are taken abroad for analysis in some departments in sciences because the relevant facilities are not in place. This affects the quality of education offered and undermines the quest to make Nigerian universities compete on a global stage.

Though the library is central to the success of the university, most university libraries have outdated books and materials while the resources to update the collections are not always there. Limited power supply and funding also affects the capacity of university libraries to subscribe to important databases for their universities. In some universities, internet facilities are still inexistent or insufficient at the institutional level while large classes are often fraught with problems in many public universities with many students being unable to learn.

Overcoming this challenge has to do with doing needs analysis and adequate investment in critical infrastructure and facilities. It would also require adequate maintenance of the existing facilities because Nigerians appear to have poor maintenance culture.

### **Staffing and Human Resources**

Without doubt, the success of a university is directly proportional to the quality of its staff and by extension, students. Staffing and human resources directly impact the quality of education, research, and services provided to students and the university community at large. There are two major categories of staff, the academic and the non-teaching staff. Factors that affect staff include shortage of qualified staff, brain drain, poor staff development programmes, inadequate staff welfare as well as limited diversity and inclusion. These have implications for academic quality, research and innovation, student satisfaction, efficient operations and meeting accreditation standards.

It is imperative to attract and retain qualified staff through competitive salaries and benefits, provide opportunities for professional growth and development, enhance working conditions, salaries and benefits, promote diversity and inclusion in staffing and university operations, align staffing with university goals and priorities and foster collaborations and partnerships.

## **Student Affairs**

Students occupy the centre of university life as without them, there cannot be a university in its conventional sense. Managing student affairs is crucial to ensuring students' success, physical and emotional wellbeing as well as overall campus experience. For public universities, there is a surge in student population without a commensurate expansion of the existing facilities. Getting student support services in terms of counseling, academic advising, career guidance, moderating a healthy student life through extra-curricular activities, sports and student organisations, ensuring compliance with rules, regulations, policies and procedure guiding student affairs, providing health services, encouraging excellence through financial aid, scholarships, bursaries as well as work-study programmes and promoting inclusion through support and assistance to those with disabilities.

There are challenges on Nigerian campuses such as cultism and indulgence in cybercrime that pose serious threats to the success of University Administration. By giving students a sense of belonging and having zero tolerance for wanton violation of rules and regulations, students can actually be put in check especially when their basic welfare (especially accommodation, water and electricity) are provided. Ultimately, by increasing funding and resources, recruiting relevant staff and training them in student affairs, maintaining student-centred approaches and making continuous improvements in all areas in which students' interests are involved, students can be managed well.

## **Curriculum Development and Academic Programmes**

Curriculum and academic programmes constitute the heart of university education, shaping students' knowledge and skills as well as developing their competencies. Given the rate at which social changes occur in Nigeria, universities face challenges in designing and delivering curricula and academic programmes that meet the needs of the rapidly changing world. Universities have to overcome the burdens of outdated curricula, limited academic programmes, poor teaching and learning and bad environment. These conditions create poor graduate outcome, limited employability, poor research and development as well as accreditation challenges.

Universities must ensure regular curriculum reviews and new programme developments, by enhancing teaching and learning activities, fostering internationalisation and allowing industry-university partnerships. The development of the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standard (CCMAS) by the National Universities Commission (NUC) is a step in the right direction as the university system must keep on evolving. The challenge however is the evolution and development of the CCMAS which has generated a lot of controversy. Should Universities be goaded into development of curriculum? Should universities be in the position of using uniform curriculum? Should universities be in a position to determine only a fraction of its curriculum? These are questions begging for answers. While it is one thing to develop or review curricula, it is another thing to have academic staff who are well-trained to deliver the goods of the curriculum (Adedimeji & Alabi, 2022).

### **Autonomy**

Autonomy may be described as a legal and functional independence of a university to operate, govern, direct, control and run its affairs without being subjected to external forces be it governmental or non-governmental. As a university is a legal entity, with a clearly defined democratic governance structure and inbuilt accountability mechanism; capable of exercising independence in defining and prescribing its academic programmes and employ its own staff and determine their terms of engagements.

As the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) put it,

Autonomy is that degree of self-governance necessary for effective decision making by institutions of higher education regarding their academic work, standards, management and related activities consistent with systems of public accountability, especially in respect of funding provided by the state, and respect for academic freedom and human rights.

Autonomy is the institutional form of academic freedom and a necessary precondition to guarantee the proper fulfilment of the functions entrusted to higher-education teaching personnel and institutions.

However, many Nigerian universities do not enjoy autonomy. It is the Federal government-owned universities that fare best in this regard as state universities are often under the constant micro-managing by overzealous commissioners and Permanent Secretaries in the Ministries of Education. The same thing applies to some private universities where the powers of the Vice-

Chancellor are often hijacked by the proprietor leading to internal disenchantment and poor governance. It becomes so bad that some staff are fired in some private universities for not greeting the proprietor while students can also be expelled because of offending one person or another, without following due process.

Making universities have autonomy within the extant regulatory framework is germane to institutionalising academic culture and excellence. A bird with a clipped wing cannot fly high and a university that is encumbered by excessive interference cannot compete with its counterparts elsewhere. The appropriate disposition is that of releasing the university to the management headed by the Vice-Chancellor to operate, with the Governing Council doing its own supervisory work by meeting regularly.

### **Research and Innovation**

It is through research and innovation that universities can drive their discovery and impact. Research lies at the heart of the university mandate and it is the piston in the engine of the university. Research activities where basic, applied or interdisciplinary studies are critical to understanding fundamental questions and phenomena as well as solving practical problems and developing new applications. But research is often constrained by limited research funding and support, inadequate research infrastructure and low research output and publications on the part of academic staff as well as some regulatory barriers. This is further compounded by the craze for publication for promotion by academic staff without adequate consideration for impact driven research.

This situation has accounted for limited scientific progress, missed economic opportunities, reduced global competitiveness and societal challenges. Boosting the profile of research and innovation in a university requires increased funding, infrastructural development, research capacity building, industry partnerships, regulatory reforms and the enhancement of research culture. By honouring the researcher of the year as done by the University of Ilorin before now and by rewarding scholars who publish in high impact journals with money as done by my administration, the goal is to encourage researchers and motivate them to do more.

Boosting research and innovation profile of a university hinges on increased funding to power such research endeavours, infrastructural development, staff training, research capacity building,



internationalisation and collaboration, regulatory reform to encourage research and innovation as well as a conducive environment. When these are put in place, research will thrive, and innovation will grow.

## **Corruption**

It is in order to admit that the university is not immune from the virus of corruption and mismanagement. Corruption refers to all forms of deviation from justice, honesty, fairness, probity, impartiality and discipline expected from institutions of learning. It largely stems from moral impurity and manifests in selfish acts that are detrimental to the goals of education and advancement of society. It can be likened to an evil mother with terrible children. Some of the children or types of corruption, according to Martini (2014), are commercial bribery and kickbacks, extortion and solicitation, gifts and hospitality, fees and commissions, collusion, trading of information, trading in influence, embezzlement, favouritism, nepotism, cronyism and clientelism.

In spite of the high moral grounds that would be expected from the system, there have been cases of top-level university administrators accused of corruption and graft. Corruption within the university manifests plagiarism, fabrication, deception, cheating, bribery, sabotage, professional misconduct, impersonation on the part of students and professors as well as the use of institutional authority or name for personal gain. Cases of sexual misconduct between male lecturers and female students have also been subjected to public scrutiny.

It is imperative to stress that while funding is seriously affecting and hampering the efficiency of the education sector, wastages of the available resources are equally fundamental. There is the issue of corruption by the managers of affairs of the education sector either at the policy level or at the level of implementation. Mismanagement of funds and embezzlement, according to Ogunode, Ohunene and Olatunde-Aiyedun (2022), is regarded as offspring of corruption. There are also the challenge of infrastructural deficits and misplaced priority where white elephant projects are embarked upon without taking into consideration the needs of the educational sector. The Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) in 2012 embarked on a study into the issue of corruption in Universities in Nigeria. The findings (see Table 4) were mind-boggling and nothing appears to have changed since then.

**Table 4: Various Forms of Corruption in the Education Sector**

| <b>Form of Corruption</b>          | <b>Embezzlement</b>  | <b>Bribery</b>  | <b>Fraud</b>   | <b>Extortion</b>   | <b>Favouritism</b>   |
|------------------------------------|--|---|--|--|--|
| Definition                         | Theft of public resources by public officials  | Payment (in money or in kind) given or taken in a corrupt relationship              | Economic crime that involves some kind of trickery, swindle, or deceit | Money and other resources extracted by the use of coercion, violence, or threats of force    | Mechanism of power abuse implying privatization and a highly biased distribution of state resources                    |
| Examples from the Education Sector | Educational funds used for political campaigns<br><br>School funds diverted for private interest | Bribes paid to be recruited as teachers<br><br>Bribes paid to be admitted to school | Ghost teachers on pay rolls<br><br>Creation of fake diplomas           | Illegal fees collected to be admitted to school<br><br>Sexual harassment for grade/promotion | Recruitment of administrators based on the membership of political party<br><br>Good marks obtained due to favouritism |

Source: Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Abuja, NIGERIA © ICPC 2012

It is therefore important that appropriate frameworks be designed to guard against corruption in the system because the university must at all times be seen as the model. At the University of Ilorin for example, the University produced “Code of Ethics and Corruption Prevention Guide”. The document was well applauded, endorsed by the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC). Sanctions should be meted out any time there is a breach of the code of conduct while measures should be taken towards strengthening governance and leadership, creating robust institutional controls and oversight as well as institutionalizing transparency and accountability mechanisms.

### **Conclusion**

There are many issues affecting the Nigerian education sector and the university system as its microcosm. A lot of efforts had been invested in playing the blame game and deflecting on the part of the stakeholders. Every stakeholder is a leader, including the students, who are leaders in their own right today and tomorrow. In his book, *The Trouble with Nigeria* (1983), the late Prof. Chinua Achebe discussed the problem with Nigeria. “The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership.”

But the truth is that everyone is a leader with some responsibilities and everyone within the leadership structure in the university, the Vice-Chancellor and the Principal Officers, the Deans, the Heads of Departments and Units, lecturers and administrators, Chairmen and members of Committees, Coordinators of programmes even level advisers and student representatives as well as group leaders, should do their best in their various beats to change the narrative and shift the paradigm of university administration because a single tree cannot make a forest. Almost everyone is ultimately part of administration as everyone has a responsibility that should align with the overall goal of the system. This is especially when we look at how universities are expected to run as a shared executive and driven by committee system.

With everyone accepting responsibility, from ownership to studentship, the focus will not just be on enjoying the moment but on leaving legacies for the future generation. No one within the ecosystem should be like a Nigerian who walked into a New York restaurant that had a bold inscription, “Lunch Is Free; Your Grandfather Had Paid For It”. Encouraged by the inscription, the young Nigerian made a lavish order of the best of food and the most expensive drinks. After he finished eating, he wanted to leave but he was asked to pay. He protested that the lunch had been taken care of by his grandfather as inscribed on the notice board. However, he was told that though his grandfather had paid for his meal long before then, he also had to pay for his own unborn grandchild who would also come some day to eat.

This paper has highlighted a number of issues affecting university administration in Nigeria. Apart from those discussed such as ownership, funding, governance and management, infrastructure and facilities, staffing and human resources, student affairs, curriculum development and academic programmes, autonomy and corruption, there are other issues like massification of university education, policy incoherence, admission challenges, waning academic culture, poor remuneration, safety and security concerns, combative unionism and integrity deficiency, among others. All hands must be on deck to clear the Augean stable and uphold the dignity of the university system so that it will continue to serve as a beacon of hope to the larger society as it does in other parts of the world and be in a position to serve the future of Nigeria.

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