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Vice Chancellors and University Education Sustainability in Nigeria: Challenges and Way Forward

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Abstract: The study examined Vice Chancellors and University Education Sustainability in Nigeria: Challenges and Way Forward. Vice Chancellors are major players and chief executive officers in the universities' administrations; hence their roles cannot be underestimated. The social and economic development of the universities depends on the job performance of the Vice-Chancellors. This paper critically looked at the concept of Vice-chancellors and the roles and functions of Vice-chancellors in the university system. The paper also examined factors that enhance the job performance of Vice-chancellors in the university system in Nigeria. This study attempts to provide an answer to the research question that says; how has the Vice Chancellors impacted University Education for Sustainability in Nigeria? The study employed an ex-post facto research method, using secondary data that were collected from print and online publications. Content analysis was the method of analysis. The paper established that the independence of Vice Chancellors, training and retraining, adequate funding, effective supervision and provisions of adequate working resources are the factors that will enhance Vice Chancellors' job performance and enable university education to be able to perform their roles in Nigerian society. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made: The Federal Government of Nigeria and the state governments should provide adequate funds for university administrators, infrastructure facilities, adequate working resources, grant autonomy to universities and ensure effective training and retraining programmes and supervision. The suggested solution will enable the university administrators (Vice Chancellors among others) to be effective in the discharge of their roles in the universities and make university education perform its role of social and economic development.

Keywords: Vice Chancellor, University Education, Sustainability, Corruption, Nigeria.

Introduction

University education is a tertiary education created to prepare people for career life; hence it can transform an individual and society positively. University education is an advanced education in teaching, research and community service. Solomon, Ogunode and Jegede (2020) viewed university education as the education that provides post-secondary school education for citizens. It is the type of education that gives direction to career development; hence it is an organized formal education received after secondary school education. Ololube, Elechi, & Uriah (2018) noted that university education globally plays a noteworthy role in the expansion of global knowledge management. The cardinal objectives of University education are; teaching, researching, community service, career development, technological development, human capital development, and national development (University of Ibadan, 2019; Oyebade, 2016). Corroborating the above, the Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education (2013) stated that the goals of tertiary education include contributing to national development through high-level manpower training; provision of accessible and affordable quality learning opportunities in formal and informal education in response to the needs and interests of all Nigerians; provision of high-quality career counselling and lifelong learning

programmes that prepare students with the knowledge and skills for self-reliance and the world of work; reduce skill shortages through the production of skilled manpower relevant to the needs of the labour market; promotion and encouragement of scholarship, entrepreneurship and community service; forge and cement national unity; and promotion of national and international understanding and interaction.

University education is created to provide teaching and research; hence the reason why university education is headed by Professor who is usually involved in teaching and research. The academic activities that take place in university education are directly under the control of the chief executive usually referred to as the Vice Chancellor. Thus, Ogunode, Haliru, Shehu, and Peter (2023) observed that in Nigeria, the vice-chancellors are regarded as critical academic leaders because of their executive powers and roles attached to their offices. NOUN (2012) acknowledged that the Registrar is responsible to the Vice Chancellor for the day-to-day administration of the University, while the Bursar is responsible to him for the day-to-day administration of the financial affairs of the University. The roles of the Vice Chancellors and their functions are crucial to the development of the university system in Nigeria. Among the main tasks of the Vice-Chancellor are to: provide academic and administrative leadership to the whole University; represent the University externally; secure a financial base sufficient to allow the delivery of the University's mission, aims, and objectives; carry out certain important ceremonial and civic duties. The university Vice-Chancellor has a critical role to play to ensure that the institution's mission statement is vigorously pursued by all stakeholders. The administrator sets the vision and empowers other stakeholders to take responsibility for achieving it through collaborative efforts involving different stakeholders. This will help in shaping education and training to make it more relevant to the needs of the market (Ogunode, Ayoko & Orifah 2023).

This study intends to fill a gap in the existing literature. Ahaotu, and Ogunode (2020) who carried out a study on —Challenges Facing Administrators of Public Higher Institutions in Nigeria and the Ways Forward revealed that many higher institutions like university education, polytechnic, and colleges of education are faced with challenges that need urgent attention. Even though this study is relevant to the present study, the previous study is inadequate as it did not investigate the vital role that the Vice Chancellor of Universities faced in ensuring that they achieve the set objective of university education. The present study intends to fill the above lacuna. In a related development; Ogunode, Ajape, and Jegede (2020) investigated the —University Education Policies in Nigeria: Challenges Preventing the Implementation and the Ways Forward and discovered that government policies hamper university education from achieving its overall objective. This previous study is relevant, however, it is inadequate as it failed to investigate the central impact that Vice Chancellors have on the sustainability of University education, as the present study is set to achieve.

The objective of the study is therefore to examine how Vice Chancellors impacted university education for sustainability in Nigeria.

The study examined Vice Chancellors and University Education Sustainability in Nigeria: Challenges and Way Forward.

This study attempts to provide an answer to the research question that says; how has the Vice Chancellors impacted university education for sustainability in Nigeria?

The study employed an ex-post facto research method, using secondary data that were collected from print and online publications. Content analysis was the method of analysis.

Conceptual Clarification of Terms

Vice Chancellor

The Vice Chancellor is the Chief Executive Officer that oversees the day-to-day activities of university education, just like what the Chief Executive Officer does in an organisation.

University education

There are various definitions of university education based on the perspective of scholars. For

Ogunode, Ayoko, and Orifah (2023), university education is the highest form of education given to adults with the view of collecting certificates after graduation. University education is the zenith of every formal education available to humanity all over the world. In another development, Ogunode and Sarkinfada (2023) assert that a university is an institution of teaching, researching and institutions saddled with the provision of community services. Whichever way one might want to view the above definition, the paramount point of emphasis here is that University education is an educational system at the highest peak designed for the transformation of an individual and society positively in addition to the production of manpower.

The theoretical framework of Analysis

The study engaged structural-functional theory as a theoretical framework of analysis. Structural functional theory originated from sociology and anthropology. This theory was used in political science by the likes of Coleman (1960), and Gabriel Almond (1960). The major thrust of this theory is that every society is made up of a system with structures that perform various functions for the existence of the system. The political system is made up of input and output functions (Almond, 1960). The input function can be likened to the human and material resources available in the university education, why the output system refers to the students the university education is expected to impact. The two types of functions in university education are accomplished by some structures for the continued existence of the system (Ayeni & Nwaorgu, 2018). The Vice Chancellor is in the input function ensuring the coordination of human and material resources to achieve the mission and the vision of the university education. The various structures in the political system, whether they are input functions or output functions are members of the university community that can be influenced by the environment.

Vice Chancellors and University Education in Nigeria: Challenges

Vice Chancellors of Nigerian universities are faced with a lot of problems that are militating against the sustainability of university education. Emiko, (2023) reported Professor Emmanuel Osodeke, President Association of Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), as saying that the National Assembly is distracting university Vice Chancellors from carrying out their duties through incessant invitations to Abuja to face committees. He observed that undue interference with the autonomy of the university system by the federal government is affecting academic activities negatively. He maintained that most vice-chancellors are being distracted from carrying out their duties by Ministries and other government agencies who frequently invite them to Abuja to face committees.

Not only that, the government also introduced policies that frustrate the effective job performance of Vice Chancellors in Nigeria. For instance, the federal government came out with the Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System (IPPIS) policy. The integration of the federal universities into the Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System (IPPIS) according to Bello and Mela (2022) and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (2019) has slowed down the federal universities' administration due to the administrative protocol. For instance, recently, the Vice-Chancellor lamented that staff of the institution engaged over a year were yet to receive salary due to poor implementation of IPPIS. This is the worst policy of the federal government on staff welfare. The above is supported by Ogunode and Ahmed (2022) by said that the Nigerian government directed that all Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) including universities drawing their personnel cost from the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) must enrol in the Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System (IPPIS). The enrollment of all tertiary institutions in the Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System (IPPIS) has prevented effective recruitment exercises in public tertiary institutions. The Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System (IPPIS) have frustrated tertiary institution administrators to carry out smooth employment in the various institutions in the country.

The IPPIS does not recognise adjunct professors and those on sabbatical, which informed the decision of the Academic Staff Union of Universities to develop the University Transparency and Accountability Solution as an alternative payment platform. IPPIS is hindering effective university administration.

Also, poor funding has been identified as a major challenge to the job performance of vice in Nigerian universities. Sanni (2016); Akomolafe and Aremu, (2016) and Ogunode, Attah, and Ebute (2023) asserted that the university education financing in Nigeria manifested a lack of commitment on the part of the government, impacting a qualitative education to its citizenry and that this has been evident in the last 10 years where the total number of students' enrolment was triple while public resources allocated to the education sector from the Gross Domestic Product continue to decline from 11.5 in 2002 to 8.7 per cent in 2013. Olayiwola (2012); Akomolafe et al (2016) and Ogunode, Onyekachi and Ayoko (2023) submitted that at present more than 90 per cent of the funding for University education is received from the government. Hence government subvention is the main source of financing university education in Nigeria. Yet, these are grossly inadequate to deliver the University education services. There is an obvious financial crisis in Nigerian Universities militating effective job performance of university administrators.

Another major problem hindering the job performance of Vice Chancellors in Nigerian public universities is the inadequate academic staff. Ogunode, Ezema, and Olugbenga (2021) noted that many Vice Chancellors in Nigerian public universities do not have adequate academic staff to deploy for the implementation of teaching, research and community service programmes in the respective institutions. Majorities of administrators of higher institutions in Nigeria are confronted with the problem of a shortage of academic and non-academic staff. Many administrators of higher institutions in Nigeria do not have enough manpower to deploy for teaching in their respective schools. Also, Okpata, and Udofia (2016); Ololube, (2016); Nwakpa (2015) and Egu, Ogbonna, Obike and Obiuto (2014), disclosed that research infrastructure in tertiary institutions in Nigeria is grossly inadequate and generally out of date otherwise obsolete, work-shops, librarians and laboratories are ill-equipped and obsolete educational equipment and facilities are research-stressors among academic staff and universities administrators of tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Generally, Tunde and Issa, (2013); Otokunfer (2015); Van Den Hurk and Verhoest (2015); Ahmed & Dantata, (2016); Adetunji, and Ogunleye (2015); Ojo (2018); Olowonefa, Ogunode, & Ohibime (2022) ascertained that inadequate human resource; autonomy, corruption, political influence, brain, strike actions and poor motivation are major constraints to universities administrators job performance. University education has faced many challenges that make it difficult to function effectively. Corroborating the above, Nigerian universities are politically influenced in areas of recruitment, admission and curriculum development (Ogunode, Atobauka, & Ayoko, 2023; Ogunode, & Musa, 2022).

Vice Chancellors and University Education in Nigeria: The Way Forward

There seem to be many factors that can enhance Vice Chancellors' performance in ensuring that University Education in Nigeria performs its roles sustainably and optimally. Some of these factors are; the independence of vice Chancellors, training and retraining, adequate funding, supervision and provision of working resources

Independence of Vice Chancellors

Vice Chancellors of Nigerian Universities need freedom from political influence and power to enable them to perform their functions. Vice Chancellors in Nigerian Universities are held down by political power and government bureaucracies and policies that hinder them from innovative thinking and creativity. Marcus (2005) stated that in recent years governors have emerged as visible, active policymakers with significant influence on university education. Ekundayo and Ajayi, (2009) observed that universities these days are not free from the hand of politics outside the university system. The government of the day, most especially in the state-owned varsities, interfere a lot in terms of the selection and choice of the chief executive, deans, departmental heads, directors of programmes and above all the selection of vice-chancellors. A situation whereby the members of the university are not free to choose who their head should be, without government intervention would not augur well for the university system.

For Vice Chancellors to be effective in carrying out their functions, they must be freed from the hands of political officerholders. Universities must be given academic and administrative autonomy. Vice Chancellors must be given freedom to operate without political interference. Ogunode and Ibrahim (2023) and NOUN (2012) maintained that the university system globally is designed to operate as an autonomous body whereby decisions and policies for the running of the institutions are taken within the system by the leadership without any interference from the government. University is an autonomous public institution with the general function of providing liberal higher education and encouraging the advancement of learning throughout Nigeria. Autonomy is a principle upon which the higher education system normally operates and through which operational stability and actualization of goals of the higher educational institutions are ensured. When autonomy is enthroned in the right perspective, it then facilitates academic freedom and accountability. The survival of the higher education system is directly proportional to, or to a large extent dependent on the institutionalization of autonomy. Higher education exists to generate and disseminate knowledge and information, which are critical to the development of the individual and society at large. To accomplish these noble goals, autonomy must of necessity be enshrined in the system. The Vice Chancellors' independence will enhance their job performance in the universities.

Training and Retraining

Vice Chancellors of universities in Nigeria needs constant training and retraining programme to enable them to carry out their functions effectively. Ogunode, Kasimu, and Sambo (2023) viewed training as a continuous exercise; and training is a necessity for human organizational development. Training is considered a necessary factor for improving the performance of an individual as well as the organization through the quality and quantity of output. Training aims to improve productivity, it is equally a deliberate attempt to improve the performance of the individuals on their jobs by correcting any deficiency in human efforts. Training is human-oriented. Training is organised for the staff of an organization. Training is very important for university administrators and managers. Training helps to equip university administrators and managers with the skills they need to do their jobs effectively. Training aids and allows university administrators and managers to improve the quality of their work and boost productivity across universities. Effective training can improve a leader's loyalty, satisfaction, and commitment to the university. Management training teaches essential leadership skills, setting standards for universities that have a trickle-down effect on the entire university system.

Provision of Adequate Funding

Vice Chancellors of universities need adequate funds to enable them to carry out their responsibilities in the universities. Ogunode, Olowonefa and Suleiman (2023); Daniel-Kalio (2018a); Daniel-Kalio (2018) and Uche and Wordu (2015) attested to this when they remarked that adequate funding of tertiary institutions in Nigeria will lead to sufficient funds in the various higher institutions that will guarantee development of infrastructure facilities, employment of adequate staff, increment in salaries and welfares packages of staff, reduction in brain-drain problems, prevention of strike actions in the institutions, attraction of international lecturers, research development, improvement in international ranking and attainment of an effective staff training programme. Gambo, and Fasanmi (2019); Nwafor, Uchendu, and Akani, (2015) and Ifeanyi, Ogunode and Ajape (2021) submitted that the availability of funds is very important for universities administrators for the provision of school infrastructures in the universities. More funding will help the higher institutions' managers to provide more facilities such as hall halls, classrooms, laboratories, libraries and instructional materials. This means that the higher the level of funding, the more the infrastructures that will be provided for teaching and learning. Ohiare Udebu, Sarafadeen and Ebio Abashi (2022) noted that funding is germane to the sustainable development of higher education. Adequate funding is the key to the implementation of higher education programmes. There cannot be any meaningful development in the higher education sector without adequate funding. The government and institutions saddled with the responsibilities of supervision and ensuring quality standards in higher institutions in Nigeria should wake up and ensure every higher institution in the country is adequately funded.

Effective Supervision

Another factor that will enhance Vice Chancellors' job performance in the universities is effective supervision. Supervision is the professional way of improving personnel's productivity and performance in an institution. Ogunode and Omenuko (2021) noted that the National Universities Commission (NUC) was established in 1962 and its function includes; to advice the government on the establishment and location of universities; creation of new faculties/postgraduate institutions in the universities; financial requirement of universities; periodic review of terms and conditions of service of university staff, etc. Also, the executive functions include: the preparation of periodic master plans for a balanced and coordinated development of universities; receipt and disbursement of federal grants to federal universities; establishment and maintenance of minimum academic standards in universities accreditation of degrees and other academic programmes, et cetera. Effective supervision of Vice Chancellors will help them to improve their job performance. According to Ogunode and Adanna (2022), higher institution supervision is the act or process of providing advice, guidance and direction to the institutions to help institutions achieve their objectives. Higher institution supervision is an organized activity or programme that is designed to improve the institutions by checking both human and material resources of the institutions through the provision of professional guidance, advice and correction that would help the institution to improve and achieve its goals. Effective supervision is critical in the improvement of university leaders' job performance.

Provision of Working Resources

The provision of adequate working resources for the various Vice Chancellors in the universities will aid their job performance. Vice Chancellors need educational resources like infrastructure facilities in adequacy to be able to carry out their functions. Ogunode (2020) defined infrastructure facilities as those facilities aiding the delivery of academic and non-academic services in educational institutions. Infrastructural facilities include; libraries, laboratories, halls, offices, administrative blocks, hostels, road facilities, water, electricity, internet et cetera. The availability of infrastructural facilities in adequate quantities will support the effective administration of educational institutions. Ahaotu and Ogunode (2020) concluded that university administrators will perform well when they are provided with adequate infrastructure facilities. Ogunode & Babatunde (2021); and Peter (2022) observed that university administrators also need provision of adequate academic and non-academic staff.

Not only that, Akinsanya and Akinsanya (2015) and Ogunode, Jedege and Musa (2021) noted that Academic staff also known as faculty members are a key component of higher institutions, especially universities. The academic staff as the name implies are professionals who handle the teaching, and research programmes of higher institutions and also perform other academic services. The role of academic staff in the development of higher institutions cannot be underestimated because the academic staff is the implementer of instruction in educational institutions. Egu, Ogbonna, Obike and Obiuto (2014) described academic staff are human resources that university managers need mostly to be able to carry out their responsibilities. Okebukola, (2018) and Ogunode and Emmanuel (2023) noted that both academic and non-academic staff are essential education resources that university administrators cannot do without. Ogunode & Adamu (2021) asserted the roles of academic staff and non-academic staff in tertiary institutions cannot be underestimated. Okinyi, Kwaba and Nyabuto (2015); Efanga, Effiong, and Nwokomah (2018) and Ogunode and Olaitan (2023) contented that adequate provision of human and materials resources to university administrators and managers will aid effectiveness and job performance of academic staff, non-academic and academic leaders in the universities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study has been able to examine the Vice Chancellor and the university education sustainability in Nigeria, Challenges and the way forward. Vice Chancellors' roles cannot be underestimated; hence they are responsible for making crucial academic decisions for the universities. The social and economic development of the universities depends on the job performance of the Vice chancellors. The study finds out that the independence of Vice Chancellors, training and retraining, adequate

funding, effective supervision and provisions of adequate working resources are the factors that will enhance Vice Chancellors' job performance and enable university education to be able to perform their roles in the Nigerian society.

Based on the above findings, the study recommends that the Federal Government of Nigeria and the state governments should provide adequate funds for university administrators, infrastructure facilities, and adequate working resources, grant autonomy to universities and ensure effective training and retraining programmes and supervision. The suggested solution will enable the university administrators (Vice Chancellors among others) to be effective in the discharge of their roles in the universities and make university education perform its role of social and economic development.

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