



RESEARCH ARTICLE

NATURE AND SCOPE OF UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA.

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Abstract

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Introduction:-

The history of university education in Nigeria dates back to the setting up of the Elliot Commission by the British Colonial Government in 1943. The Commission recommended the establishment of a University College in Nigeria. The University College, Ibadan was founded in 1948 (FGN 2001). According to Ikoku (1987:8), “the university was conceived as a nursery of African renaissance, a departure from the then prevailing dominant convention in higher education inspired by our historical links with Imperial Britain”. He remarked that the university was construed as an avenue for dedicated innovativeness and evolution of courses conducive to producing the requisite manpower for a “new born nation” grappling with challenging developmental problems. Supporting this view, Musa (1982) pointed out that the university would help produce a new breed of leadership that would engender the unity of the country; doing so not through the suppression of opposing ideas but emphasizing the infinite superiority of persuasion over force; of perseverance over haste; of love over hate; of harmony over conflict. Similarly, ASUU (2002:2) noted that,

A University is a congregation of intellectuals, constantly reproducing and re-inventing itself and generating advanced knowledge for the improvement of the socio-economic and physical environment. And an intellectual, in essence, is a social critic, the conscience of the society, and the spokesman of progressive forces in the society in any given period of history. In the same vein, the university is quintessentially, a place where prevailing orthodoxy is vigorously interrogated and the status quo challenged. It therefore runs conflict with those who defend the status quo and uncritically accept the conventional wisdom.

Ike (2016), maintained that the university should serve as a temple of knowledge capable of producing “free men and free women in a free society.” He stressed that the university should be able to build “a brave new world where man shall no longer be wolf to his fellow man”. This view is in conformity with the central purpose of education which hinges on a virtuous society. Knowledge is virtue and virtue is knowledge. Masfield in Akinyemi (1982: 123) maintained that,

a university is a place where those who hate ignorance may strive to know, where those who perceive truth may strive to make others see; where seekers and learners alike, banded together in the search for knowledge will honour thought and uphold ever the dignity of thought and learning.

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The university, being at the apex of the educational pyramid, is a place where students are educated in different branches of learning. It is known as a community of scholars and students. The usual constituent bodies of the university are the council, the Senate, Faculties, department, Institutes, congregation, lecturers, convocation and students. According to the Federal Government of Nigeria (2013), tertiary education which covers university education and all other post-secondary section of the national education system should strive to:

- ❖ *Contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training;*
- ❖ *Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society;*
- ❖ *Develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments;*
- ❖ *Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;*
- ❖ *Promote and encourage scholarship and community service;*
- ❖ *Forge and cement national unity;*
- ❖ *Promote national and international understanding and interaction.*

Alele – William (1988) classified the principal functions of the university into seven, namely; teaching, certification, research, storage of knowledge, publication of texts, public service and enlightened commentary. In the same vein, UNESCO (1963:7) outlined the following functions of the university.

- ❖ *To teach and impart knowledge as an end in itself and for the edification of society;*
- ❖ *To seek and discover truth which for centuries has defied the genius of man;*
- ❖ *To disseminate its findings to all, so that mankind generally and the African in particular may shed the shackles of ignorance and want, and the world may be a better place in which to live.*

In Nigeria, the statutory organs of university administration are the Governing Council and the Senate. The Governing Council has an overall responsibility for the policies and operations of the university including matters of finance, staff conditions of service, discipline of staff, the property of the university and building programmes. The Pro-chancellor is the chairman of the Governing Council. On the other hand, the Senate headed by the Vice-Chancellor, is responsible for all the academic matters of the university including the provision of courses and the approval of their syllabuses; through examinations and otherwise. What the status and powers of a particular university can be known from the instrument by which it was established which may be an Act of Parliament, a Charter, a Military Decree or an Edict. University education in Nigeria is on the concurrent legislative list which implies that both the federal and state government can build and own universities.

Challenges of University Administration in Nigeria:-

University administration in Nigeria has not been an easy task because of the heterogeneous nature of Nigeria society. One of the problems confronting university education in Nigeria is poor funding. Ocho (1995:30) asserted that “everybody knows that the universities are not properly funded... yet we go ahead, and for purely political reasons, to open more universities”. The decision to establish new universities increased the financial investments and running costs of universities significantly. Universities are non-profit organizations established for the sake of pursuing excellence in teaching and research. Another threat to the survival of university education in Nigeria is the issue of brain drain. According to the World Bank Report (1991:5),

the exodus of talents from the universities reflects a wider regional phenomenon. The migration of highly skilled Professionals from sub-saharan Africa increased from an average 1,800 per year. some 70,000 Africans trained in Europe remain there, and more than 10,000 educated Nigerians are reportedly working in the United States.

The situation is deplorable as the working condition of university staff in Nigeria seems to be dehumanizing. Many professionals leave Nigerian universities for greener pastures in Europe, America and Asia.

Another essential area in the university administration in Nigeria is the students’ personnel matters. Adesina (1980) was more concerned with services rendered to students, because institutions are not primarily established to cater for the interests of teacher, parents and education administrators but for students. The university authorities have serious cases of secret cult activities, drug abuse, examination malpractice, rape and other social vices involving the students to contend with. Another important segment of university administration includes the staff personnel administration. Mgbodile (2007) referred to staff personnel administration as including “responsibilities of the

administrator in recruitment, selecting, orienting, supervising and evaluating staff performance". Simply put, staff personnel administration involves the selection, placement and retention of people working for an organization with the ultimate aim of achieving the organizational goals effectively and efficiently. In the university system, staff include both academic and non-academic staff. It is upon their character and performance that the university's claim to be worthy trustees of high standards must depend. indeed, the intellectual health of the university depends primarily on their academic and non-academic staff.

The organization and administration of university education in Nigeria according to the Federal Government of Nigeria (2013) is vested in the internal organs. Regrettably, this power in principle is conferred on the internal organizations or individuals participate in its decision-making process and governance. For instance, the National Universities Commission (NUC), the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), the federal and state ministries of education have in one way or the other played and are still playing advisory, supervisory and coordinating roles in the administration of universities in Nigeria.

It can be understood from the foregoing that one of the attributes of a university is that it has perpetual succession. In other words, although the members of the university may change, the concept of the university as a corporate body does not, so that the rights and liabilities continue unhindered. The university is equally concerned with its standing in the world intellectual community. It has a dual loyalty which includes, loyalty to the community of its origin and loyalty to the world university community. Above all, it jealously guards its autonomy in both administrative, academic and financial matters even though it may depend on the government for a substantial proportion of its finances.

Conclusion/The Way Forward:-

To minimize the incessant cases of students' uprising on the campuses, students should be incorporated in university student welfare board and other committees that handle the affairs of students, and in decision making organs that affect them. Effective administration of the students depends on the constant maintenance of the lines of communication between the university authorities and the student bodies.

There is the need that university authorities make adequate use of committees in resolving their major administrative tasks. As much as possible, committees should be instituted in all segments of the university life, from the departmental level to Council. Vice-Chancellors should use statutory committees widely to address the problems of the universities as they emanate from both students and staff.

Although the use of committees has proved to be potent, Fielden and Lockwood (1973:43-44) posited the following as some of the adverse effects of committee system of university administration.

- ❖ *It causes delay which in turn leads to decisions being taken outside the structure with the result that doubts are cast on the value of the committee method in general*
- ❖ *Preparation for committees, by chairmen, secretaries and members becomes too onerous thereby reducing the effectiveness of the committee, of participation, and of the administration;*
- ❖ *It creates an environment where no decision, however trivial, can be taken without reference to a committee; It enables the inefficient officer to shelter behind a committee and it shackles the initiative of the efficient officer;*
- ❖ *It can result in uncertainty as to when a decision is final and, if it is, who does what about it;*
- ❖ *It produces a structure so complex that few people can understand its intricacies.*

Also, the funding challenges of university education in Nigeria could be solved if the federal and state government of Nigeria increase their yearly budgetary allocations to education. In that regard, the mandatory benchmark of 26 percent budgetary allocation to education must be honoured and respected by the respective governments. This is so because education is capital intensive as it is the only sector that has human beings as raw materials and human beings as its finished products.

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