# PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION MANAGEMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY IN NIGERIA

**BY**

**[1]Laura Akoloh [2]Ibinabo Stephen Koroye & [3]Ikurite Numoipre**
**Department of Educational Foundations, Isaac Jasper Boro College of Education, Sagbama, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.**
**Email: akolohlaura@gmail.com**

**Abstract**

This study examined the problems and prospects of University education management in the 21st century in Nigeria. The demand for University education has continued to increase over the years and opinion of different stakeholder on how Universities should be managed has continued to shift in recent times. The study relied on secondary data from internet sources and journals for extensive review. It was indicated that there are challenges faced in the management of University education in recent times and such as the lack of technical competence for meeting modern educational demands. The prospects from managing these institutions were also highlighted. Major aspects of the topic x-rayed areas such as university system management in the 21st century, indicators for effective management of university education in the 21st century, challenges confronting university management in Nigeria in the 21st century and prospects were looked at in details. The review concluded that Universities can overcome the crisis associated with the exhausted resource of a classical university development system in the 21st century. They will succeed subject to their active role in social advancement.
**Keywords:** Management, Propspect, Prospect, University Education

**Introduction**

University administration is the ability of an individual or a group of individuals to influence and guide followers or other members of an organization to achieve predetermined university set goals. This involves making sound and sometimes difficult decisions, creating and articulating a clear vision, establishing achievable goals (Green, 2015), and providing followers with the knowledge and tools necessary to achieve those goals. Managers are found and required in most aspects of society, from university business to politics to region to community-based organizations (Adeyemi, 2009). According to Babalola (2007), to be an administrator in 2 the university means enough deal about curriculum and instruction, and providing guidance to staff when they have questions. It also means that we research best practices and look for the most innovative ways for staff to engage our students. It also means that university administrators should also be able to spend time getting to know students and working with staff. To be a university manager means that we have to maintain a focus on engaging staff and students to find the positives that surround us. To manage the university there is a lot of hard work to make sure they work with their struggling teachers at the same time they challenge their best teachers. True university managers do not need new mandates, policies or laws to make sure this happens. They do it instinctively and it is often at the forefront of their mind as they begin their day. University managers concentrate on preparing students for a variety of university career options at both community colleges and universities. In order to achieve these laudable goals, Ajayi and Haastrup (2011) opined that academic excellence must be guaranteed by the university managers. Academic excellence connotes effective teaching and learning, developmental researches, high impact community services, creativity and innovation, acquisition of self-independent economic skills by university graduates (Ukiwo, 2007). Oyebade (2016) puts it that it also indicates scientific and technological skills acquisition by both staff and students and high moral discipline.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study is hinged on Freeman (1983) stakeholder theory. Stakeholder theory originated in the field of enterprise management in the 1960s, and most discussions on stakeholder definition are directed at tertiary education. Freeman (1983) defines it as "any group or individual that can be identified, that can influence the achievement of a company goal or that can be affected by the achievement of a company's goals. Such as public interest groups, government agencies, trade unions, competitors, trade unions, employees, customers, shareholders and so on. "In the 1970s, business management has moved from stakeholder influence to stakeholder participation. In the 1980s, with the publication of Freeman's landmark book Strategic Management - Stakeholder Approach, more and more western scholars have invested in this emerging field. Their research has penetrated from private institutions to the public sector, and has gradually gone beyond the scope of business management and spread to economic, political and social fields. Can stakeholder theory be used in the field of higher education? What are the similarities and differences between universities and enterprises? This is the topic that this paper tries to discuss. Differences and connections between university education and enterprises According to J Victor Baldridge of Stanford University, colleges and universities are unique professional organizations, which have six characteristics different from business organizations, government 4 organizations and their organizations: (1) the objectives of academic organizations are numerous and vague; (2) academic organizations serve customers; (3) institutions need intricate technology; (4) high degree of professional dominance academic work; (5) colleges and university professionals tend to be discrete and fragmented; (6) university organizations are becoming more and more vulnerable to the impact of environmental.

However, more and more scholars point out that universities and enterprises have common ground in some aspects. Wang Jianhua (2005) believes that in the context of reform, which is intertwined by new public management, neo-liberalism and economic globalization, higher education reform has gradually entered another "discourse system". It has gone farther and farther along the road of management reform and closer to enterprise management in management technology. Jeff Whitty pointed out that "without considering their respective functions, all organizations are fundamentally the same and have the need to pursue efficiency. The conclusion is that for public organizations such as schools, to be more effective, they must become more like enterprises, one of the important measures is to adopt a good business management model. Unlike the bureaucrats, professionals and politicians who used to control public education, new managers are regarded as innovative, dynamic, flexible, candid, consumer-centric and strategic. "The paper believes that university education, as a public sector, is obviously different from profit-making organizations such as enterprises. As a non-profit organization, university is also the gathering place of 5 owners of human capital. Material capital serves human capital. Knowledge innovation of human capital is the legitimacy basis of the existence of university. However, as a non-profit organization, colleges and universities themselves are "the links between stakeholders". The stakeholder analysis framework for higher education is not in the sense of "enterprise" for profit, but as a non-profit organization. Although "not for profit" means that no one owns the ownership and residual claim and control of the organization, only the property right of the legal person, whose property right subject is "virtual", it means that higher education institutions are a stakeholder organization.

**Conceptual Clarification on University Education in Nigeria**

The history of University education is dated back to 1948 when the first higher institution – University of Ibadan was established then followed by the second generation Universities from 1960 to 1962 and the third and fourth generation Universities from 1975 to 1980 and from 1980 to 1990 the fourth generation Universities. In April 1959, the Federal Government commissioned an Inquiry - the Ashby Commission to advise it on the higher education needs of the country for its first two decades. Before the submission of the report, the Eastern Region government established its own university at Nsukka (the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1960). The implementation of the Ashby Report led

to the establishment of the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife) in 1962 by 6 the Western region, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in 1962 by the Northern Region and University of Lagos (1962) by the Federal Government. Over the years there has been a proliferation of universities including those established by State governments and privately owned. Similarly, in the course of time, it was observed that Nigerian Universities are fraught with lots of challenges that incapacitated their efficiency.

Mohammed and Gbenu (2007) affirmed that the quality of education offered by higher education institutions in recent times has deteriorated substantially. Babalola (2007) viewed the situation in our tertiary institutions as ―institutional failure‖ because of skill mismatch. He said skill mismatch is a major concern in Nigeria where tertiary education graduates acquire skills that are not demanded by the labor market. In spite of the great benefits of Universities' education to nation building the potentials of this level of education to fulfilling their responsibility are being consistently thwarted by the long-standing problems bedeviling the system. This paper, therefore, considers the concept, character, and importance of University education as well as challenges and possible solutions. Goals of University Education According to the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004), the goals of tertiary education that is necessary for system performance include to: i. contribute to national development through high-level relevant manpower training;7 ii. develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society; iii. develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate the local and external environment; iv. acquire both physical and intellectual skills for self-reliance; v. promote and encourage scholarship and community service; vi. forge and cement national unity and vii. promote national and international understanding and interaction To reiterate it is realized from the above-stated goals that the key components of the university are to offer teaching, research, and community service. Effective teaching is very important in university education as it constitutes about 40% of the university education system.

Biola (2015) submitted that all resources required for research - an important program of the University are made available to ensure Nigerian universities excel in carrying out this vital role. Communities are equally expected to be beneficiaries of the services offered by the universities. However, given these goals expected from these institutions, to what extent have they fared? According to Abdul (2013) who did a study on the evaluation of the Universities education goals in Nigeria, the goals of Universities' education is moderately been achieved. Even though the University system in Nigeria has not had a very smooth sail from inception, it has witnessed many successes. National Teachers‗ Institute as (Jake, 2012) argued that the gains that Nigeria has derived from the university education become glaring when 8 one considers the five national goals through which Nigeria's philosophy of education draws its strength, namely, to create a democratic and free society, a just and egalitarian society, a united, strong and self-reliant nation, a great and dynamic economy and a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens.

**University System Management in the 21st Century**

University management implies being able to handle (carefully and not wastefully) what goes on in the processing of educating people in the university system. A rather encompassing definition by Altbach (2005) puts ―university management‖ as meaning the way universities are formally organized and operated. Likewise, Ojedele and Fadokun (2009), equally see university management as the management of men and resources with the most highly developing minds and intellects. They stressed further that, university management entails the management of academic and human resources in order to produce persons that are found worthy both in character and learning, persons whose services are needed in the business or private enterprise and public services. University management in the words of Ibukun (1996), can be viewed from two perspectives the supra or national level, and at the internal or individual institutions levels. At the national level, the national university commission (NUC) is the statutory government organ responsible for the coordination of university management in the country Its main objectives in the words of NUC

(2004), is —to ensure the orderly development of 9 university education in Nigeria, to maintain its high standard by laying down or setting minimum Academic Standards (MAS) for all programmes taught in Nigerian universities and the accreditation of such programmes; and to further ensure adequate funding of all Nigerian universities. On the other hand, the internal management of each university in Nigeria is represented by a simple organogram. The visitor and chancellor are titular political office holders whose administrative roles are mainly reserved for ceremonial functions in general. Federal and state universities have the president and the incumbent governors, as visitors respectively. At the apex of the management structure within each university is the council. This body in his words is headed by a chairman of council (Pro-Chancellor). Other members include the Vice-Chancellor who is the chief executive of the university; he is saddled with the daytoday management of the university, with other members of the public as constituted by government, representatives of the university Senate and congregation, and the registrar as secretary and chief scribe who handles all matters which are administrative.

**Indicators for Effective Management of University Education in the 21st Century**

The quality of an education, university education inclusive can be ensured, judging by the following indices. For the universities in Nigeria to therefore achieves its goals of creating a continuous capacity to produce and re-produce knowledge for national development as stated in Federal 10 Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013), the under listed indices amongst others must therefore be strictly adhered to: i. Availability of quality human capital or resources in terms of qualifications, training and experience. ii. Adequate provisions of teaching materials iii. Modification of the content of curriculum to be market friendly iv. Ensuring quality and adequate provisions of instructional facilities such as lecture rooms, libraries, laboratories, resource centre, studio and workshops etc. (Chukwuma & Nwaham, 2007). iv. Availability of specialized lecturers v. The use of modern teaching and management techniques coupled with effective monitoring and evaluation of both staff and students. When all the above indices or indicators are given necessary attention and consideration, the goals of university education may not be far from being achieved.

**Challenges Confronting University Management in Nigeria in the 21st Century**

In the past few years, there have been myriads of problems confronting the management of university education in the 21st century in Nigeria. Prominent among these problems is the issue of inadequate funding. Akindutire and Ajayi (2007) have laid credence to this that; inadequate funding is the bane of the Nigerian university education, and this is invariably hindering optimal performance of many university managers. 11 Some of the universities in the country are characterised by poor infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, persistent industrial crisis and students 'unrest as a result of inadequate funding. This may jeopardise the effective management of university education in the 21st century. However, some of grave challenges bedeviling university management system in the 21st century is discussed as thus:

1. Poor Leadership Competence of University Managers: Most administrative problems experienced in our universities today are due to the fact that many of our universities managers are new in the field and therefore do not have wider knowledge of the technicalities involved in effective university management. While the old ones among them appeared or seemed out of date because of inadequate development (Akudo 2014 submitted). However, many of the university managers seem to have failed to use their leadership competencies for the achievement of their institutional educational goals and objectives.

2. Inadequate Equipment and Physical Facilities: In this age of accelerating technological development and globalization, modern equipment and facilities for effective teaching and learning are not only essential but must be provided in adequate and useable condition. Roberth Okah (2013), observes that all Nigerian universities particularly

the first and second generation cadre are faced with the problem of coping with old facilities including Obsolete equipment. This 12 invariably affect effective management of university in the 21st century. Lecturers rooms are grossly inadequate and most building are in a state of dilapidation and despair, libraries with obsolete books and journals appear to be a common sight in our universities in Nigeria, and laboratories with obsolete equipment equally seem to be the order in the nation's universities. To make situation worse for university managers, a large proportion of money allocated to university which would have been utilized to improve facilities are being expanded on recurrent expenditure such as salaries and allowances, leaving nothing for infrastructure and other developments (Robert-Okah, 2013).

3. Excess enrolment: This is another major challenge confronting effective university management in the 21st century. Excess enrolment as affirmed by scholars usually results in overcrowded classrooms, ineffective instructional delivery, examination malpractices, inadequate recreational and learning facilities etc.

4. Dearth of Academic Personnel in the Universities: There is an acute shortage of academic staff in most of the nation 's universities. This was further buttressed by Ngozi (2013), that many university programmes rely mainly on adjunct and part-time Lecturers to facilitate them. The implication of this is that lecturers are over laboured with excess responsibilities and this invariably may affect productivity in terms of quality teaching, effective conduction of examinations, marking and grading of students scripts and releasing of examination scores, supervision of students projects and thesis. All 13 these vital functions appear to be unduly delayed due to a shortfall in academic staff requirements in Nigerian universities. The brain drain syndrome in the Nigerian university system has also compounded the problems of acute shortage of academic staff in the Nations Universities. Most of the good brains appear and indeed scattered to other parts of the globe such as Europe, Asia, America etc. and those still in service in Nigeria, if given the opportunity will equally migrate.

5. Incessant Strike actions in the University System: perhaps one of the banes of effective university management in the 21st century in recent times is the incessant strike actions being embarked on by various Unions bodies in Nigerian university system. Nwabueze (1995), further lays credence to this that among the dire consequence of strike actions in the university system is generation of unwholesome mood which is unconducive to meaningful teaching and learning among teachers and students alike.

6. Insecurity: The spate of general insecurity in the nation has further put the works or university managers in jeopardy; especially in the northern universities where we have the ―Boko Haram‖ insurgency (terrorism), which is totally against western education. There is also the insecurity problem of militancy in the South-western parts of the country, kidnapping and armed robbery in the west, and the seemingly lack of will on the part of the leadership, the followership and the law enforcement agencies to tackle these insecurity problems in the nation 14 are all current issues university managers must grapple with in this 21st century.

**Prospects in University Management in the 21st Century**

Based on the issues raised in this paper, the author has put forward the following prospect as panaceas for effective university management. i. Government should provide adequate funds for the management of university education: This is to say that; government should allocate more funds to the universities so that they can be more effective in their operations. Likewise, the universities on their own parts should look inward by strengthening their internally generated revenue base without compromising academic standard. ii. Provision of more physical facilities by government in universities should be given uppermost attention: This is very germane to preparing students for life in the ever competitive global village; facilitating effective teaching and learning, and invariably a better performance

on the parts of both the teachers and the learners. According to Akindutire and Ajayi (2007), universities administrators should take the advantage of the Education Tax fund (ETF) in providing some of the physical facilities in their universities on regular basis; and prudent spending of such funds must also be ensured. iii. Improving the condition of service of university staff: The conditions of service of university staff (both academic and nonacademic) should be improved upon in order to curb the incidence of 15 brain-drain that seems prevalent in our universities. This could be achieved through the motivation of university staff by enhanced salary package and better conditions of service. The teaching staff should also be encouraged to carry out meaningful and productive researches that are geared towards national development. iv. Student enrolment: The issue of students 'enrolment which have exploded in recent times, over stretching the available facilities and infrastructures on our campuses should be thoroughly looked into. v. Insecurity: On the issue of insecurity all hands must be on deck to tackle this menace, most especially, the government should rise to this challenge by matching words with action; by ensuring the security of lives and property of citizenry which is one of its primary duties. Conscious efforts at achieving comprehensive and sustainable peace and security in the country should be made by government; and this could be achieved by putting in place the necessary foundations for short and long term peace and security in the country and this will invariably rub on our universities. The cost of insecurity is quite high both for individual Nigerians, as well as the nation as a whole. The elimination of this threat and enemy of man (insecurity) must be a top priority of the government and everybody.

**Conclusion**

Universities can overcome the crisis associated with the exhausted resource of a classical university development system in the 21st century. 16 They will succeed subject to their active role in social advancement. First of all, it implies that the universities 'active efforts in cooperating with the society and other international organization to implement educational policies that aid effective university management system in the 21st century is sacrosanct. This can be facilitating by applying a more flexible approach to students 'admission; ensuring diverse curricula and expanding educational variability; pursuing active policy in attracting the young to study at a university which will invariably boost human capital development.

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