

## **SUPERVISION OF UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA: PROBLEMS AND SUGGESTIONS**

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**ABSTRACT:** The quality of university education in Nigeria is falling. The National Universities Commission is saddled with the responsibilities of supervising the universities. This article discusses the problems facing the supervision of universities in Nigeria. Secondary data was used to support the points raised in the article. The secondary data were sourced from print materials and online publications by recognized institutions, opinions and views of authorities in education. Inadequate funding, opposition from ASUU, shortage of professional supervisors, inadequate supervision materials, poor capacity development of supervisors, corruption, inadequate transportation facilities and insecurity were identified as the problems facing the supervision of universities in Nigeria. To address these problems, the following were recommended: adequate funding of National Universities Commission, employment of more staff in the commission, provision of adequate transport facilities, constant training and retraining of staff of the commission etc.

**KEYWORD:** Supervision, Universities, Education Programmes, Problem

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Nigerian universities especially, the public universities are beset with many challenges. The challenges are the following: inadequate funding, opposition from ASUU, shortage of professional supervisors, inadequate supervision materials, and poor capacity development of supervisors, corruption, inadequate transportation facilities and insecurity. Some other problems include; poor quality of universities education, Poor planning, poor implementation of universities policies.

Moja (2000) observed that, the entire educational system of Nigeria is weak in terms of planning, monitoring, evaluation and supervision of educational activities. The University system is poorly supervised by the relevant commission established for that purpose.

Olaleye, & Oyewole, (2016) observe that, the National Universities Commission (NUC), seems to have been ineffective in the performance of its regulatory roles, as organizational effectiveness is a measure of the extent to which an organization realizes its goals. Punch (2019) submitted that, the backdrop of the proliferation of private universities in the country is poor quality of graduates. Some eminent scholars have accused the National Universities Commission (NUC) of poor supervision of the institutions to foster best academic standards. Victor (2014) submitted that, lack of proper regulation and supervision is part of the problems bedeviling Nigeria's educational system. It is

against the background that, this paper discusses the problems facing the supervision of Universities in Nigeria.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Situation of Nigerian Universities**

Nigerian universities are among the best in the world. Olaleye, & Oyewole, (2016) cited Borishade (2002) that, the state of Nigerian universities in the 60's and greater part of the 70's were conducive for teaching, learning and research. Obasi (2004) remarks that, during the early post-independence era, the Nigeria University system acquired and retained national and international recognition. The learning environment, the quality of learning, as well as the quality of the products of the universities were all considered good enough within the constraints of a developing nation. However, the prevailing situation in the Nigerian educational systems shows that all is not well with the system; for instance, Babalola (2001) noted that, Universities in Nigeria are in crisis as there is less money to spend on teaching, research and community service.

### **Quality of Graduate**

The quality of university education is often a reflection of the performance of university graduates in the labour market which is also dependent on the quality of academic programmes offered by the various universities. Mohammed and Gbenu (2007) and Obayan (1999) submitted that the quality of education offered by higher education institutions in the recent times has deteriorated substantially. Megbo, & Ahaotu, (2015), observed that Nigerian Universities over the years have lagged behind in the performance of its formidable task due to the nature and dynamics of leadership as well as the political and economic environment of these institutions.

Saint, Hartmet and Strassner (2003) lamented that, the Nigerian university system is performing poorly in the area of teaching and learning in terms of labour market absorption and employers' assessment of graduates while Babalola (2007) saw the situation in the 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 labour market.

Aare Afe Babalola (SAN), the founder of Afe Babalola University, Ado Ekiti, has said that, the quality of education in Nigeria had degenerated to the extent that, many graduates cannot defend their certificates. Babalola, who expressed displeasure at the growing declining standards of education, particularly university education (Punch, 2021).

The Federal Ministry of Education (FME, 2006) submitted that university graduates go jobless for the following reasons:

- A. A mismatch between teaching in our institutions and the needs of the labour market.
- B. Lack of consultation with private sector has led to teaching of outdated curriculum, resources and teaching methods.
- C. Majority of students learn through lectures and academic textbooks and are academically sound, but often have limited opportunities of acquiring practical experience by using machinery, equipment and practical techniques associated with the profession.
- D. Lack of qualified teachers to teach vocational, innovative, entrepreneurship and job skills.

### **2.2. Concept of University Supervision**

University supervision is the process of improving the performance of the universities through provision of professional guidance to the school administrators and academics. University supervision is the process of helping the universities to realize their objectives through formulation of

policies and ensuring implementation of such policies. Universities supervision deals with ensuring that universities comply with the various policies and directives for the development of the universities. The objectives of university supervision include: to realize the objectives of the universities, to ensure delivery of quality education, to provide guidance for the universities administrators and managers, to help improve the university system ranking and to ensure quality assurance in the system.

The supervision of the Universities in Nigeria takes two forms. The external and the internal supervision. The external is through the National universities Commission while the internal is through the school administrators.

#### **A. External Supervision through National Universities Commission (NUC)**

As fallout of Sir Eric Ashby Commission's report on higher education in 1962, NUC was established in that same year. However between 1962 and now, the university system has undergone three developmental phases. The first phase was between 1962 -1968 when NUC was a part of the Federal Cabinet. It was an administrative department at this time and it was headed by Head of Department (HOD) to advice the prime minister on university matters. At this time, the membership comprised of twelve (12) non-academic members. Around this time, there were three regional universities (Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and University of Ife, now Obafemi Awolowo University), and two federal universities

(University of Lagos and University of Ibadan) in Nigeria. The second phase was between 1968 - 1974. During this period NUC still remained an advisory body, but the membership was expanded to seventeen (17) comprising twelve (12) non-academic and five (5) academic members. During this time, University of Benin was established; this increased the total number of universities in Nigeria to six. The third phase was from 1974 to date. This phase could be regarded as statutory phase because, it was during this period that NUC was given statutory powers, on the 25th April 1974. Since then, NUC has been empowered to employ staff, discuss and reward staff, and was given definite roles to play. NUC increased its staff strength and created professional departments and committees and since then, NUC had been one of the statutory agencies of the Federal Ministry of Education (NOUN), 2008).

The functions of National Universities Commission include the following:

1. Co-coordinating the entire activities in all Nigeria universities,
2. Harmonizing and coordinating the development of Nigerian universities to meet the national goals,
3. Advising the government on the financial needs of the universities,
4. Distribution of funds to the Universities when made available by the government,
5. Setting the minimum, benchmark for Nigerian universities,
6. Ensuring compliance of the Universities to the minimum bench mark set,
7. Collecting, collating, analyzing and storing data collected from Nigerian Universities for use in advising the government on the need to expand the existing universities or establish new ones,
8. Setting standards to be followed in establishing universities in Nigeria,
9. Issuing operating license to approved Nigerian universities.
10. Accrediting courses and programmes in Nigerian universities,
11. Participating in universities annual estimate hearings to determine the financial need of the universities, and

12. Keeping accurate and up-to-date financial records for all local and foreign transactions relating to universities in Nigeria.(NOUN,2008).

### **B. Internal Supervision through the School Administrators**

The internal supervision deals with the supervision of universities through school administrators and managers. The university administrators include the Governing Council, Senate, Vice chancellor, Registrar, Bursar, Librarian, Deans, and Directors, Heads of Department and heads of units. The vice chancellor is the superior supervisor of the university followed by other team members like the Deans who are in charge of the faculties' supervision, while the Heads of department and units are in charge of supervision of the various departments and units in the universities.

The National Universities Commission coordinates the programmes development for universities in Nigeria, and resources verification, programmes accreditation and quality assurance. The National Universities Commission handles the funding of public universities, data administration and management of the universities. According to the Executive Secretary, National Universities Commission (NUC), Professor Abubakar Adamu Rasheed, the roles and responsibilities of the Commission had continued to expand with the supervision of 199 direct universities made up of 45 federal universities, 53 state and 99 private universities(NUC,2021).

The key to quality university education is effective supervision. University supervision is the step to the realization of the universities' goals and objectives. Udida, Basse, & Udofia, (2009 cited Ojugwu(2001) that ,supervision creates the awareness of sound educational philosophies in teachers, and makes them to be aware of educational policies and reforms. Thus supervisors are to play leadership roles that would stimulate and encourage both staff and students in the system to perform their duties as to achieve the institutional tasks or objectives.

Udida, Basse, & Udofia, (2009 submit that, the effective supervision of instruction will help administrators to identify the quality of lecturers in the institution. It will also check and balance academic staff, non-academic staff and students. Through constant monitoring and evaluation of the system activities in terms of effective control by the different heads of units or departments and constant feedback to management and good utilization of reports, the standard in the system would be raised high and sustained.

### **3. Methodology**

This paper focus on discussing the problems preventing effective supervision of Universities in Nigeria. The study used secondary data and content analysis method was adopted for the selection of relevant content of literatures related to this study. The researcher relies on published secondary data from reputable sources including review of published articles from reputable international journals such as CEON, Elsevier, Hindawi, JSTOR, IEEE, LearnTechlib SAGE, Nebraska and Springer amongst others. The Content Analysis was done by researchers who critically evaluated and analyzed journal and abstract used for the article. The style adopted for this article was to demonstrate understanding on the problems facing the supervision of universities in Nigeria. This study employed content analysis method by selecting the relevant content of the various literatures related to this study; and the literature review enhanced the overall development of the study which ordinarily centered on theoretical and conceptual exploration.

### **4. Discussion of Problems facing Supervision of Universities in Nigeria**

The following were identified; inadequate funding, opposition from ASUU, shortage of professional supervisors, inadequate supervision materials, poor capacity development of supervisors, corruption, inadequate transportation facilities, insecurity and weak school administrators as the problems preventing effective supervision of the universities in Nigeria.

#### **4.1. Inadequate Funding**

Inadequate funding of education especially, educational institutions is affecting the supervision of universities in Nigeria. The funds allocated by the federal government for the administration of universities' education in Nigeria is not adequate to effectively implement all the universities programmes such as supervision. Adewale (2017), identified shortage of funds as the bane to the development of public commissions and agencies established by the federal government to provide key functions in the country. He went further and said "Many commissions established in Nigeria are underperforming because of the challenges of funding. The federal government have not actually provided adequate funding for these institutions to enable them discharge their mandate as stipulated in the act establishing the respective commissions and agencies. Supervision of instruction at the universities level by the school administrators and other management team like the Directors, Deans and head of departments is also hampered by poor funding of the universities. Ogunode & Ababakar (2020) observed that inadequate funding is a major challenge facing the administration of universities in Nigeria. The university system requires a lot of funds for effective administration to be realized. The annual budgetary allocation for the administration of universities in Nigeria is grossly inadequate. The inability of the federal government to stick to the UNESCO 26% of national budget for education is affecting the management of Nigerian universities. For one decade now the annual budget for the entire educational sector in Nigeria is below 15% and this is affecting the effective administration of the different levels of education in the country including the university system. The poor funding of education is responsible for poor quality of university education in Nigeria. The annual budget for the administration of universities in the country is not adequate to provide the needed infrastructural facilities and human resources that the various universities require to function properly. The failure of the government to adequately provide funds for effective administration of the universities is among the factor responsible for poor supervision of the universities.

#### **4.2. Opposition from ASUU**

Opposition from the academic staff union of Nigerian universities is another problem preventing the National Universities Commission from effectively supervising the universities in Nigeria. The Academic Staff Union of Universities is claiming that, the universities are enjoying autonomy so, the universities do not need external regulatory commission. Olaleye, & Oyewole, (2016) submits that the NUC has been accused of usurping the role of the Senate on the issue of accreditation which hitherto was the responsibility of individual Universities. The Ashby Commission Report 1961 stipulated that the NUC will play a vital role in securing funds for the Universities and distributing them and co-ordinating same without interfering with their activities and in providing cohesion. However, the reverse was the case; subsequently other extant laws have transformed the NUC to a body performing other functions outside its mandate at inception. Decree No 1 of 1974 had empowered the NUC to advise the Federal Government on finance, and condition of service as well as external aids to all the Universities. Olaleye, & Oyewole, (2016) and Akinkugbe (2001) observed that there have been ominous signs of the intention to reduce academic freedom in Nigerian Universities. The idea of a nationally agreed set of minimum standard for the Universities is good though not an inevitable one. Besides, where such explicit formulations are considered necessary,

care must be taken to express them in more abstract forms than virtually handing down syllabuses to the University. An institution that cannot design his own curricula and syllabuses and being constantly innovative does not deserve to be called a university. Olaleye, & Oyewole, (2016) and Ade-Ajayi (2003) opined that, the Executive Secretary of the NUC had transformed himself into a super Vice Chancellor. The NUC claimed that the Committee of Vice-Chancellors, hitherto responsible for representing the views of the Universities was declared an informal assembly but could not challenge the authority of the NUC as a statutory body. From there, the NUC has become a huge bureaucracy. Thus, relationship between the NUC and the University system is observed to have remained controversial with persistent pressure on the NUC to hands off from the affairs of the University systems and concentrate on sourcing for adequate funds for sustainable development of the Nigerian Universities.

#### **4.3. Shortage of Professional Supervisors**

Shortage of professional supervisors is a big problem preventing effective supervision of universities in Nigeria. The National Universities Commission was set up by the Nigerian government to handle the supervision of universities in Nigeria. The Executive Secretary, National Universities Commission (NUC), Professor Abubakar Adamu Rasheed, said “the Commission’s staff numerical strength as at 2018, was 688 and that it dropped to 642 in 2019 and 628 by the year 2020 due to retirement of some staff and movement by others”. The Punch Editorial Board’s comment of August 16, 2013 noted that regulating more than 129 universities in Nigeria effectively is increasingly becoming, a burden too heavy for the National Universities Commission to bear alone. This is because, the staff capacity of the commission, is still small to handle the supervision of all the universities in the country. Adewale (2017) did a study that examined the problems facing the public commissions and agencies in Nigeria and discovered that, many commissions and agencies of the Federal Government are understaffed and the problem is affecting the implementation of their statutory functions.

#### **4.4. Inadequate Supervision Materials**

Inadequate working materials is a big problem facing supervision of universities in Nigeria. Many supervisors deployed to various universities for supervision are not been provided with adequate working materials to carry out their assigned roles. Many professors assembled for verification exercise in many universities, were not provided with the verification forms and other supervisory materials. The inadequacy of these materials is preventing effective supervision of universities in Nigeria. Adewale (2017) observed that, many commissions and agencies of Federal Government do not have adequate working facilities to execute their mandates. He concluded that the inability of the Federal Government to adequately fund these commissions and agencies is responsible for the shortage of working tools.

#### **4.5. Poor Capacity Development of Supervisors**

Poor supervisory development programmes constitute impediments to effective supervision of universities in Nigeria. Capacity development programmes is very important and crucial for supervisors and staff of National Universities Commission. Supervisors need training and retraining programmes to upgrade their knowledge on programmes supervision and accreditation. Research has it that, many staff of National Universities Commission are not enrolled into training and retraining programmes to increase their skills in supervision of universities. National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN, 2009) observed that, the development of human resource capacity for the delivery of an effective education is critical. There are human resource needs for administration, management,

research and teaching as well as technical staff support. Lack of well- trained human resources is a problem in almost every area of higher education.

#### **4.6. Corruption**

Corruption is an endemic problem preventing effective supervision of the universities in Nigeria. Corruption has penetrated into the bones and marrows of ministries of education and other agencies, commissions and departments under the ministry of education. Funds released for supervision of programmes are not prudently used for the supervision, part of the funds are looted or diverted into personal accounts and mismanaged. Some staff of the National Universities Commission sometimes compromise with university officials to influence accreditation of programmes in universities. Prof. Abubakar Rasheed, Executive Secretary, National Universities Commission (NUC) said, the Commission has dismissed one of its staff over academic corruption during the accreditation programme of universities. (Vanguard, 2019), reported that Transparency International, posited that, Nigeria now rank 146 out of the 180 countries considered as corrupt nations. This was two steps lower from 144th corrupt index rankings in 2018. Despite Nigeria's anti-corruption campaign, the country has dropped from 144 in 2018 to 146 in 2019 on the annual corruption perception index published by Transparency International. The report revealed that, Nigeria ranks 146 out of the 180 countries considered, behind Botswana (34), Rwanda (51) and Mauritius (56) among other African Nations (Nairemetric, 2020). A public survey released Tuesday by the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) stated that, the levels of corruption in public institutions in Nigeria for the past 5 years outrageous. Of the five major public institutions surveyed, the police emerged as the most corrupt, with the power sector identified as the second most corrupt in the country today. Other public institutions identified as corrupt by 70 per cent of Nigerians surveyed are the judiciary, education and health ministries. The survey reveals that the level of corruption has not changed in the last five years. (Premiumtimes, 2018). The level of corruption in the educational institutions is high and is affecting the supervision and quality in the system.

#### **4.7. Inadequate Transportation Facilities**

Inadequate transport facilities is a factor militating against effective supervision of universities in Nigeria. The National Universities Commission do not have enough transport facilities that can ensure effective supervision of universities across the country. The inability of the commission to procure transport facilities is what is responsible why universities send their school coaster bus to pick NUC staff for resource verification and accreditation exercises sometimes. The problem of inadequate transport facilities is as a result of underfunding of the commission.

#### **4.8. Insecurity**

Insecurity is a challenge of great magnitude facing universities in Nigeria today. The supervision of many universities in Nigeria have been stopped due to insecurity in the country especially the Northern part of the country. Many universities in the North East and North west Nigeria that are due for programmes verification and accreditation cannot hold, because of the high level of insecurity in the states. The insecurity have led to the death of many students, lecturers and school administrators. Many universities have been attacked which resulted into closure of the universities for some period. Ogunode & Abubakar (2021) submits that insecurity in Nigeria has prevented effective administration of universities in the country. The insecurity in the country is affecting the administration of educational institutions especially the universities. Nigeria is facing a lot of security challenges. The Southern part of the country is confronted with; kidnapping, armed robbery and conflicts over oil spills. In the North, insurgency of radical Islamists, ethno-religious, inter-communal

violence. Among these challenges, the conflict in the North East requires particular attention as it has caused negative significant impacts on education service delivery in the affected areas. Since 2009, the Boko Haram has affected nearly 15 million civilians and left widespread devastation in North-East Nigeria. The activities of the dreaded Boko Haram have caused the higher institutions and especially the universities more harm. Many of the universities located in the Northern part of the country have been attacked and many lecturers and students killed. The continuous attack on the universities in the Northern part of Nigeria by the insurgents is preventing effective supervision of the universities.

#### **4.9. Weak Universities Administrators**

The weak leadership of many universities in the Nigerian is also a contributory factor responsible for poor supervision of the universities. Many Vice chancellors, Directors, Deans and Heads of Department appointed to provide leadership and supervision for universities and other sub-units within the universities are weak in discharging their supervisory functions. Udida, Bassey, & Udofia, (2009). Observed that Leaders in some universities are weak, uncoordinated and lack administrative skills. Some do not have administrative knowledge or skills. According to Taiwo (1980) in Ekaette (2001), a lot of higher education managers do not poses the charisma, or good human relations needed for effective and efficient leadership. As a result of the poor leadership and ineffective style of administration, a lot of programmes of activities are not carried out in such institutions such as provision of grant for research and publications. Staff welfare is neglected, no adequate control of staff and students, no vision for the University. Such leaders also do not have the zeal for supervision and monitoring of institutional activities. This can affect the systems performance in that, workers conduct can result into undesirable attitude to work and hence, no sustainability or continuity of good track records of performance in the system. Nigerian Higher Educational System needs leaders who can position it to an enviable height, success and progress(Udida, Bassey, & Udofia, 2009, Ujomu (2001). The inability of the various university administrators to effectively carry out their supervision functions is affecting the effective supervision of the universities. This has led to poor supervision and poor quality of education.

### **5. Conclusion**

From the paper reviewed and literature analyzed, the paper concluded that, inadequate funding, opposition from ASUU, shortage of professional supervisors, inadequate supervision materials, poor capacity development of supervisors, corruption, inadequate transportation facilities, insecurity and weak universities administrators problems are the problems preventing effective supervision of universities in Nigeria.

#### **5.1. Recommendations.**

To address the following problems identified, the following were recommended:

1. Government should increase the funding of the National Universities Commission to enable it carry out its functions effectively.
2. Government should direct the executive secretary of the commission to recruit more staff with specialization on supervision and monitoring.
3. More transport facilities should be provided for the commissions to aid its delivery mandate without the commission depending on individual universities for transportation of its staff during supervision and programme accreditation

4. Adequate supervisory materials should be provided for supervisors to enable them carry out their functions. Each supervisors should be provided with stationaries, pen, calculators etc.
5. Riot act should be read for all the supervisors going on supervision and the commission should ensure all forms of corruption practices are fought and addressed.
6. Adequate security should be provided for supervisors on special functions across the country to ensure their safety.
7. Zonaloffices should be established within the six geo-political zones to handle issues of supervision and quality assurance for the universities.
8. Constant training and retraining programmes should be organize for supervisors in the National Universities Commission.
9. National universities Commission Desk officers should be appointed in all the universities. The Desk officer's office should be domiciled in the academic planning unit.
10. The Academic Staff Union of Universities should support the activities of the National Universities Commission and the commission should ensure that, the Academic Staff Union of Universities are actively involved in the supervision of oprogrammes of the universities.

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