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Political Influence, Appointment of Principal Officers, Staff Recruitment, and Establishment of Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to assess the extent of political influence on the appointment of principal officers, staff recruitment and establishment of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The paper used secondary data. The secondary data were collected from both print and online publications through content analysis. The papers' findings revealed that there is political influence on the appointment of principals' officers of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The study also disclosed that staff recruitment in tertiary institutions and the establishment of tertiary institutions in Nigeria were influenced politically by politicians in power. Based on the findings of this study, the paper recommends that: The government should grant full autonomy to tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The government should allow full implementation of all agreements reached with the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) to empower the institutions to follow the recruitment policy and recruit into the various institutions. Tertiary institutions regulatory agencies should be mandated to develop a national plan on tertiary institutions establishment and locations to prevent politics in the location and siting of institutions across the country.

Keywords

Political Influence, Appointment of Principals Officers, Staff Recruitment

Introduction

Tertiary education is the final stage of education that handles the production of manpower for the social, economic and technological development of a country. Tertiary education is an organized education that deals with intensive teaching, research and provision of community

services. Tertiary institutions are a micro section of the larger society. Tertiary institutions are an organized fraction of the whole society carved out for teaching programmes, research and provision of community service (Ogunode, Ayeni, & Ogwuche, 2024). The tertiary institution can also be seen as a subset of the general society that is made of a collection of different people, different cultures, different lifestyles and different values (Ogunode & Odo, 2023).

A Nigerian tertiary institution is overwhelmed with political influence or interference. Osuji (2015) noted that Nigeria is a highly politicised society with diverse, ethnic, geographical and religious interests. Ayeni and Ezirim (2023) argued that tertiary institutions in Nigeria are no doubt established for political consideration rather than the needs of the people. The role of politics in the management of schools in Nigeria is affected by government interference. This is because politics and school management cannot be separated. The objectives of education, the control, production, process variables, financial and accreditation system are tied inescapably to politics. Hence the reason why, access to education is expected to empower people to enable them to provide for their basic needs (Ayeni, Sani, Idris, & Uzoigwe, 2019). The concept of political influence has been well articulated by educators and social scientists like Ogunode (2020); and Elujekwute (2019) who all agreed that the aim of political influence in an institution like a school is to control the decision in terms of appointment of leaders and recruitment of staff. Globally, tertiary institutions are designed to operate autonomously. This is to prevent political influence. The presence of politics and political interferences in the establishment, recruitment and management of tertiary institutions in Nigeria appears to be affecting the development of the institutions.

It is on the above note that this study intends to examine the extent of political influence on the appointment of principal officers, staff recruitment and establishment of tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to assess the extent of influence of political influence on the appointment of principal officers, staff recruitment and establishment of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The specific objectives are;

1. To find out the extent of political influence on the appointment of principal officers of tertiary institutions in Nigeria.
2. To assess the extent of political influence on staff recruitment in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.
3. To determine the extent of political influence in the establishment of tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study;

1. To what extent does the government politically influence the appointment of principal officers of tertiary institutions in Nigeria?
2. To what extent does the government politically influence staff recruitment in tertiary institutions in Nigeria?
3. To what extent does the government politically influence the establishment of tertiary institutions in Nigeria?

Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored on role theory that was developed by George Herbert Mead in 1934. Other theories like Merton (1957), and Simmel (1991) among others contributed to the development of the theory. This theory assumes that each social status involves not a single role but an array of roles (Uche, & Uche, 2014). The role theory hinges on the principle that the developing social role theory focuses on how well individuals adopt and act out their roles during interactions. Individuals do not necessarily embrace all the identities associated with their roles, though; the extent to which they are committed to identifying with the expectations placed on them can vary. As an outcome of these interactions, individuals may identify themselves or be identified by others as holding particular statuses or positions.

The theory is relevant to the present study because politicians, principal officers, and staff of tertiary institutions have various roles to play in achieving the purpose of setting up tertiary institutions. Following the roles that individuals are expected to play; Ayeni (2018) has argued that there is a need for integrity to be displayed that enables everybody to do what is expected of them without fear or favour. It is expected of the government to play its roles with all effort and commitment to ensure the autonomy of the tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Political Influence

Political influence is the use of politics to control resource allocation and decision-making in an institution or state. Olayinka (2018) defined political influence on education in the context of this study refers to the success of good educational policies issued by the government on the citizens, as the formulation of policies is influenced by the political parties in power which sometimes are criticized by the opposition party. *Political influence* is the ability of private individuals

and groups to influence, condition, shape, and control authoritative decisions and actions. *Political influence* is the power sought by politically active persons like legislators, ministers, leaders, et cetera. Political influence is an instrument by the political officers to control resources. Gbenu, (2012) posited that political influence is the use of power, influence, and authority by the government of the day, especially in the allocation of resources.

Nnemme (2011) differentiate between positive and negative political influence, positive political influence is when proper decisions are taken in the distribution of resources, the appointment of principals, board of governors, members of the board, allocation of funds to schools, the appointment of staff personnel, good relation of the school community and proper welfare of students. The influence is negative where there is discrimination, favouritism, and bias in the appointment of principals, promotion of teachers, the selection of the board of governors, appointment of the board of governors, allocation of funds, and lack of freedom on the parts of the principals, teachers, school-community relation member of the board of governors and board of members to express their opinions on matters affecting them.

Appointment of Principal Officers

The principal officers in Nigerian tertiary institutions include; the Vice Chancellor, Registrar, Bursar and Chief Librarian. The processes of appointing them include advertisement of the position in national newspapers to invite applications, selection of candidates for interview by the committee, review of candidate performance based on specifications stated in the advertisement, qualifications and experiences; committee selection of the best three candidates to be forwarded to the presidency in the case of federal institutions or Governor officer in case of state institutions for the final approval and appointment (Ogunode, Haliru, Shehu, & Peter, 2023; Ogunode, Ezema, & Olugbenga, 2023). Principals' officers are critical to the development of tertiary institutions. Their roles in fixing the problems facing tertiary institutions in Nigeria cannot be underestimated. The functions of principal officers include; supervision, resource allocation, plant management, staff recruitment, curriculum development, infrastructure facilities provision, ensuring staff development, and ensuring implementation of teaching, research and community service programmes. The performance of principal officers in tertiary institutions is to bring about the idea of accountability that could engender development (Muhammed & Ayeni, 2018). The reason for principal officers in tertiary institutions is to ensure the survival and efficiency of tertiary institutions this is on the premise that organisations and institutions of government are surrounded by the environment, hence the survival of the organisation depends on the environment and how

the organisation can blend with the environment is of paramount important (Ayeni, & Dada, 2018, p, 89).

Staff Recruitment

Recruitment is the act of employing an individual into an organisation or institution to carry out a designed function at a particular time. Recruitment is the whole process of finding, identifying, sourcing, screening, shortlisting, and interviewing candidates for jobs within institutions such as educational institutions. Recruitment also is the process involved in identifying and choosing individuals for defined functions in an organisation. Recruitment is the process of selecting, identifying and choosing an individual that meets the requirement for placement in an organisation actively seeking out, finding and hiring candidates for a specific position or job. The recruitment definition includes the entire hiring process, from inception to the individual recruit's integration into the company. Recruitment is the process of actively seeking out, finding and hiring persons for a specific position or job. The recruitment definition includes the entire hiring process, from inception to the individual recruit integration into the company (NOUN, 2012; Ogunode & Ahmed, 2022).

Recruitment in educational institutions involves the systematic *process of identifying, attracting, interviewing, selecting, hiring and onboarding personnel (teaching and non-teaching)*. Employment of good quality teachers in tertiary institutions is a pre-condition to quality of instruction. The case study on how to attract staff of good quality and their retention in tertiary institutions (universities) is done. The same process transpires in polytechnics, mono-technics and colleges of education. (Babalola, 2008), notes that the general procedure for attracting, selecting and retraining the best scholars to teach at the university level in Nigeria involves articulation of staff posts, requisition by heads of academic units, authorization by the establishment unit to recruit, advertisement (internal/external to contact all sources), application analysis into suitable, possible and unsuitable applicants, short-listing from the suitable list, assessment of suitable applicants through interviews, appointment (letter) subject to medical test and references and acceptance of offer by the most suitable applicant(s). Others include administrative appropriation (opening of a file and organization of induction), assumption of duty by filling in an engagement form, addressing the letter of regret to unsuccessful applicants, and an accounting system for effective coordination of payroll. In Nigeria, tertiary institutions have different ways and policies of recruiting their staff. For instance, (Nwodm, 2021) explained the procedure for Recruitment, Selection and Appointment of Non-Academic Staff at the University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

The regulations governing staff conditions of service provide amongst others the following procedures for recruitment, selection and appointment of Junior Staff: All vacancies shall be advertised. Such advertisement shall be in any Nigerian newspaper and shall ensure that adequate time is given for the receipt of applications; copies of the applications duly listed shall be sent to the Dean or Head concerned within two weeks of the close of the advertisement; the Dean or Head of Department shall prepare a shortlist of suitable candidates and send to the Registrar within 7 days of the receipt of the scheduled application from the Registrar; interview and selection exercise for post on CONTISS1-3 shall be conducted in the Faculty or Administrative/Technical Department Service Unit concerned and the report shall be endorsed by the Dean/Head of Department to the Registrar, who shall consider the report and where appropriate approve the report for necessary action on behalf of the Junior Staff Committee; the Selection Committee and its Chairman in the Faculty/Department/Service Unit shall be nominated by the Dean/ Head concerned and approved by the Registrar; the Selection Committee shall ensure that the academic, professional recruitments, as well as experience stipulated in the advertisement are adhered to in making its recommendations; references and background information on candidates shall be sought and placed before the interview panel to enable it assess the candidates in detail; the Registrar shall on behalf of the Junior Staff Committee consider the report and offer appointment where appropriate, to those recommended and present the interview report to the Junior Staff Committee, thereafter for ratification (Nwodm, 2021).

Establishment of Tertiary Institutions

Tertiary institutions are licensed by institutions established by the federal government in Nigeria. To establish tertiary institutions, various government agencies have designed processes. NUC (2024) outlined the following:

Guidelines for establishing institutions of higher education in Nigeria

According to the recommendations of the Commission on the Review of Higher Education in Nigeria, the Federal Government of Nigeria has approved guidelines for the establishment of higher institutions of learning in Nigeria. Relevant excerpts contained in the Education (National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions) (Amendment Decree No. 9 of 1993 are reproduced here under:-

19A. An institution of Higher Education may be sponsored or owned by the Government of the Federation or of a State or Local Government or by any of the following, that is:-

- a. By a Company incorporated in Nigeria: or

- b. By an individual or association of individuals who are citizens of Nigeria, and who satisfy the criteria set out in the Schedule to this Act for establishment of institutions.

19B-(1) Application for the establishment of an institution of higher education shall be made to the Minister:-

- a. in the case of a University, through the National Universities Commission;
- b. in the case of a Polytechnic or College of Agriculture, through the National Board for Technical Education;
- c. in the case of a College of Education, through the National Commission for Colleges of Education; and
- d. in any other case, through the Director-General of the Federal Ministry of Education, following the guidelines prescribed for making the application.

(2) No State, Local Government or tertiary institution shall benefit from the education tax concerning a tertiary institution unless the application for the establishment of that tertiary institution was made following the provision of subsection (1) of this section.

(3) No person shall be approved to establish an institution of higher education unless the criteria set out in the Schedule to this Act have been satisfied.

Criteria for establishing an institution of higher education

(1) The academic structure and spread of discipline of the institution shall be such as would cater for areas of felt needs.

(2) 1. Evidence shall be produced to show that the institution would be provided with adequate:-

- (a) Funding, both Capital and Recurrent;
- (b) Academic and Support Staff.

2. The proposed staffing guidelines shall meet with current guidelines of:-

- (a) The National Universities Commission; or
- (b) The National Board for Technical Education; or
- (c) The National Commission for Colleges of Education, as the case may be.

(3) The Federal Government must be satisfied that, on approval being given, the sources of funding and necessary funds will be available.

(4) The Federal Government or its accredited agency shall ascertain and be satisfied itself that:-

- (a) The fixed and enabling assets, that is, funds, land, movable and immovable assets, are appropriate for establishing the institution in the light of such factors as:-
 - i. The type of institution envisaged,
 - ii. Its philosophy and objectives,

- iii. The cost of goods and services prevailing at the time;
 - (b) The assets shall be assigned to the institution on approval being given for the institution to be established; and
 - (c) That the applicant has supplied a concrete and guaranteed source of financial support for the University to the tune of N200 million, N100 million for Polytechnic or Mono technic, and N50 million for a College of Education, over 5 years.
- (5)** (1) A proposed institution shall have spelt out a master plan for infrastructural and programme development for at least 20 to 25 years which shall make adequate provision for:-
- (a) Plan space, aesthetic beauty and fixed final assets;
 - (b) Minimum land area of 100 hectares for a University, 50 hectares for a Polytechnic or Monotechnic and 25 hectares for a College of Education, in a salutary site.
- (2) The site's distance from an urban complex shall take into account the availability of municipal services, including water, transportation, private accommodation, communication and other consequential inadequate in its Community.
- (6)** (1) A proposed institution shall have an adequate environment base and shall be open to all Nigerians irrespective of ethnic derivation, social status, religious or political persuasion.
- (2) Accordingly, its laws and status shall not conflict with the conventional responsibilities in academia or interfere with avowed traditional institutional autonomy.
- (7)** To pre-empt problems of inadequate municipal facilities, the proposed institution shall have a clear policy on student and staff accommodation and catering services.
- (8)** The proposed institution shall have a well-articulated mission and set of objectives which may be original and innovative but unequivocally in consonance with the socio-economic and political aspirations of Nigeria.
- (9)** To create and sustain credibility and confidence from the start, the administrative structure of the proposed institution shall not depart too radically from established norms.
- (10)** The library, laboratory and workshop facilities including instructional tools and consumables, shall be adequate and there shall be long-range plans for sustaining them.
- (11)** The planning and feasibility report of the proposed institution includes proposed contracts and affiliation with existing similar institutions and plans for cooperation and interaction.
- (12)** The criteria set out in this Schedule shall also apply to a proposed institution which is an Open University except that:-
- (a) The minimum land area requirement shall not apply; and
 - (b) Guidelines prescribed by the appropriate authority as regards technical infrastructure for functional and effective operation shall be satisfied (NUC 2024).

Methodology

The objective of this article is to discuss the extent of influence of political influence on the appointment of principal officers, staff recruitment and establishment of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This paper used secondary data. The secondary data were from reputable sources such as CEON, Elsevier, Hindawi, JSTOR, IEEE, Learn Techlib SAGE, Nebraska and Springer amongst others. This research used content Analysis in the selection and analysis of papers, journals and abstracts used for the article. The final literature collected was used for the paper.

Results and Discussion

Q1: To what extent does the government politically influence the appointment of principals' officers of tertiary institutions in Nigeria?

The rate at which the government influences the appointment of principals' officers of the tertiary institutions in Nigeria is high because they are the ones providing the funds for the management of the institutions. This political influence has resulted in a situation where scholars like Ayeni, Tusayi, Joseph and Obatayo (2018, p, 98) have posited that Public office has become cash and carry in Nigeria's political system. However, Ekpiken & Francis (2015) maintained that with the government's commitment to the skills required for more rapid growth of the economy and the provision of basic knowledge to the citizens of this country, there came an increased financial commitment and support from the Federal Government to the educational systems in this country, especially the Higher Education. The rationale for such commitments is predicated upon the doctrine of Human capital which implies that without the required stock of skills, physical capital accumulation will be unable to lead to rapid economic growth (Okwori, 1995). Based on the huge funds committed by the government in the provision of education for the citizenry, it became incumbent on it to assert some degree of control on educational operations in the areas of policies, and implementation of its programmes, especially in higher education (Ekpiken et al., 2015).

Ogunode and Musa, (2020) noted that the activities of these governing councils are affecting the effective administration of the public universities in Nigeria. The alarming level of political interference in the administration of public universities in Nigeria is frightening. The visitors of the universities who are the chief executives (president/governor) have reserved powers to appoint the chancellors and constitute the governing council of various universities under them and select their cronies as members. These appointees in turn interfere in the internal management of the university such as the selection of VCs and other principal officers of the universities. This practice is seriously jeopardizing the administration of universities in Nigeria. Ogunode (2020) opined that another big challenge facing the administration of public universities in Nigeria is

political influence. The public universities have been designed to function with political officer-holders or politicians in the country. The school administrators of public universities are answerable to the governing council constituted by the government to manage the affairs of the public universities in the country.

The appointments of many public universities are politically influenced in Nigeria. The government of the day uses the council members to influence the choice of their candidate. They act regulating the responsibilities of the governing council empowers the council to appoint vice-chancellors (Ogunode & Musa 2022). The Act stipulates that: "The Governing Council of a university shall be free in the discharge of its functions and exercise of its responsibilities for the good management, growth and development of the university. "Section 3 (4) of the same 2003 Amendment repose on Council the power to appoint the vice-chancellor of the university. For instance, the former Minister of Education, Malam Adamu Adamu as reported by Guardian (2021), accused some state governors of hijacking the process of appointing vice-chancellors for Federal Universities, due to apathy in the selection processes. Adamu described this vested interest as responsible for the unimaginable crises in the selection processes of the vice-chancellors for those particular universities in the country, citing the development as leading to "unnecessary frictions and tension in the institutions". Pinga, Ivase, and Nomayu, (n.d) and Yawe, Ivagher, and Ijov (2015) discovered political influence in the appointment of principal officers of tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

2Q: To what extent does the government politically influence staff recruitment in tertiary institutions in Nigeria?

Many politicians in Nigeria are using their political influence to influence the employment of their cronies and friends in public universities. Nnenne (2011) observed that government interference in school management to a large extent has influenced the management in different ways. It is observed that in areas of employment within the education sector, politics to a large extent determines who is to be taken and who is not to be employed. Ogunode, Ajape & Jegede (2020) opined that politicians have at least a slot in any recruitment processes in the Nigerian higher institutions. These slots being given to politicians end up being given to people who the leadership of tertiary institutions might not be able to effectively control because of their godfather, this development affects efficiency in tertiary institutions, thus it has been argued that "leadership in an organisation will not be effective without the power to reward and punish that they have that make their subordinates carry out their instructions" (Ayeni, & Andeshi, 2022, p, 5), Sometimes their candidates may not qualify; they influence their employment against the policies of the

institutions. This development has led to the situation that scholars refer to as the inability of structure to perform its function causing the system to malfunction (Ayeni & Nwaorgu, 2018; Joseph, Cinjel & Ayeni, 2017), The activities of political officeholders and politicians in the Nigerian higher institutions are a threat to the sustainability of higher education policies. Alemika, (n.d.) opined that the absence of effective oversight of incompetent and unaccountable management officials and organs (principal officers, Senate, A & PC committees, faculty and departments boards and heads) is due to weak oversight and primordial considerations. Marcus (2005) corroborates this opinion that in recent years governors have emerged as visible, active policymakers with significant influence on university education especially in the area of staff employment, appointment and promotions. For instance, in December 2020, according to Nwodm, (2021), the authorities of the Rivers State University conducted a recruitment exercise for academic and non-academic positions in the Institutions. A total of 125 non-academic staff and 148 academic staff positions were filled at various levels in the various Departments and Faculties in the Institution. This was after over 5 years of non-recruitment of staff in the Institution.

However, stakeholders in the University, especially the Academic Staff Union of Universities, (ASUU) faulted and kicked against the process and guidelines as not following due process. For instance, it accused the administration of not making the job vacancies open by advertising it to members of the public, both locally and internationally. This flouted the first process stipulated by the recruitment policy of the University. This process seemed to be hijacked by persons in authority and politicians outside the University to favour specific candidates in the process. The union threatened a local industrial action if the process was not reversed. There was palpable tension on Campus over the threat by ASUU. The stance of the Union was based on the fact that there was no form of competitiveness in the selection process, it did not give qualified and quality personnel a fair chance of applying for the vacant positions thus sweeping merit under the carpet. Not following this initial procedure creates room for manoeuvring the process as favoured candidates are most likely to be recruited during the exercise. There were also reports that the Faculty Selection Boards, for the respective Departments were not properly constituted as some elected representatives on the Board were not informed of the interview dates.

3Q: To what extent does the government politically influence the establishment of tertiary institutions in Nigeria?

The role of education is germane for the overall development of every society thus, Ayeni, Abdullahi and Andeshi, 2021, p, 38) noted that the absence of an educated population is one of the missing links why a developing country like Nigeria finds it difficult to achieve economic

development. Ogunode & Omenuko, (2021) established the result when they observed that political influences are a major problem hindering the effective planning of university education in Nigeria. Nigerian politicians both at the legislative arm and executive arm of government are always influencing the siting of universities in their states, local government and towns. Strategic planning on university distribution is always been altered to favour politicians in power because educational planners are influenced to site Universities in their communities. Nigerian politicians have taken the establishment of universities as constituent projects. Bills are sponsored every year by honourable members of the National Assembly for Universities establishment in their state and senatorial district. Okoli, Oghondah, & Ewor (2016) observed that there has been political interference in the establishment of universities in Nigeria. With the return of civil rule in 1999, the spate of government's establishment of Federal universities continued, beginning in 2002 when the Obasanjo administration resuscitated the National Open University Nigeria Lagos, which was suspended in 1984. Ogunode & Ajape (2021) observed that politicians both at the federal and state levels especially those in the position of president and state governors' influence the location of higher institutions in their states and communities to attract development and achieve political gain by altering the national document on siting of educational institutions in the country. The rationale for the establishment of tertiary institutions is corroborated by Ayeni, Saman & Sani, 2019) when they argued that capital expenditure by the government will guarantee sustainable economic growth. Presently, a university of transportation has been established in Katsina state, the state of the current president.

Findings

The findings indicated that the appointment of principal officers in tertiary institutions is influenced politically. This finding of this study is in line with the discovery of Pinga, et al. (n.d) and Yawe, Ivagher, & Ijov (2015), that appointment of vice-chancellors, Registrar, Bursar and Chief Librarian is influence politically.

The study also disclosed that the establishment of tertiary institutions in Nigeria is influenced politically. Olayinka, (2018) and Ogunodd et al. (2022) submitted that the location of universities in Nigeria has come under great political influence. Universities are not located based on needs and national interests but based on political interests and influence. Okoli et al. (2016) opined that there has been political interference in the establishment of universities in Nigeria.

The study revealed that staff recruitment in tertiary institutions was influenced by politicians in government. This result is in line with the findings of Ogunode et al. (2022) and Nwodm (2021)

who found that recruitment of staff (academic staff and non-academic staff) in tertiary institutions in Nigeria at both federal and state are influenced politically.

Conclusion

The management of tertiary institutions in Nigeria is influenced politically. This gives room for political influence in the appointment of principals' officers and recruitment of staff in the system.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, the paper recommends that:

1. The government should grant full autonomy to all tertiary institutions to prevent political influence in the appointment of principal officers.
2. The government should allow full implementation in all tertiary institutions to empower the institutions to follow the recruitment policy and recruit into the various institutions.
3. Tertiary institutions regulatory agencies should be mandated to develop a national plan on tertiary institutions establishment and locations to prevent politics in the location and siting of institutions across the country.

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