

Politics in the Management of Nigerian Higher Education: Risks and Realities

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Abstract

It is undisputed fact that education is an instrument for social transformation and sustainable national development. Nigeria higher education was established to produce the needed middle manpower necessary for transforming the available natural resources to the greater height of the economy. However, the political issues had been influencing effective management of Nigerian higher education in the areas of teaching, appointments, admission, research and community services in many ways. The paper therefore examines the concepts of politics, the mode of political involvement, in the areas of institutional location, funding, policy making, appointments, institutional ranking and admission policy. The paper further looked into the risks and the realities expected from the politics for effective higher educational management. It was concluded that the management of Nigerian higher education had been greatly influenced by political interference which had been greatly affected the quality of the products. It was however suggested that the issues of politics be substituted for merit operations to eradicate the risks of politics on the quality of the product and bring out positive realities to the management of Nigerian Higher Education.

Keyword: *Politics of Education, Management, Nigerian Higher Education, Risks and Realities.*

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Background to the Study

Education is an essential tool for enhancing social-political transformation and sustainable National development. No nation can develop economically without provision of quality education to her citizen. However for sustainable political goals achievement in any country, such country should not toy with the quality education to her citizens. Since the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) acknowledged the provision of higher education program for the truing of middle manpower among the citizens that will handle the transformation of political sector for a stable governance. Presently categories of higher education in Nigeria include universities, polytechnics, Monotechnics College of education and colleges of technology. It should be noted that, the Higher Educational institutions are headed and managed by the vice chancellors for the universities, rectors for the polytechnics, provosts for the colleges of education and advanced teachers' colleges and principals for the colleges of technology and nursing schools. The issue that prompted this paper is that effective and efficiency in the achievement of higher educational goals depend strictly of the types of managerial techniques, and efforts adopted by the head of the higher institution.

However despite the efficiency and effectiveness of the Nigerian higher educational programme, the desirable goals are not achieved, the question is about what is happening to factors that influence the management effectiveness in the higher institutions. The identified factors include politics, economy, culture and national philosophy. It should however be noted that politics have significant influence in the management of higher education in Nigeria. Enoh and Bamangah (1992) defined politics as the science and affairs that relate to the thinking about the governance. The authors observed that both the education and politics influence the operation of each other. It should also be noted that quality education acquired by the citizens determine the level of the political stability for any country. Politics on the other hands influence the types of education to be provided. The goals of the higher education therefore are affected by the political factors. For a successful operation of higher education in Nigeria there is influence of politics in the management especially in the area of family, institutional location, appointments, admission, employments, philosophy institutional rankings and accreditation. The successful implementation and management of Nigerian higher education, there is political undertone. However, the political interference in management of higher education has risks on the operation of higher education in Nigeria. According to Mathew (2014) politics refer to the system of overseeing the activities of the government of a safe through which the action of the state are being influenced by the power, and authority of the people that are in the helm of affair of the state.

However, there are many decisions to be taken for effectiveness of Nigerian higher education. The decision for effectiveness of the institution centered on policies formation, funding, admission, accreditation, institution location, recruitment, appointment. It should be that the political interference in the decision making process in the management of higher education had constituted risks to the productivity, effectiveness and efficiency of the Nigerian higher education.

Higher education is the tertiary institution in Nigeria. The institutions include polytechnic, college of education, advanced teachers, secondary health institutions. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) identified the objectives of Nigerian higher education to be however, the achievements of the objectives are being affected by the perpetration of political interference. The interference in the management therefore constitute risks to effective management of the Nigerian higher education, which and the objectives were made difficult to achieve.

Politics in the Management of Nigerian Higher Education

Politics in the management of higher education had caused a lot of difficulty in the achievement of the purpose to which the institutions are established, the decision and policies taken by the government are being determined by the policy principles and the manifestos of the government of the day. The rate of which politics constitutes risk to the management of Nigerian higher education are reflected in the following policies.

Institutional Location: The critical for the location of the higher institution are not strictly followed. According to Oke (2016), the factors for the location of institution are rural-urban resources availability, needs and aspiration, educational policies, students demand, industrial-institutional relations and manpower requirements. However, the educational planners consider these factors before institutions could be approved for establishment.

However, with the politics in the management of tertiary education, the policies grinding the location are not effectively sited in the strategic places, the issue of nearest neighbors analysis is not well determined. In Nigeria, it is observed that most of the institutions are concentrated in the urban areas neglecting the rural areas in Nigeria, the concentration of the institutions in the urban areas caused rural-urban drift risks to the Nigeria youths and other members of the rural communities. For instance the politicians that is in the helm of government affairs will influence the location of institutions in their own state or in their communities mindless, whether their state or communities are in the urban areas. They only use institution location to compensate the ministers, president, senators, ambassadors, governors etc whether the goals in the higher education will be achieved or not in their institutional location areas. It is less of their concerned (Borkono (2017).

Appointment: Appointment of academic and non-academic staff of higher education are politicized, the appointments are therefore influence by the government in power. The action on the recruitment of the staff are influence by the government to gain the political popularities from the public. The appointment of vice chancellor, provosts reactors and all the management of the higher institutions are done by the government in power, however, the politics have great impacts on the appointment of the staff for the smooth running of the institutions. However, the risks involvement in the appointment is that all the appointments are influenced by good fatherisms, political participation in the ruling parties; The procedures for the appointment are not strictly followed.

However, the problem of the politics in the appointment according to Ahmed (2013) enable the government not to put the institutional needs, available funds, the physical facilities and the capacities of the jobs into consideration. However, the risks of this type of appointment lead to the inability of the government to regularly and promptly pay the workers monthly salaries, regular retrenchment of the workers and the poor consideration for the available facilities which have negative effect on the workers productivity. The realities of the consideration of the institutional needs in term of qualified and skillful worker was supported by Oyedeji (2013) that the consideration of both the needs of the institutions in term of skillful and expertise workers have positive impacts on the institutional productivity and effectiveness. It is important to note that politics in the appointment of workers for the higher education is used positively for reducing high level of unemployment among the graduates. The politics in the appointment should be done by program expansion, industrial-institution relationship, program to allow the people to be fitted into the institutional jobs and the public relevance.

In Nigeria context therefore, whenever there is the need for recruitment exercise into higher institution there are some percentages of the posts that are illegally reserve for the politicians in the presidency, ministers, honorable members government etc. However, the reservations of the positions to the politicians crates excessiveness of power control of the management by politician. It should be noted that the candidate presented may not be quality candidates. As Ogundele, Eseyin and Abimiku (2017) said that the qualified of the product of educational institution are being determined by the quality of the teachers, that no educational standard can rise above the quality of its teachers and quality teachers enhance quality education in Nigeria. Bangu (2011) also noted that in Nigerian politics determine the employment opportunities for the citizens. The realities therefore is that no individuals cannot ignore the power of politics in the appointment but the political action, and policies encourage high productivity and effectiveness.

University Ranking Processes: There are many factors that influence universities ranking in Nigeria. The factors according to Ogundele and Jake (2016) are research publications teaching community services, quality control mechanisms. However, for the universities to be ranked high, there should be high commitment of the institutional workers, adequate funding and efficiency in the management control of the institutions. The ranking of Nigerian universities is noted through accreditations, whereby the accreditation panels will access the research publication, level of conference attendance and sponsorship. He availability of quality physical facilities like information and communication technology building, like office and classroom accommodation, library facilities workshops science laboratory equipment. However, the issues of politics in Nigerian universities caused problems those to be involved in the government, distribution of power, institutional products and most of the accreditation for effective ranking are “window dressed approach”.

However, Ogundele and Mawak (2015) observed that an ideal university ranking supposed to be equal staff ranking for all the programmes like professor, Associate,

Professors, Senior Lecturers, Lecture I, Lecturer II Assistant Lecturers and graduate Assistant. There should be well furnished library complex with current books learned journals, e-book, and e-library equipped with computer accessories like inter connectivity, skypes, thetric plagiarisms, facilities. It should however be noted that in Nigeria universities for them to be ranked high among other universities they will hire professor and other lecturers that are lacking for the program from other university as visiting lecturers, contract staff instead of recruiting the needed position permanently, the politics is that Nigerian universities after being ranked, higher they will then dropped the hired and contract staff making the universities to be poor by staff and producing low quality products.

Politics in Students Admission: In Nigerian higher education, the higher education program, admission policy is being controlled by the governmental agency called Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB), Federal Character Commission.

However, under ideal situation, the Admission Policy are being conducted using the following criteria's merits, catchments and disadvantaged areas. It should be noted that there are many candidates that merited admission and was not given because of the issue of good fathersim. The admission was based on whom you know before admission be given to the candidates, the issue in admission is that for any candidates to be admitted to Nigerian higher education program the candidates should possess at least five credits including English language and mathematics and such candidates should pass the JAMB with score of 180 minimum. However, with the political interference, many of the qualified were not admitted into Nigerian universities. Some of them that were admitted, they are not given the admission of their choice and interest. However, nature of the admission put the students at the risk of probation rustication and examination malpractice. Yoloye (1996).

University Autonomy: There is politics in the introduction of university autonomy in Nigeria. Due to the fact that the Federal Republic of Nigeria made an attempt to grant every university autonomy to be independent in the management of the affairs of their various universities. However, the granting the autonomy was politicized by the government in power. The autonomy could not work due to the fact that the government will not be given power to appoint the vice chancellor, chancellor or any other management positions. However, if allow and to work, the government may not gain cheap political popularities among the electorates, the issue of initiating employment, admission into the university will not be possible. The issue of university autonomy was therefore, interfered by the political power and authority (Omolewa, 2016).

Politics in the Higher Education Policies: Policies are guided rule and regulate statements that express goals and the steps and procedures for achieving them. Educational policies serve as frame work within which education is administered in a place at a particular point in time. Adegbite (2007) noted effective Educational policy is a definite course to action proposed by the government and adopted as a guide for effectiveness in achieving

educational goals. However both the politics and policies play effective role in the policy formulation and implementation and evaluation. Udoh and Akpa (2008) noted that good governance is concerned with measuring of government performance and policy statements in relation to goal attainment. However, the success of any policy depend on the level of integrity, honest efficiency, effectiveness and accountability in the resource allocation and consideration of the needs and aspiration of the society. Higher Education program is however guided by effective governance through effective policies formulation and execution. The question is that the politics and policies in Nigerian higher education are not effectively coordinate that is the reasons why desirable products are not turn out from the universities. The politics and policies can be effective if they consider the needs and aspiration of the society when formulating program of activities.

Risks of Politics in the Management of Nigerian Higher Education

It is an undisputable fact that politics and educational provision cannot be separated in the provisions of effective and quality education to the citizens. Enoh and Bamangah (1992) rightly put that education produce the necessary educated elites to run the affairs of the governance while politics determine and monitor the formulation and policy implementation of the policies to guide effective production of the educated elites for the good governance.

It should be noted that the universities of these days are not totally free in the hand of politics. The risks associated with politics in the management of Nigerian higher education are:

The rise of god fatherism and dictators: The selection and choice of chief executives of the higher education are associated with the political interference for instance the selection of the deans, department heads, directors, vice chancellors, registrars, institutional librarians, director of works, medical directors are approved by the government of the day. The risk of the political interference in the selection of the chief executive is that the appointed chief executives performance is therefore dictated by the political groups that appoint them. They become god father to them the effective performance evaluation become difficult. Proper accountability for their stewardship becomes difficult. However, the god fathers dictate the ways they perform their duties. In short, the politics in the management of higher education is highly characterized by favoritism nepotism and god fatherism.

Qualities of Products are Bargained: Quality of higher education programs are not effectively controlled and assured. The interest of the people in the executive positions to bring changes and innovation to improvement of the higher education program is threatened by the interference of politics in their managerial performance. Because such performance may not be the interest of those in the politics.

Rise of programme window dress activities: Issue of accreditation program are window dressed preparation. Adegbite (2007) noted that the visitation panel of accreditation

panels are constituted by the visitor of each institution. The members of the panels will not perform their duties contrary to the wish of the visitor. That is the reason when the accreditation panels get to the institution, the institutions treat them like gods and they borrow the facilities that are not available, such as computers, laptops, temporary installation of network connectivity, library books temporary offices for the staff in the name of the accreditation. It should be noted that the management committee will only spend meager amount of funds to loan or maintain the few facilities instead of making adequate provision for the success and productivity of the institution, instead, they only make provision for the successful accreditation in their institutions and at the end, the program will not be able to respond to the ultimate goals of the institution. However, the production of quality graduates for the national transformation and sustainable national development become weak and unrealistic in Nigerian higher education.

Also, the factors like policy and program planning after the commencement of implementation leading to holistic in planning, insincerity, selfishness, lack of support, tribalistic tendencies, lack of continuity in the program, tenures and projects execution. The problem however constitute low rate of service delivery which lead to low productivity and internal inefficiency.

Human factor in politics may affect the management position in the curriculum development and institutional sitting in Nigeria. As Adeoye (2005) rightly that the curriculum development for any institution should be guided by the principles of societal needs and aspiration and for the institutions to be effectively located, the need to consider the environmental resources in such area. Adeoye however noted that the curriculum will later be developed in line with the needs and aspirations, and the available natural resources. However Ogunsaju (2007) noted that politics in the management of education enable the educational planners ignore the principles on the sitting institution to compensate individual politicians, without considering whether the site is adequate for the location or not. For instance for institutions to be sited, there is the need to there is the need to consider certain environmental factors be for sitting an institutions for instance for the institute of geology is to be established in a place there is the need for mineral resources pond, university of petroleum need to ne in petroleum site but not the case in Nigeria.

Realities of Politics in the Management of Nigerian Higher Education

Borokonou (2017) observed that politics in the management of education usually generate both good and bad consequences, the experience of politics in the management depend on how it is played, the activities and actions, and the history Nwadian, (2015). However, the realities of policies in the management of Nigerian higher education are. Equity, fairness, justice, accessibility and quality are the emerging issued in the operation of the government of the day. In the appointment and operation of the institutions management, all the issues of concerned would be given priorities in the government. So that the government can make a remarkable achievement in the national educational development.

Equitable distribution of resources: Equitable distribution of natural resources for sustainable national development of Nigerian higher education. Through politics in the higher education, there are lobbying, collective bargaining, cooperative efforts with the government in power. Thomas (2007) noted that since the members of the ruling political parties are mostly appointed in the management position in the resource allocation will not be a problem. However the members of the management will be able to talk positively because they are working together. The cause of inadequate of the resources will not be the issued in the higher education. However the Federal Republic of Nigeria established federal character commission in 1997 order to solve the problem of quota system whereby the resources will be adequately distributed in Nigerian institutions based on geographical location, catchment area and quality higher education program will be assured with the politics in the management of Nigerian higher educational program, the reason being that the management council, senates, and those people appointed through politics they are going to have close monitoring and supervision of the program as not to disappoint the people that appoint them into the positions, however, Ogundele and Jake (2016) noted that for quality assurance of education program to be enhanced, there is the need for high commitment, honesty, supervision, monitoring, discipline and effective delegation of power. The authors however described institutional failure as the bane of productivity and transformation. However, effectiveness of politics in the management of Nigerians higher education will enhance high global institutional ranking accountability and other quality control and assurance. Mechanisms will be better put in place for the pride of the institution the staff and the society at large.

Politics in the management of Nigerian higher education enable the educational planners to consider the issues and factors influencing the principles of curriculum development, the reality of this are that the politicians will allow effective curriculum development and provide all necessary effort to make the institutional goal achievement a reality. The politicians will want to make the goals achievement of any institution to record cheap political popularities. Politics in the management of Nigerian higher education will enable the curriculum planning and implementation to be successful in the institution.

Effective coordination and societal mobilization for support will become easy. Since the politicians are from the society, they will be able to mobilize the stakeholders, philanthropist those with good will towards education; to come and contribute their quotas for the development of the higher education. However the mobilization can be done through lobby, pressure, collective bargaining, politicking association formation and all efforts that can create interest of the members of the society to come to the aid of the higher education can be made through politics.

Conclusion

Based on the investigation and observations and experiences, it has been observed that Nigerian higher educations are not totally free for the hand of politics. The political interference in the management of higher is characterized by the nature of good and bad. Therefore, the risk are seriously involved which reduced the quality of the products

produced and the reality is the fact that the higher education program cannot exist without politics while politics cannot be successful without higher education program. Since no political power can be respected at the helms of mass illiteracy. This is because illiteracy have baneful effects on the productivity of any governance. However no politics can be ranked high among developed nation when there is high level of illiteracy among her politicians. It is therefore important to note that the politics and higher education programs are inseparable in any nation.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion made, the following recommendations are made in order to allow the realities of politics to be more than the risks involved in the management of Nigerian higher education.

1. The government should avoid the issue of god fatherrism, favourites in the appointment processes. Appointment should be based on the quality effectiveness appointment will bring about effective realities into the higher educational system.
2. Politics should be played with caution on the institutional location appointments funding accreditation in order to remove the risks of graduates and to ensure equity accessibility, fairness, justice and quality in the products of the Nigerian higher education.
3. Political interference in educational policies planning, implementation and evaluation should be stopped. Non professionals should not be allowed to take part in the curriculum development process.
4. Government should come up with a policy that will bring about equal accessibility of the citizens in order to meet up with the social-demand approach to Nigerian higher education.
5. Systematic approach should be used when sitting higher education in a particular areas in order to consider environmental factors and the need and aspiration of the people within the geographical areas.
6. Finally, community participation should be allowed in the institutional decision making process in order to encourage community-school relationship in the management of the institution especially in the areas of funding donation of educational facilities and all areas that will aid complementary efforts to the government.

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