



## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF TERTIARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

**Anthony AFARIOGUN, PhD**

Department of Educational Foundations, Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo, Nigeria  
[tonniekayode@gmail.com](mailto:tonniekayode@gmail.com)

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### **Abstract**

Tertiary education is the level of education that comes after secondary education in Nigeria. The goal of tertiary education is to contribute to national development by providing high-level and relevant manpower training. The key functions of tertiary education include teaching, research, development, and dissemination of knowledge. These functions are instrumental in producing skilled professionals who can work at managerial and technocratic levels in the economic, social, technological, and political systems of the nation. In addition to imparting relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes, tertiary education prepares individuals to succeed in their careers and contribute to the economic growth of the nation. The effective management of various tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria is being hindered by myriads of socio-political and economic problems that require urgent attention and prompt solutions. These problems include inadequate fund allocation, corruption, and leadership problems. To improve and integrate the nation's socio-cultural values that pave the way to national development, it is essential to tackle these challenges. This paper examines the concept of educational management and discusses the goals and functions of tertiary education. It also highlights the political and socio-political constraints that hinder effective management. To address these challenges, the paper recommends that tertiary institutions should be adequately funded through grants and other available resources. It also emphasizes the need to tackle various socio-political problems and ensure that tertiary education has autonomy and academic freedom overall.

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**Keywords: socio-economic, socio-political, management and administration, tertiary education**

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### **Introduction**

The investment in tertiary education in Nigeria would be a monumental waste if the goals of tertiary education could not be effectively achieved due to various socio-economic and political constraints to the management of the Nigerian tertiary educational institutions in recent times. Most Nigerian tertiary educational institutions are now witnessing high student enrolment in various courses which makes the management of these institutions cumbersome and caught up daily in the web of various socio-economic and political problems permeating their institutions. Most of them are pre-occupied with how to effectively achieve the lofty goals of their institutions and maintain high academic standards in the face of paucity of funds, the inadequacy of infrastructural facilities, inadequate academic and non-academic staff for some programmes, incessant student crises, lack of modern instructional materials and equipment and frequent industrial actions embarked upon by academic and non-academic staff over poor conditions of service.

In Nigeria today, tertiary education has become a household enterprise and it is widely embraced as a formidable investment in human capital development that yields economic benefits and contributes significantly to the cultural integration, social reconstruction, political stability, and technological emancipation of the nation. Tertiary education apart from inculcating in the individual relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudinal orientation needed for one to progress in one's career in life and

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contribute to the economic growth of the nation. It also assists in improving and integrating the nation's socio-cultural values that pave the way to national development. However, the rapid demands for tertiary education in Nigeria in the last five years have been enormous. Between 2018 and 2023 there had been a phenomenal increase in the number of tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria. As of May 2023, we had 474 tertiary educational institutions. These include 170 universities, 152 Polytechnics, and 152 Colleges of Education.

**Table 1:** *Categories of Universities*

S/N	CATEGORY	NUMBER
1.	Federal	43
2.	State	48
3.	Private	79
	Total	170

(Source: <https://www.statista.com>)

**Table 2:** *Categories of Polytechnic*

S/N	CATEGORY	NUMBER
1.	Federal	37
2.	State	51
3.	Private	64
	Total	152

(Source: <https://www.statista.com>)

**Table 3:** *Categories of Colleges of Education*

S/N	CATEGORY	NUMBER
1.	Federal	21
2.	State	49
3.	Private	82
	Total	152

(Source: <https://www.statista.com>)

The factors that contributed to the increase of tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria could be attributed to several factors. These include the rapid expansion of primary and secondary education in Nigeria since the attainment of political independence paved the way for high demand for tertiary education by the large population of secondary school leavers. Also, many Nigerians hitherto, perceived tertiary education as a passport for securing white-collar jobs in Government Ministries and Parastatals and private establishments. The lofty goals of tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria aimed at producing the required skilled manpower for managerial and technocratic levels for the economic; social and political systems could be effectively achieved, if the various socio-economic and political constraints to the management of the institutions are clearly identified and properly addressed, to alleviate them.

### **Brief History of Tertiary Education in Nigeria**

In response to the growing need for higher education, the Secretary of State for the colonies announced on June 13th, 1943 that a Commission would be established to recommend the creation of a single West Africa University College in Ibadan, Nigeria, along with three territorial colleges in each territory to train teachers. Despite some delays, the majority recommendation was eventually implemented, and in January 1948, the University College Ibadan was founded in Nigeria. The Yaba High College was also absorbed by the University College, Ibadan during this time. However, the idea of vocational training schools had been proposed much earlier in 1930 by the Director of Education, Mr. E.R. Hussey. The government approved this proposal and built a higher college at Yaba in 1932, admitting students that year and temporarily housing them in King's College, Lagos. On January 19th, 1934, the Yaba High College was officially inaugurated by Governor St. Donald Cameron, and that same year, students were relocated to its permanent site. The college offered courses in medicine, agriculture, engineering, and teacher training.

### **Concept of Educational Administration**

Human society has developed many organizations to help its members achieve their life aspirations and foster development. Education is one of the largest organizations in contemporary times and its services affect everyone in society. Education is perceived as the panacea to all the problems of mankind which is why everyone is concerned with how it is managed especially as there appears to be a strong link between education and national development. Educational administration implies the organization of human and material resources and programmes available for education and their systematic use to achieve predetermined educational objectives (Nwankwo, 1982). The educational administrator is responsible for organizing and implementing educational plans, policies, and programmes. Some people believe that educational administration and management are interchangeable, while others see a distinction between the two. Educational management is more comprehensive, including corporate planning, policy formulation, and implementation, while administration is necessary during the implementation stage. According to Nwandiani (1998), educational management involves micro-aggregates that enhance the education process, and educational administration is one of the activities involved in educational management. Sapre (2002) defined management as a set of activities directed toward efficient and effective utilization of organizational resources to achieve organizational goals. Therefore, educational management can further be referred to as an executive function for carrying out agreed policy, (Bolan 1999).

### **The Concept of Management**

According to Welch (2010), management is a process in which one or more individuals coordinate the activities of others to achieve results that would not be possible by one person alone. The process involves the efficient utilization of human and material resources to achieve the desired outcome (Bedeian, 2011). Afariogun (2015) opined that management involves planning, organizing, staffing, coordinating, budgeting, controlling, directing, communicating, and evaluating to achieve organizational goals promptly. According to Brech (2012), management is a social process that involves the responsibility for effective and economic planning and regulating of the operations of an exercise, in fulfilment of a given purpose. Heinz, Mark, and Harold (2011) define management as the process of designing and maintaining an environment in which individuals work together in groups to accomplish efficiently selected aims. In other words, management is the process of achieving the goals of an organization by utilizing people and other resources such as money, equipment, buildings, and materials. Management is a continuous process that occurs over time. Recent studies have attempted to specify what managers do. Regardless of the kind

or size of business, managers perform the same basic functions of management, whether they are the president of a large manufacturing company, the supervisor in a small retail business, or an administrator in an institution.

### **Purpose of Tertiary Education**

Tertiary education refers to education provided after secondary education, typically in universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education as well as institutions that offer distance or correspondence courses as well (FRN, 2014). In management, the primary focus is on accomplishing objectives, goals, and purpose. Therefore, every organization or institution must be fully aware of its goals. The goals of tertiary education are stated clearly in the fourth edition of the National Policy on Education (2014). These goals include:

1. Contribute to national development through high-level relevant manpower training.
2. Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of individuals and society.
3. Develop the intellectual capacity of individuals to understand and appreciate their local external environment.
4. Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of society.
5. Promote and encourage scholarship and community services.
6. Forge and cement national unity; and
7. Promote national and international understanding and interaction.

### **Functions of Tertiary Education in Nigeria**

Tertiary education was established in Nigeria with the objectives of performing the following functions according to Manga, Hakimi and Nakazalle (2015):

- a) **Teaching Functions:** This is the first function around which other elements of tertiary education and organization revolve. Tertiary education is expected to impact or transmit the highest knowledge, skills values, and attitudes of the society in which they exist.
- b) **Research Function:** Tertiary education is established for the pursuit of knowledge and truth through constant studies and investigations of natural and even supernatural phenomena. They are expected to expand the frontiers of knowledge through research, which will generate new knowledge in all.
- c) **Community Service Function:** Tertiary educations are established to provide qualitative professional services to the community in every aspect of human activity. They provide the highest-level manpower needed for the overall economic, political, social, technological, and cultural development of society.
- d) **Dissemination Function:** Tertiary education is to pursue the truth, publish the truth, and disseminate the truth as they see it. Through the dissemination of ideas, objectively, tertiary education is expected to contribute to national and international dialogue. Tertiary education is expected to criticize issues and publish their findings without shackles, hindrances, or intimidation by the government or other authorities.
- e) **Cultural Function:** Tertiary educations are established to develop and transmit the national cultural heritage and blend it with the larger world cultural heritage. They are expected to be solidly rooted in their local cultural heritage and get projects and refine the international cultural heritage of mankind.
- f) **Change of Function:** They are supposed to be catalysts of change and innovation in society.



- g) **International Relations Function:** It is to foster international relations through scholarships and exchange programmes, as well as fellowships with other tertiary institutions across the world.

### **Socio-Economic and Political Constraints in the Management of Tertiary Education**

Socio-economic and political constraints refer to all forms of social vices, economic stress, and political manoeuvring that hinder the effective management of tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria. Some of these constraints include inadequate funding, social media, examination malpractice, corruption, poor leadership, and more.

#### **Socio-Economic Constraints.**

- 1) **Inadequate Funding:** The inadequate funding has resulted in poor infrastructural development of the institutions; inadequate teaching and research facilities and poor staff and students' welfare administration. The poor funding of most public tertiary institutions in Nigeria has been attributed to the economic meltdown and recession in Nigeria and the various measures introduced by the Government in recent times to revamp the ailing economy. According to Okebukola in Afolabi and Yusuf (2015), the devaluation of the Naira has affected the tertiary education system in various ways among which are the high cost of textbooks reference materials for the library and production of journals, the high cost of building construction and maintenance, low buying power of parents, lecturers and students, high cost of membership of overseas learned societies and journal subscription, high cost of laboratory, office, workshop equipment and high cost of postage of articles or parcels.
- 2) **Social media:** Various forms of social media have diffused into various tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria. These include students' exposure to the internet, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, exposure to poor models in society, showing sensational films and movies on the campuses, where most of the actors and actresses are in the complete nude; bribery and corruption in the society, irrational magazines and posters on the campuses, apathy, and materialism in all nooks and crannies in the society; greed and avarice; and the use of dreadful fetish objects in getting to leadership positions. All these societal vices which harm the academic work of the students also constitute a serious constraint to the effective management of Nigerian tertiary educational institutions.
- 3) **Examination Malpractice:** Examination malpractice refers to all unethical practices adopted to influence the performance of a candidate in an examination by giving him/her unmerited favour over other candidates. It is a violation of examination rules and regulations by an examinee who desires desperately to excel in a particular examination, through dubious and unethical devices. Examination malpractices permeate all levels of education in Nigeria. The various forms of examination malpractice as highlighted by Adesina in Afolabi and Yusuf (2015), which feature prominently in Nigerian educational institutions are as follows (include): Smuggling of materials into examination hall, deliberate extension of time by supervisors and invigilators, academic and non-academic staff aiding students by leaking questions papers. Others include trading sex for question papers, marks, and grades, more knowledgeable students or the person sitting examination for a weak student, giraffe, and change of marks by academic and non-academic staff, head of schools colluding with examination officers, parents, teachers, and students to cheat at external examination. Also, buying and selling of examination grades, question papers, prepared answers from the head of schools, examination supervisor invigilators, and officers working with examining bodies.

- 4) **Protest by Students:** In recent times, many tertiary educational institutions have been witnessing students' protests over welfare issues and all forms of unruly behaviors among students. An example is the blockage of the federal highway between Ondo and Ore at the gate of Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo on April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023, and the recent one by 2020/2021 set of the same school on May Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup>, May 2023, demanding for their results and certificates. These include various cases of examination malpractice, cultism, prostitution, poor dressing, rapes, theft, and drug offenses like smoking cigarettes and Indian hemp, drinking alcoholic liquor, snuffing tobacco, and the use of cocaine, heroin, and other drugs inimical to healthy living. The involvement of students in all these ruinous vices would continue to hinder the effective management and administration of tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria.

### **Political Constraints**

- 1) **Peace and Security:** On account of our multi-ethnic, multi-religious society, Nigerians are prone to competition for social and political relevance. This is a source of tension, which often escalates into actual socio-political unrest. With Nigeria's growing population, having to share resources, which is not growing in the same proportion, means that this competition will grow ever fiercer going forward. To ensure peace and security government should be ready to facilitate a dialogue process that will ensure the equitable distribution of the nation's resources, and address the discontents among different sections of the country. Fostering peace 'demands the absolute and radical rejection of violence and terrorism and requires a constant and vigilant commitment on the part of political leaders. We must resolve the present crisis of terrorism, herdsmen attacks, kidnapping, inter-communal clashes, and robbery to foster peace and security for all citizens.
- 2) **Education:** Education is a human right. Every government must see to the education of its citizens. Families and groups should be supported to educate their members. Not to educate the child is to deprive him or her of her a fundamental human right. Several socio-economic and political problems bedeviling our country and tertiary education are closely linked to the lack of education of our youth. This has made them easy recruits for socially deviant behaviours like thuggery, terrorism, armed robbery, and abduction of child soldiers according to CATHAN (2018).
- 3) **Quota System on Admission:** The Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) was established in 1978 by the Federal Government to regulate the matriculation requirements for tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria. JAMB also conducts a joint matriculation exam for candidates seeking admission to these institutions. However, since 2004, the regulatory and supervisory agencies such as NUC, NBTE, and NCCE have permitted tertiary institutions to screen and re-examine their candidates through post-screening tests and interviews. They are allowed to admit candidates based on the JAMB UTME cut off score of 180 (out of 400 obtained scores) for university candidates and 150 (out of 400 scores) for polytechnics and Colleges of Education Candidates. This practice has led to the selling of admission to unqualified candidates under the guise of generating revenue for the institution. In Nigeria, candidates are admitted into tertiary institutions using JAMB quota criteria such as merit, catchment area, educational disadvantage area, and discretion criteria such as Vice-chancellor's, Rector's, Provost's, and Dean's list. This practice is put in place to prevent multiple admissions of a candidate into two or more tertiary institutions and reduce the education imbalance between the North and South. However, it has been depriving many highly qualified candidates of admission into Nigerian



tertiary institutions. This political maneuvering would continue to hinder the effective management of tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

- 4) **Poor Leadership:** Lack of good leadership in tertiary institutions affects the quality and the improvement of the sector. According to Jones in Manga, Hakimi, and Nakazalle (2015), the development of the conditions for effectiveness and efficiency in tertiary institutions depends solely on leadership.
- 5) **Inadequate Infrastructural Facilities:** Infrastructural facilities are provided for the enhancement and promotion of teaching and learning activities. These facilities such as buildings for classrooms, offices, chairs and tables for students and staff, and other facilities are grossly inadequate in tertiary institutions.
- 6) **Corruption:** Corruption is the ‘illicit and non-transparent provision of private benefits to public officials. It also refers to changing or altering the implementation of existing laws, rules, and regulations to provide advantages to either state or non-state actors as a result of the illicit and non-transparent provision of private gain to public officials. For example, favoritism in choosing the Vice Chancellor, Provost, and rector, cheating in schools, and more. It is a cankerworm that has stunted development, economic growth, and the building of physical and social infrastructure in our tertiary institutions and Nigeria at large.

## **Conclusion**

The National Policy on Education states that each institution is responsible for its internal organization and administration. However, no tertiary institution in Nigeria currently enjoys complete autonomy and academic freedom. The government in power at the state and federal levels keeps an eye on the affairs of the tertiary institutions. As a result, managing and administering these institutions is a challenging task. To address this issue, all fraudulent, corrupt practices and political problems must be tackled. All stakeholders of tertiary institutions in Nigeria should come together to provide the necessary infrastructure, modern teaching, learning, and research materials and equipment. This will ensure that all citizens will get the maximum benefit from these institutions. In conclusion, the devaluation of the Naira has impacted the tertiary education system. Additionally, social media has diffused into various tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria, and examination malpractices are prevalent in all levels of education. Lastly, protests by students in recent times have also affected the educational system in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

## **Recommendations**

1. Different ways of generating funds should be looked into so that the funding and payment of workers/lecturers salaries and allowances will not be a problem.
2. Government should work towards the improvement of teaching and learning.
3. Necessary facilities for teaching and learning should be provided by the government to ensure balanced development in the tertiary institutions.
4. There is a need to screen properly candidates seeking admission into tertiary educational institutions, not only to ensure that they are prima facie qualified for admission but also to reject the candidates who are of questionable character and background.
5. The parents, guardians, and politicians in the corridors of power should inculcate the habit of refraining from infringing on the management of the tertiary institutions thereby allowing the heads of the institutions to have free hands to run their institutions.



6. The institutions should state clearly in students' handbooks and seminars comprehensive and unambiguous information on campus cultism and sanctions, as well as official statements banning secret cults in the institutions.
7. Decisions on critical issues in the institutions must be based on consultation, deliberation, and participation of all concerned stakeholders.

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