

Original Research Article

Monitoring Recruitment and Selecion Practice: A Therapeutic Strategy for Quality Service Delivery in Nigeria Public Universities

Abstract

Nigerian public universities were established and managed by government (federal or state), to provide educational services as well as embark on research for purpose of general development. Acquisition and management of relevant resources was *sine qua non* for effective functioning of the institutions. The decreasing quality of performance in public universities is believed by certain individuals and unions to be the consequence of infrastructural decay, which the envisaged improvement in government funding and condition of service could possibly provide the solution. This paper uncovers the maxim that infrastructural renaissance and staff welfare, devoid of concomitant staff quality checks especially at the verge of recruitment and selection exercise would rather result in fiasco. It was recommended among others that uniform recruitment and selection policy and procedures be formulated; also, the implementation must be monitored by external agencies of government.

Keywords: Monitoring, Recruitment, Selection, therapeutic, Strategy, Quality Service, Nigeria, Public Universities

24 **Introduction**

25 University is a citadel of learning, with traditional functions of promoting research,
26 developing skills and knowledge, and authorized to confer degrees in various fields. The
27 complex functions and mandates of universities determine the vast nature of factor inputs
28 required for attainment of the established goals.

29
30 Over a decade now, relevant labour unions, and individuals have made frantic efforts urging
31 government to properly fund public universities in Nigeria, if the country is to achieve the
32 much needed human and societal development goal through education. The targeted
33 funding pattern, if met, would help in providing the necessary facilities and improve the
34 general infrastructure, thereby creating conducive environment for teaching and learning.
35 Invariably, these proponents view improved university funding as the sole and pivotal
36 means of achieving qualitative university education or better still, the panacea for the
37 perennial churning out of half-baked graduates.

38
39 The question now is “can improved university funding devoid of monitored staff recruitment
40 and selection practice provide a solution to the chagrin performance of public universities in
41 the country?”. Therefore, effort in answering this question constitutes the crux of this
42 paper.

43

44 **2. Conceptual framework**

45 **2.1 Overview of public university and funding**

46 University, be it publicly or privately owned is the most complex educational institution, in
47 terms of functions, facilities and scope of operation, designed and established to offer
48 candidates the highest degree of training in various fields than can be expected of any other
49 level of tertiary institution [1].

50

51 Unlike private universities, public universities are established and managed by the
52 government at state or federal level. Less than two decades ago, every university in Nigeria
53 was publicly owned. The reign of President O. Obasanjo (1999-2007) marked the cradle of
54 private universities proliferation in the country operating side by side their public
55 counterparts.

56

57 The funding burden of public universities rests on government – state or federal. Over the
58 years, the deteriorating standard and quality of public university education was blamed on
59 low budgetary allocations. This condition resulted in frequent devastating face-offs between
60 the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the government. The paltry nature of
61 budgetary allocations to education has negative consequence on the general operations of
62 public universities as well as on the quality of service to the public [6].

63
64 Presently, the nationwide strike by teachers in Nigerian public universities is in its fifth
65 month. Union members were admonished not to succumb to the intrigue of government
66 but to stand firm to ensure the success of the struggle for implementation of the 2009
67 agreement reached between the union and the federal government [12]. The major
68 component of that agreement was improvement in public university funding, as catalyst for
69 increased performance in this sector, in order to unleash developmental impact on the
70 society. The extent of national development is a function of the effectiveness of education
71 sector (which university is part of). He added that proper funding constitutes part of the
72 essential determining factors of university effectiveness [4].

73
74 The union struggle so far seems to be parochial to the impossibility of accomplishing
75 university performance targets through funding alone. In other words, what might be the
76 situation in terms of the envisaged university performance when the required funding level
77 is met, devoid of grave concern about the mode of staff recruitment and selection.

78

79 **2.2.1 Recruitment**

80 Recruitment is the set of activities used to obtain a sufficient number of the right people at
81 the right time; its purpose is to select those who best meet the needs of the organization
82 [13]. Recruitment could be seen as the process of searching for and obtaining applicants for
83 jobs, from among whom the right people can be selected [5]. He explained the term to
84 mean the process of finding and attracting capable applicants for employment.

85

86 A good recruitment programme is one that is properly planned and well operated [14].
87 Recruitment and selection policy sets out how to ensure, as far as possible, that the best
88 people are recruited on merit and that the recruitment process is free from bias and
89 discrimination [15].

Recruitment has a direct impact on performance, this being the case, if done well, brings in the best people to the organization [8]. In larger organizations, specialist recruitment officers may be appointed with the human resource team or recruitment services may be delivered from a recruitment service center, whose main role is to ensure that the right people with the right skills are employed at the right time by the organization [11]. One would think that, with a continuous flow of new people into the workforce, recruiting would be easy [13].

2.2.2 Sources of recruitment

i) Internal recruitment: It involves seeking applicants for positions from those who are currently employed. Internal sources include present employee referrals, former employees and former applicants [5]. Internal recruitment involves recruiting within the firm [10]. Internal recruitment has several advantages [9]: It is less costly than external search, and it generates higher employee commitment, development and satisfaction because it offers opportunities for career advancement to employees rather than outsiders.

ii) External recruitment: This involves efforts aimed at drawing applicants from outside the firm. External recruitment makes it possible to draw upon a wider range of talents, and provides the opportunity to bring new experience and ideas into the business [10]. External recruitment is more expensive. Also, it may pave a way for a mediocre that performed well in paper, with good credentials but without sufficient job performance prowess, to be brought in. The methods and sources employed depend on the firm's recruitment policies and procedures [7].

2.2.3 Selection

Selection is often the step that succeeds the stage of attracting applicants sourced within or outside the organization. It is another important set of activities that must be performed based on the firm's relevant policies and procedures, to enable the firm obtain the envisaged number and quality of personnel.

In the selection process, employers attempt to obtain the skills, abilities and other attributes a person needs to perform a particular job [9].

122 The following are some of the key stages in the selection process [7]:

- 123 1. Sifting through application forms or CVs
- 124 2. Drawing up a shortlist of candidates
- 125 3. Inviting these candidates for interview
- 126 4. Conducting interviews (supported by tests where appropriate)
- 127 5. Making a decision about choice of candidates

128

129 Everyone involved in the recruitment and selection of staff has a responsibility to ensure
130 that candidates are treated fairly and decisions are made objectively and in line with the
131 organization's commitment to equal opportunities [16].

132

133 **3. Unmonitored recruitment and selection practice and its consequences in public** 134 **universities**

135 As is the case in other sectors, human capital is considered most important of all the
136 resources, by virtue of its potency in manipulating other resources [3]. It does appear, in
137 Nigeria, for decades, emphasis has been on achieving increased funding, probably due to its
138 perceived ability to procure other resources required for task performance. So far,
139 infinitesimal attention has been paid to the process of attracting and selecting quality staff
140 that can offer best services in Nigerian public universities.

141

142 About two decades ago, staff employment in public universities was often based on
143 procedure where areas of need were sent by heads of departments to the vice chancellor or
144 registrars; advertisement of job vacancies widely made; the applications sorted and sent to
145 the relevant departmental head, the shortlisted applications forwarded to the registrar who,
146 in consultation with the vice chancellor, will present before Appointments and Promotion
147 Committee for consideration before final consideration and approval by the university
148 council; whoever that scales through these stages will be issued temporary (probationary)
149 appointment by the Registrar. The successful candidate commences work and after a period
150 of about one year, the person will be made to attend regularization interview, if successful,
151 would have his or her appointment regularized before being confirmed within the second or
152 third year of that appointment.

153

The sequential steps in the staff recruitment and selection procedures to some extent, helped to sift out applicants considered unfit for university jobs. At that period, people in the labour market did not see university jobs as being attractive due to very poor condition of service prevalent in the sub sector. People who willingly choose to work in this sector were very few. Also, the phobia of imminent embarrassment and humiliation during the interview session and lectures with students further killed the interest of many job seekers. Interestingly, many of those who passed through the employment procedure of public universities were individuals who could beat their chest to proclaim high level of competence in the discharge duties. Also, the quality of services delivered by the university workers was very commendable, leading to the sub sectors' remarkable contribution to the general development via effective training and research.

In about a decade ago, public universities through relentless struggle of the relevant unions began to witness some level of improvement regarding work condition/staff remuneration. The consequence of this was a sharp departure from the due process of hiring workers into public university system. It paved ways for unfair and discriminatory staff employment practice. The purported economic attractiveness to public university jobs led to indiscriminate employment due to pressures from politicians, traditional rulers, high powered bureaucrats, relatives and friends of university administrators. In a bid to accommodate unimaginable volume of job requests, the university top administrators, over the years resorted to jettisoning the standard procedures for staff hiring. This scenario led to employment of enormous volume of mediocre to perform academic and non academic jobs, hence contributing vehemently to the present day rot in the Nigerian public universities, which "increase funding" yearning cannot be the sole panacea.

As a result of universities top management deviation from standard staff recruitment and selection procedures, campuses recently became dumping ground for frustrated politicians, external retirees, spouses and relatives of politicians, candidates presented by university management personnel etc. In other words, recent employment in the public universities mostly tailors toward the line of sentiment and utter discrimination rather than merit.

The glaring overstaffing condition in the universities environment in terms of quantity and not quality has been the outcome of the deviation from the standard employment procedures. Also, the present day unfair and discriminatory employment practice has

substantially negated the federal character policy of government as well as the equal employment opportunity act.

The presence of many incompetent personnel in public university system gives rise to declining quality of both individual and institutional performance, increased corrupt practices and wanton sexual harassment.

4. Conclusions

Public universities established through special states or federal edicts, were aimed at undertaking the moulding of individuals for purpose of formal/special skill acquisition, as well as embarking on research, to foster human and general societal development.

The attainment of this aim is a function of the acquisition and management of the essential resources in these tiers of educational institutions.

At the moment, every public university in Nigeria suffers grave setback interms of human and material deficiency, which negatively impacts on the quality performance at both individual and corporate levels.

Frantic efforts of relevant unions in the universities have so far been unleashed to urge the federal and state governments to urgently improve on funding and condition of service, as the sole panacea for the rot.

The obvious departure from the standard staff recruitment and selection procedure has led to infiltration of incompetent employees, giving rise to poor individual and universities performance and climaxed wanton and heinous behaviours on the campuses.

Incompetent employees often lack the zeal to tap the motivation and satisfaction inherent in the assigned duties. They are also not committed to goals [2]. Strict adherence to due process by management of Nigerian universities in carrying out staff recruitment and selection becomes the maxim that constitutes the nitty-gritty of this work.

Improvement in university funding and staff condition of service without the concomitant staff quality checks especially at the verge of employment procedures will definitely end in fiasco.

5. Recommendations

Since the targeted increase in workers' quality service delivery and overall university performance would not be attained through improved university funding and condition of service devoid of establishment and strict adherence to realistic, applicable recruitment and selection policy and procedures, the following recommendations were made:

Uniform human resource management policy and procedures should be formulated to guide actions and decisions of public universities management, especially, with regards to employee recruitment and selection.

To forestall discriminatory practice and non adherence to equal employment opportunity act, government should establish and put in force effective mechanism to monitor employee recruitment and selection practice in public universities.

Government through Federal Ministry of Education and Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) should set minimum standards by way of outlining the qualifications, experience and capabilities expected to match specific jobs in the university environment. Subjecting applicants to practical test is also necessary in this case.

To guide against overstaffing, redundancy and inefficiency, staff employment should be pre determined through effective human resource planning and based on the needs and requests of the work units or sections.

Advertisement of job vacancies approved by the relevant government agencies should be widely made. Also, copies of the applications and credentials sent to the universities should be forwarded by applicants to the relevant supervisory/monitoring agencies of government (state or federal, as the case may be. This may be made faster through the agencies' email or website.

The participation of external assessors from Ministry of Education and NUC during the interview should not be compromised. This would ensure that the established standards are met by the candidates, also, that the due process in terms of the employment policy and procedures are followed.

257 Employments when the university council has not yet been constituted should be abolished
258 by government, since that could be the game plan by public university management to
259 employ workers on the basis of undue sentiments and favoritism rather than on merit.

260
261 University databank should be maintained by government for easy accessibility of
262 information about staff qualifications, appraisal reports, mode and period of employment,
263 promotion, etc.

264
265 To clean up campuses, government should constitute independent committee and deploy
266 same to various universities for verifications and other necessary actions such as transfer,
267 inter-ministerial redeployment or training. This action could also help in decongesting
268 departments, and minimizing redundancy and wastage.

269
270 Government should enforce the university staff ratio of 1:3, meaning that employment
271 should be based on policy of one non academic staff to three academic staff. This will
272 reverse the current trend of employing more non academic staff, whereas many are
273 redundant and unproductive.

274
275 Staff employment (recruitment and selection) procedures should be made one of the key
276 areas to be assessed by Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) during accreditation visits
277 to universities. The report of non compliance with the due process should be viewed
278 seriously, also, appropriate sanctions meted out on personnel or institutions that erred.

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