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Comparative Analysis of Payment of Earned Academic Allowance in Nigerian Universities: University of Benin As a Focal Point

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Abstract

In Nigeria sovereign nation, the greatest obstacle to democracy is the neglect of education for her citizens as evidenced by the spate of armed robbery attacks, political assassinations, religious conflicts and lack of education funding coupled with the seeming helplessness of security agencies to handle criminal acts. The focus of this paper is to comparatively analyse the payment of Earned Academic Allowance in Nigeria tertiary institutions, University of Benin as a focal point. Universities all over the world and particularly in Nigeria often provide the philosophical drive, and in some cases, the front-line troops for social change, including revolutions and, occasionally centre of excellence. Therefore, the development of political and administrative institutions in Western Europe has shown that other countries that have modernized or developed politically and those new and old nation states that strive towards modernization or development have developed political system. In the course of this study, the comparative analysis of payment of Earned Academic Allowance/Funding of Education in Nigeria were brought to the fore while the objectives of the study were well spelt out. Hypotheses were postulated and the Group Theory was used to explicate the works. Data were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. From the primary sources, the survey method, that is, the use of questionnaire was designed and adopted. Data obtained from this method were analysed with the aid of Simple Percentage. Thereafter, the five researchable

hypotheses were tested and accepted while the null hypotheses were rejected. The implication is that there was relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Generally, the paper brought to focus that effective payment of Earned Academic Allowance/funding of education in Nigeria is a task that must be done with collective efforts of all stakeholders for the growth and development of universities in Nigeria. In a nutshell, this paper suggested policy prescription and recommendation which are aimed at repositioning universities in Nigeria. Finally, this paper appraised several of these issues and concluded that all stakeholders in the federal polity should thread softly, be objective, rational, altruistic and magnanimous in order not to make the existence of true federalism (social, education, political and economic cohesive existence of the people, peace and tranquillity) a fleeting illusion and a mirage.

Key Words: Stakeholders, Allowance, Strikes, Payment, Federal, Government

Introduction

Nigeria sovereign nation, more than anything else, the greatest obstacle to the nascent democracy is the neglect of education for Nigerian citizens in nation building, as evidenced by the spate of armed robbery attacks, political assassinations, religious conflicts and education funding coupled with the seeming helplessness of security agencies to handle criminal acts (Uhunmwangho & Epelle, 2011). The situation is worsened by the increasing number of uneducated Nigerians some of whom are ready recruits for criminal activities (Nigerian Tribune, 2002). The above statement from an editorial comment by a national daily in Nigeria indeed epitomises the central focus of this paper, the aim of which is to analyse the importance of Earned Academic Allowance in educational institutions to democratic sustainability in Nigeria.

The focus of this paper is to comparatively analyse the payment of Earned Academic Allowance in Nigerian Universities, University of Benin as a focal point. Universities all over the world and particularly in Nigeria often provide the philosophical drive, and in some cases, the front-line troops for social change, including revolutions and, occasionally centre of excellence. Recently, the Academic Staff Union of Universities said that its members should not be held responsible if there is any disruption in the university system, as the Federal Government had not shown commitment to carrying out the 2019 Memorandum of Action. This is sequel to the ongoing renegotiation with the government and to clear the air over the N25billion confirmed by the Minister of Education, to have been approved for universities for part-payment of Earned Academic Allowance and should have been released between February 15 and April, 28, 2019 as agreed (Kolade & Adeniran, 2019). Funding for the revitalization of public universities has for years been of very high priority to ASUU. Reaching an agreement with the Federal Government has often been a frustrating journey for our union. It is often marked with protests, strikes and requires a conscious and focused engagement. The 2001 agreement, which gave birth to the 2009 agreement, was not an exemption. The exception here is the personality leading the government negotiation team. The current leadership of the government team clearly lacks the academic disposition and humility needed to undertake such task. Our members enjoy their work and hate to see any disruption in the smooth running of our universities. However, the level of frustration occasioned by the lackadaisical attitude of the government towards meeting the terms of the 2019 Memorandum of Action that was freely signed with our union is increasingly becoming unbearable (Kolade & Adeniran, 2019).

However, the Federal Government, in fulfilling its promise, directed the payment of earned academic allowances/earned allowances to 22 Federal Government-owned universities to academic and non-academic members of staff. While academics under ASUU will get N18.3billion, non-teaching staff members belonging to the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian University (SSANU) and the Non-Academic Staff Union (NASU) will get N4.6 billion. Furthermore, the sharing and payment formula has begun to cause disaffection among members of Academic Staff of Nigerian Universities (ASUU), University of Benin as a focal point.

Therefore, it is an incontrovertible fact that most governments in the third world countries regard people as the real wealth of the nation, and the basic objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy, poverty-free and creative lives. This is the focus of education for all in the year 2000, a policy statement of the government and development in the late twentieth century. Whether viewed from economic, social, political or cultural perspective, education is pivotal to development and is now assessed on what people are capable of doing or how best they can mobilize their local resources to meet domestic needs (Akintoye & Uhumwuangho, 2018).

University worldwide is regarded as the citadel of learning, the fountain of intellectual development and a ground for the production of leaders of tomorrow. According to Fafunwa (1999) a university fulfils, one major function, it is a knowledge and value provider, in other words, a university progresses when it is able to provide knowledge and value and when it is not properly managed by the administrators and staff, it then fails in its function of providing knowledge for service and value. Accordingly, this explains why merit has been the watchword in the university system, an institution in which a student must first be certified worthy in character and learning before being admitted into the Honours' Degree.

Problems

It is not difficult to see that our country is brimming with frustrated young men and women. The more desperate among them form cult, kidnapping and armed robbery groups and take it out on the society. Sadly, their victims are not in a position to make things better for them. You are looking at the unacceptable face of a monumental national scandal. So many institutions, so few opportunities for the training of our leaders of tomorrow. The problem is that the big people do not see this as a major national scandal.

One is tempted to argue that the under-funding of educational institutions in Nigeria is deliberate. It started under the military era, realizing that ideas were more powerful than the guns, the military pauperized and under-developed tertiary education so as to make tertiary institutions lecturers subservient to their antics, whims and caprices (Iyayi & Momoh, 2015). Therefore, under-funding of tertiary education is a deliberate state strategy for the imposition of ruling elite hegemony for the purpose of social and political control and domination. It was also designed to reverse the adage that says "the pen is mightier than the sword", to "the sword is mightier than the pen". It came in the context of the role of what Antonio Gramsci calls the organic intellectuals have played in Nigerian policy, they manifested as Nigerian public intellectuals and they had organic links to new social movements and Labour Movement, and involved in popular struggles for political transformation (Iyayi & Momoh, 2015).

Consequently, there is multiple and hydra-headed crises in tertiary education in Nigeria, and generally our education has become mundane, moribund and backward as regards payment of

earned academic allowances/under-funding. It is also suffering the crisis of relevance and unable to respond to the challenges of the times, and it has huge technological and cultural deficits. It is also unable to empower the people and bring about rapid technological development in ways in which education, especially research, has led to the rapid development of China, Japan, South Korea, and Singapore. More often, the rapid technological development of those countries is attributed to the specific kind of leadership they had, but the secret to their success is the kind of educational system and their ability to valorise and give special attention and preference to knowledge produced by their various tertiary institutions, which are also well funded (Iyayi & Momoh, 2015)

However, the major problems Universities in Nigeria faced in the last 30 years have included incessant strikes by the academic staff union of universities (ASUU). Poor pay of academics was pinpointed by the Report of the Study Group on Brain Drain in Nigerian Universities (1982-1993), carried out by the World Bank Project Implementation Unit of the National University Commission. The development was clearly epitomized in the popular ASUU slogan of the 1990s: "My Take Home Pay Cannot Take Me Home" (Makanjuola, 2008). This problem has led to corresponding calls for the improvement of the academic staff pay package in Nigerian universities.

Furthermore, in its wisdom and at one of its Congresses, ASUU UNIBEN Chapter set up a Computation Committee with the following terms of reference:

1. To carry out the processing and computation of earned Academic Allowances for all Academic Staff of the University of Benin.
2. To determine the eligible members of the Academic Staff referred to in one above along with the allowances due to them in line with the directive of the National Leadership of the Union and subsequent resolution of ASUU UNIBEN Congress at its meeting of 2nd July, 2019 as follows:
 - (i) Compute the total sum due to each eligible academic staff from 2009 – 2016 using adequately vetted information contained in the Earned Allowances Forms filled out by the relevant members of Academic Staff;
 - (ii) Determine the total sum(s) owed to each academic staff by subtracting the sum(s) already paid to the said academic staff;
 - (iii) Determine what is owed to each academic staff on a yearly basis after subtracting the sum(s) already paid to the said staff;
 - (iv) Determine the percentage of the total sum(s) owed to each eligible academic staff that the Earned Academic Allowances allocated to academic staff of the University of Benin can cover;
 - (v) Draft and present a comprehensive detail of the results of (I) – (VI) to the Branch Executive Committee for necessary action (ASUU UNIBEN Update, 2019).

The major problem is that some Academic staff is complaining of either non-payment or inadequate payment of Earned Academic Allowances. It is against this background that the following hypothetical questions needs to be answered:

1. What is the concept of ASUU Earned Academic Allowance?

2. What are the percentage payments ASUU Earned Academic Allowance?
3. Who are the most beneficiary of Earned Academic Allowance?

Objectives

The specific objectives are:

1. To ascertain if there is discrepancy in payment of Earned Academic Allowance to Academic staff.
2. To examine whether there were human errors in computing the Earned Academic Allowance.
3. To investigate the impact of non-payment of Earned Academic Allowance to ASUU UNIBEN strength
4. To ascertain the problems associated with the implementation of Earned Academic Allowance.
5. To examine whether those unpaid Academic Staff will be captured subsequently.

Hypotheses

In order to achieve the above objectives, the following research hypotheses were formulated:

1. There is no significant relationship between discrepancy in payment of Earned Academic Allowance and Academic staff of University of Benin
2. There is no significant relationship between human errors and computing of Earned Academic Allowance.
3. There is no significant relationship between the impact of non-payment and Earned Academic Allowance to Academic staff.
4. There is no significant relationship between the problems associated with the implementation and Earned Academic Allowance of University of Benin
5. There is no significant relationship between unpaid Academic Allowance and Capturing subsequently.

Theoretical Exposition

The particular theory that can sufficiently act as guide for the analysis of issues in this paper is group theory. The group theory framework is perhaps the most ambitious methodology in the study of social sciences. The most distinctive characteristic of the group theory to the conduct of political and democratic analysis is the theoretical assumption which sees society, the political process and the entire political process as nothing but a gigantic network of interacting groups. The exponents and principle promoters of the group theory are of the view that every society includes within it a large number of groups which remain engaged in perpetual struggle for power and domination over each other. For instance, to them politics could be understood only in terms of interactions between various groups. They tried to establish the group rather than the individual or the society as the basic unit of analysis in the study of politics. The first explicit and systematic development of the group theory as it relates

to analytic study of political systems was provided by A.F. Bentley in his book “The process of Government” which was published in 1908.

However, the work of Bentley was given boost nearly half a century later when David Truman advanced it further in his book governmental process, the analytical impact of group theory in 1951. Other scholars of this theory are Robert Darl, John Starte Mill among others. Bentley was interested in de-emphasizing the institutions and re-emphasizing processes. He conceived the group as a mass of activity and not a collection of individuals. Accordingly, he defined a group as a certain portion of men of society taken not as a physical mass out-off from other masses of men, but as a mass of who participates in its form like in many other group activities (Ojo, 1989).

In a nutshell, this framework is associated with this work because of the characteristic nature of the groups that make up the polity under study. For example, the nature of perpetual struggle for power and admonition over each other by major social groups.

Methodology

This research adopted a descriptive survey method. The method was based on selected Faculties of the University of Benin in Edo State, Nigeria. The scope of the study is therefore restricted to only Eight Faculties of the University of Benin e.g. Faculties of Arts, Agriculture, Education, Engineering, Life Science, Management Sciences, Physical Science and Social Sciences which are the focal point. The population of the study consist of 1,054 respondents, based on two categories (Senior Lecturer – Professor and Graduate Assistant – Lecturer I) (see table one below). Out of this number, nine hundred and seventy-one of them met our criteria and therefore form our sample size as can be seen in table one below:

Table 1: Population of Study/Rate of Returned Survey Questionnaire

S/No	Faculties	Category of Respondents	No. of Returned Questionnaires	No. of Not Returned/Invalid Questionnaires	Total No. of Sampled Respondents
1.	Arts	Sir - Professor	16	6	31
		Graduate Asst - Lecturer I	5	4	
2.	Agriculture	Sir - Professor	17	8	31
		Graduate Asst - Lecturer I	4	2	
3.	Education	Snr - Professor	18	7	32
		Graduate Asst - Lecturer I	4	3	
4.	Engineering	Snr - Professor	15	7	31
		Graduate Asst - Lecturer I	6	3	
5.	Life Science	Snr - Professor	17	6	32
		Graduate Asst - Lecturer I	5	4	
6.		Snr - Professor	17	8	

	Management Sciences	Graduate Asst - Lecturer I	4	2	31
7.	Physical Science	Snr - Professor	18	7	31
		Graduate Asst - Lecturer I	4	3	
8.	Social Sciences	Snr - Professor	16	6	31
		Graduate Asst - Lecturer I	5	4	
TOTAL			170	80	250

Source: Field Survey 2019.

Both Primary and Secondary sources of data were explored in trying to generate data for this study the specific information required for the study was non-payment of Earned Academic Allowance to some Academic Staff in Nigerian Universities, University of Benin as a focal point. The questionnaire formed the main instrument used in generating primary data, while documented information that are relevant to this study, constituted the secondary source of data. To compliment the information received through the questionnaire, respondents were also interviewed. As the research is based on attitude and opinions, the statistical tools employed in analysing responses include, tables and simple percentages. Out of the one thousand and fifty-four copies of the questionnaire distributed to the respondents, nine hundred and seventy-one studied were duly completed and returned in a useable form. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for the data analysis.

Data Analysis

Of all the nine hundred and seventy-one respondents, eighty (47%) of them are married; fifty (29%) are single while twenty-one (13%) are divorced and the remaining nineteen (11%) are either widow or widowers. Thirty (18%) of them are within the age bracket of 18 – 25, Fifty (29%) are between the age bracket of 26-35; while eighty (47%) are within the age bracket of 36-45 and the remaining forty-six years and above are ten (6%).

Table 2: Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between discrepancy in payment of Earned Academic Allowance and Academic staff of University of Benin

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	670	65
No	301	35
Total	971	100

Source: Statistical Analysis

Table 2 above shows that 670 (65%) of the total respondents agreed that there is discrepancy in payment of Earned Academic Allowance to Academic Staff in University of Benin which annoyed some Academic staff threatening to withdraw from ASUU and NUMPECO activity.

Therefore, the hypothesis one which states that there is no significant

relationship between discrepancy in payment of Earned Academic Allowance to Academic Staff in University of Benin is accepted.

Table 3: Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between human errors and computing of Earned Academic Allowance.

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	715	62
No	256	38
Total	971	100

Source: Statistical Analysis

Table 3 shows that 715 (62%) of the respondents agreed that there are human errors in computing of Earned Academic Allowance is responsible for several complaints from Academic Staff of non-payment and short-payment conversely led to setting up of five-man reconciliation committee.

Table 4: Hypothesis 3

There is no significant relationship between unpaid Academic Allowance and Capturing subsequently.

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	740	71
No	230	29
Total	971	100

Source: Statistical Analysis

Table 4 shows that 740 (71%) of the respondents agreed that the unpaid Academic Allowance will be captured subsequently which has doused the tension on campus by some Academic Staff of University of Benin while 230 (29%) disagreed with the opinion. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between unpaid Academic Allowance and Capturing subsequently is accepted.

Findings Based on Hypotheses

Based on the analysis of the hypotheses, all the research hypotheses were positive which implies that

(H_r) 1-3 were accepted.

More so, the study revealed that there are discrepancies in payment of Earned Academic Allowances and impacted negatively on academic staff when they compared their earned allowances. However, the desire of every university Academic Staff is to benefit from the payment of Earned Academic allowance, instead of being eliminated from the payroll. However, the opinion captured from the various Academic Staff and all the respondents agreed that the unpaid Academic Allowance will be captured subsequently which has doused the tension on campus by some Academic Staff of University of Benin.

See figure 1 below for more details of Nigeria Political map.

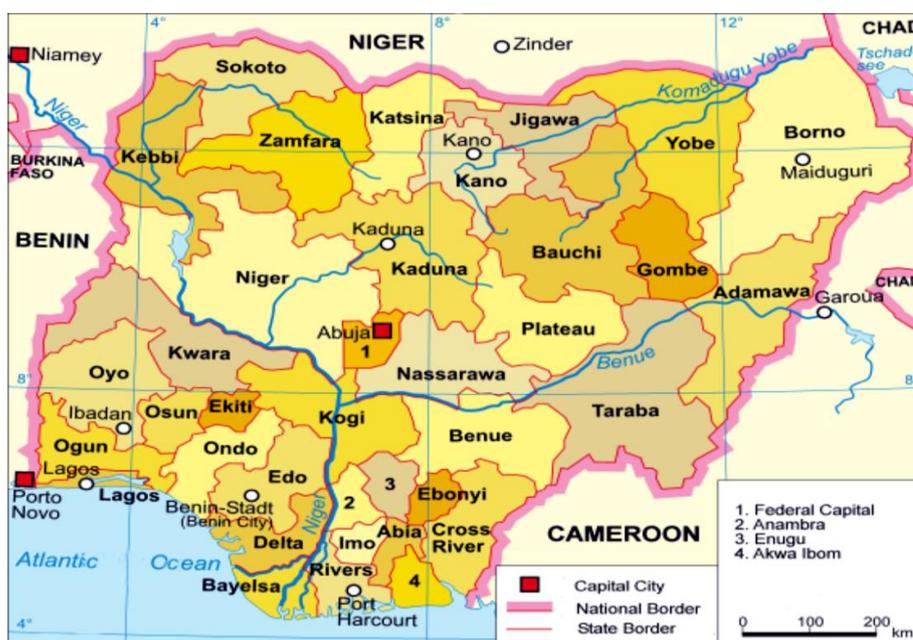


Figure 1: Political map of Nigeria Source: Wikipediacatched 20 November, 2018.

Conclusion

Conclusively, this paper revealed that there are discrepancies in payment of Earned Academic Allowance to Academic Staff in University of Benin. Conversely most Academic staff are worried of what will be the outcome, even when a five-man complaint committee to address the fall-out of payment has been set up.

Consequently, Education must be viewed as serving a public good rather than an individual good. It must be seen as having use-value rather than a commodity. The Federal Government had failed to honour the 2009 agreement to adequately fund Universities and implement the Memorandum of Action. This avoidable conflict between the government and ASUU must not be allowed to jeopardize the academics and future of Nigerian students. Education in Nigeria must be given its pride of place; the government must strive hard to meet the United Nation's minimum standard. Nigerian Universities cannot be locked up permanently and think ASUU and government will move about comfortably (Ekong, 2007).

Recommendations

Arising from the result of the analysis and the conclusion made there from, the following recommendations are hereby made:

- (a) Adequate measures should be put on ground by government and the Academic Staff Union of Universities and other stakeholders to check incessant strike in the educational system.
- (b) Academic staff of Universities should ensure that a cordial relationship exists between them and their employer.

- (c) Wealthy individuals and indigenous foundations should be encouraged to support endowments. This is one secret to the financial solvency of many Ivy-League schools in the United States of America.
- (d) Alumni of tertiary institutions must play a proactive role beyond annual dinners and token interventions. It is incumbent upon tertiary institutions to connect and communicate well with individual members of their alumni and encourage them to render better assistance, individually and collectively (Iyayi & Momoh, 2018).
- (e) Government at both Federal and State Levels must separate recurring expenditure of staff emolument from capital expenditure and ensure that they give weighted premium to both.
- (f) Government should not make TERTFUND take over its statutory obligation to fund tertiary institutions. It should also give Grant-In-Aid to deserving institutions both Federal and State, using set criteria including diversity, inclusiveness, scholarship, protection of rights of minorities and needs (Iyayi & Momoh, 2018)

However, the position of this paper has been variously put forward by the organized labour and the opponent of increase in minimum wage which purport that wage increase always lead to inflation which consequently erode the purchasing power of the worker's salary making them to be worse-off (Makanjuola, 2008). Therefore, given the level of economic crisis in the country, it is pertinent to seek an understanding of how the wage increases of academic staff have affected their job satisfaction in some Federal Universities in Nigeria. Specifically, the study determined the extent to which wage increases have led to increase in job satisfaction and to examined the effects of wage increases on the welfare of academic staff of various incomes.

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