

INFLUENCE OF POLITICIZATION OF EDUCATION SYSTEM ON QUALITY EDUCATION DELIVERY IN STATE UNIVERSITIES OF SOUTH EAST, NIGERIA

¹*Ekwe, Gabriel Michael*, ²*Mbah Christiana Nonyelum* and ³*Onyia Bernadette Nwakaego*

Department of educational foundation
Enugu State College of Education
Technical

Email: ekwemic@gmail.com,

Phone No: **08030409137**

²Department of Educational Psychology

Email: mbahchristiana819@gmail.com,

Phone no: **07066794066**

³Enugu State College of Education
Technical

Phone no: **08064949592**

Abstract

The study examined the influence of politicization of university education system on quality education delivery in state universities in south east of Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study while two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population for the study consisted of 3,218 lecturers from the five (5) State Universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The sample for this study comprised 322 respondents (186 male university lecturers and 136 female university lecturers) sampled from the 5 State Universities in the South East geopolitical zone of Nigeria using proportionate random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled “Politicization of University Education System for Quality Education” (PUEAQE). The reliability co-efficient of the instrument was calculated using Cronbach Alpha statistic. Coefficient value was found to be 0.86 indicating high reliability of the instrument. In answering the research questions, the researchers used mean and standard deviation while t-test statistic was used for testing the null hypotheses. The findings of the study revealed that politics has effects on the appointment of members of Governing Councils in State Universities of the South East State Universities according to respondent’s ratings. Also, politics has effects on the appointment of Vice Chancellors in State Universities of South East Geo-political zone according to respondent’s ratings. The study recommended among others were made that, Appointments and recruitments should be based on merit and competencies even if the policy of representation, quota and federal character are observed. This should be publicly advertised to create opportunities for the best candidates to be engaged even when quota and representative systems are applied in selected cases.

INTRODUCTION

Education is described as a process of transferring knowledge, values and norms from one generation to another. Education is the bedrock of development. It equips individual with the knowledge and skills with which to be functional member of society. Nations equip their citizenry with the knowledge and skills with which to manage effectively various sectors of the nation's economy. This explains why nations aspire to equip their citizens with functional education.

Education has been defined in various ways by various authors. Each author defines education according to his perception and according to the environment to which he belongs. It is the process of developing the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of people in order to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to survive and make progress in the society (Olaniyi & Adams, 2013). Oluremi (2016) opined that education is a means through which individuals acquire the relevant knowledge, skill and values to ensure proper intellectual and character development, for self-reliance and responsible citizenship. Misha, (2018), defined education as a process of teaching, training and learning, especially in schools, colleges or universities, to improve knowledge and develop skills. In the modern society, education is no longer seen solely as a set of skills, attitudes and values but as a service or a product to be sold by academic institutions that have transformed themselves into service providers (Misha, 2018).

In the same vein, Aristotle in Olagboye (2017), believed that education is the process of training man to fulfill his aim by exercising all the faculties to the fullest extent as a member of society.

The above definitions demonstrate the critical role that education plays in the development of individuals as well as nations. The definitions strengthen the general belief that no nation can

develop in the absence of functional education. In Nigeria and many other developing countries, educational institutions are witnessing more and more government interest and control as well as increasing intervention by the legislatures and courts (Federal Government of Nigeria as cited in Ukpong, 2017). The role of politics in the management of universities in Nigeria is manifested in government interference. This is because education is interwoven with politics. Those two concepts work hand in hand for the development of nations. Politics is defined as "a Social process whereby the limited available resources and values, whether material or symbolic, are allocated to the people or a society by those who have the authority to do so" Nwankwo (2012).

Development occurs only when quality education is delivered to the citizens. Quality education is a function of quality teachers, facilities, administration, environment and funding to mention but a few. In other words, quality education is defined as education that is relevant and adapted to the needs of the society (Ndiomu, 2019). The author argued that such needs must meet the standards in health, growth, and physical survival in a complex and globalized world. It implies education that is worthwhile, which empowers the recipients with relevant skills, knowledge, ideas, values and attitudes needed for him /her to make informed decisions and live a self-sustaining life. In other to achieve these feats, machineries must be put in place.

Various mechanisms have been put in place to ensure quality education. One of the mechanisms is referred to as quality assurance. Quality assurance is defined as a process of continuous improvement in the quality of teaching and learning activities which will be achieved via pathways of employing mechanisms internal and external to the system. It is ensuring that at least the provision of the Minimum

Academic Standards (MAS) documents are attained, maintained and enhanced (Omoregie, 2015). Ayeni (2012) in his contribution perceived quality assurance as the efficient management, monitoring, evaluation and reviews of the resource inputs and transformation process (teaching and learning) to produce a quality output (students) that meet set standards and expectations of the society.

University education means the totality of general and specialized knowledge and skill that enables university graduates to solve problems that they encounters in industry or to perform scientific research or pedagogical work within the area of education that he has been trained (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

Furthermore, Denga (2019) noted that every day, managers of federal and state universities are always confronted with personnel issues and problems which demand that they make and take decisions. As resources are generally scarce to satisfy the competing needs of their institutions and various interests, educational managers are bound to make choices from available alternatives. Their choices could however be influenced by many political factors from within or outside the institutions that could have implications for appointment of Council members, Vice Chancellors and other principal officers of universities. Whether from within or from outside, managers of these universities take decisions that discriminate against certain alternatives. Such discriminations or preferences may be borne out of political considerations. Political factors such as ethnicity, partisan political consideration, sectionalism, tribalism, religion, favouritism, catchment area, and quota system, may influence the appointment of external and internal members of the governing councils, vice chancellors and other principal officers. They may have implications for the effectiveness of the university system.

The appointment of external members of the governing councils of whether federal or state universities is assumed to have political undertones. It is speculated that the visitors use their authority and influence to appoint people of their religious, ethnic or sectional and partisan political background to the councils of the universities. This has become more apparent when considering the fact that in Nigeria, the state bears much responsibility for governance and financing of public higher institutions of their States. Debates concerning the degree to which state owned universities should be insulated from external political partisan influence, in terms of the appointment of external members of governing councils, have therefore continued to grow day by day in the South East States of Nigeria and elsewhere. Indeed, some observers believe that the alleged politicization of the management of federal and state universities have caused the authorities of these universities to take directives from politicians.

Schmidt (2011) observed that governors often handpick board members to bring the college campus under partisan control. Corroborating this position, Dunn (2013) and McLendon (2013) pointed out that governors more often appoint members of governing councils and boards which place them in commanding positions to influence the management of higher institutions. This raises the concern of the sort of exact balance that exists between politicians and the authorities of state universities in terms of their management.

It is also noted by Nwadiani, 2014 that the appointment of Vice Chancellors and other principal officers of federal and state universities is ethnically, religiously or sectionally influenced. The politics associated with the appointment of Vice Chancellors and other principal officers of the universities could be punctuated by rancour, infighting and at times open confrontation which could have serious

consequences for the effective management of the university system (Nwadiani, 2014).

The researcher's worry is that if universities in Nigeria are not shielded from the influence of politics, university education will be weakened. University education is a predictor of nation's strength in the committee of nations, if the products of university are weak, the various sectors of nation's economy will be weak. This is because these sectors will be managed by the weak products of universities. Political influence can affect adversely the quality of appointments, admissions, allocation of funds and establishment of more universities. University education should therefore be shielded from political influence so as not to affects the quality of its outputs. This constituted the researcher's worry and the motivation to embark on this research.

Statement of the Problem

In South East Nigeria, issue of concerns have been expressed by stakeholders over the influence of politics on the appointment of university education stakeholders in system. There are arguments that political influence has the potentials of weakening the quality of university education delivery. Argument equally abounds that political influences on such area as appointment of members of governing council, Vice Chancellors, funding, student's admission and establishment of universities have the potentials of flooding the universities with mediocre, especially state universities where the visitors are the sole owners of the schools. The stakeholders like who have argued that universities should be shielded from political influence. According to them, it is only through this approach that universities will function effectively. This by extension will lead to production of quality graduates who will manage the various sectors of the nation's economy. Vice Chancellors, Council members have expressed fears that if universities are not insulated

from the influence of politics, Nigerian's technological development will be an illusion. This is because political influence has a way of glorifying mediocrity at the expense of merit. Thus the researcher moved by the arguments of some of the stakeholders, then to investigate the influence of politicization of education system on quality education delivery in state universities, Nigeria. The problem of this study, therefore expressed in a question form stated thus; what are the influence of politicization of education system on quality education delivery in State Universities in South East Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of politicization of university education system on quality education delivery in state universities in South East Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine the:

1. effect of politics on the appointment of members of governing councils in state universities in the South East States of Nigeria;
2. effect of politics on the appointment of Vice Chancellors in state universities in the South East States of Nigeria;

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:-

1. What are the effects of politics on the appointment of members of governing councils in State Universities in South East Nigeria?
2. What are the effects of politics on the appointment of Vice Chancellors in State Universities in South East Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses which were tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study.

HO₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female academic staff on the effect of politics on the appointment of members of

governing councils in the south East State Universities in Nigeria.

HO₂: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female academic staff on the effect of politics on the appointment of Vice Chancellors in the south East State universities in Nigeria.

Research Method

The design of this study was descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey design, according to Ali (2006), is a study in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. Hence, the researcher deems it necessary to use this design because a representative sample of the entire population was used for the study. The area of the study was South East States of Nigeria which is one of the six geopolitical zones in the country. The region consists of the following states; Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. South East Geo political zone is 99.9% populated by Igbo people. The population for the study consisted of 3,218 lecturers from the 5 State Universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Available data show that there are 1,857 male lecturers and 1,361 female lecturers in the 5 State Universities in the south east geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The sample for this study comprised 322 respondents (186 male universities lecturers and 136 female university lecturers) sampled from the 5 State

Universities in the south east geopolitical zones of Nigeria.. Proportionate random sampling technique was used to sample 10% of the respondents from the universities. This is in agreement with Uzoagulu (2009) who posited that when the population is in few thousands, 10 percent would be used. While the instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled “Influence Politicization of University Education System for Quality Education” (IPUEAQE). The instrument was developed by the researcher and it has two sections, A and B. Section A was about the bio-data of the respondents while section B was about the information on the Influence politicization of University Education System for Quality Education. The instrument was faced validated while the reliability co-efficient of the instrument was calculated using Cronbach Alpha method. Alpha value was found to be 0.75, indicating high reliability of the entire instrument. Mean score and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, and t-test statistic was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The results are presented in tables according to research questions.

Research Question One:

What are the effects of politics on the appointment of members of governing councils in State Universities in South East Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation of Male and Female Academic Staff on the Effects of Politics on the Appointment of Members of Governing Councils in the South East State Universities in Nigeria

ITEMS		Male academic Staff 173		Female Academic Staff 128		Overall 322			
S/N	Effects of Politics on the appointment of members of governing councils include that the:	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	Dec	
1	external council members are appointed on the basis of political party affiliations	2.55	1.14	2.46	1.12	2.48	1.12	Disagree	
2	sectional considerations do not	2.62	1.19	2.46	1.15	2.47	1.16		

	influence the appointment of council chairman							Disagree
3	ethnic sentiments influence election of internal members of council	2.47	1.15	2.50	1.14	2.50	1.14	Agree
4	catchment area policy is a factor in the appointment of council members	2.52	1.15	2.51	1.08	2.52	1.10	Agree
5	religious affiliations influence composition of members of Council	2.53	1.13	2.54	1.15	2.53	1.14	Agree
6	quota system is used in the appointment of members of Council	2.53	1.09	2.59	1.13	2.56	1.11	Agree
7	council Chairman appoints Committee members on the basis of tribe	2.74	1.07	2.49	1.12	2.55	1.12	Agree
8	council Chairman appoints Committee members on the basis of friendship.	2.61	1.10	2.62	1.13	2.62	1.12	Agree
9	external council members are appointed on the basis of Familiarity with people in political power	2.55	1.14	2.49	1.10	2.51	1.11	Agree
10	council members are appointed on the basis of their contribution to development of political party.	2.74	1.07	2.49	1.12	2.55	1.12	Agree
Cluster Mean/SD		2.59	1.12	2.52	1.12	2.53	1.12	Agree

The data analysis on Table 1 showed the mean ratings of male and female academic staff on the effects of politics on the appointment of members of governing councils in the south East State Universities in Nigeria. In Table 1, the male academic staff mean scores ranged from 2.47 to 2.74, while the female academic staff mean score ranged from 2.46 to 2.62. The values of the cluster mean for male and female academic staff are 2.59 and 2.52 with standard deviations of 1.12 and 1.12. However, their overall mean ranged from 2.47 to 2.62 with cluster mean of 2.53 and standard

deviation of 1.12. The standard deviations of the two groups of the respondents indicate that they were homogenous in their responses. In other words, the standard deviations were close. The finding of the study indicates that politics has significant effects on the appointment of members of governing councils in State Universities in South East Nigeria to a great extent.

Research Question Two:

What are the effects of politics on the appointment of Vice Chancellors in State Universities in South East Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation of Male and Female academic Staff on the Effects of Politics on the Appointment of Vice Chancellor in the South East State Universities in Nigeria

ITEMS		Male academic Staff 173	Female Academic Staff 128	Overall 322				
S/N	Effects of Politics on the appointment of vice chancellors include that the:	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{x}	SD	Dec
11	ethnic considerations are key factors in the appointment of Vice Chancellors	2.50	1.16	2.51	1.13	2.51	1.14	AGRE E
12	party affiliations do not influence the appointment of Vice Chancellors	2.55	1.17	2.54	1.13	2.54	1.13	AGRE E
13	appointment of Vice Chancellors is based on sectional sentiments	2.39	1.08	2.59	1.12	2.55	1.11	DISAGREE
14	catchment area policy influences the appointment of Vice Chancellors	2.50	1.16	2.51	1.13	2.51	1.14	AGRE E
15	religious affiliations is considered in the appointment of Vice Chancellors	2.62	1.14	2.43	1.12	2.47	1.13	AGRE E
16	quota system is a key factor in the appointment of Vice Chancellors	2.52	1.08	2.50	1.12	2.50	1.11	AGRE E
17	appointment of Vice Chancellors is based on state government zoning system	2.59	1.08	2.54	1.14	2.55	1.13	AGRE E
18	quota system is a key factor in the appointment of Vice Chancellors	2.51	1.12	2.51	1.10	2.51	1.11	AGRE E
Cluster Mean/SD		2.52	1.12	2.52	1.12	2.52	1.12	AGRE E

The data analysis on Table 2 shows the mean ratings of male and female academic staff on the effects of politics on the appointment of Vice Chancellors in the South East State Universities in Nigeria. However, their overall mean scores ranged from 2.47 to 2.55 with cluster mean of 2.52 and standard deviation of 1.12. The standard deviations of the two groups of the respondents indicate that they were homogenous in their responses. In other words, the standard deviations were close. The finding of the

study shows that politics has significant effects the appointment of vice chancellors in state universities in South East Nigeria according to the respondent's ratings.

Testing of Hypotheses

HO₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female academic staff on the effects of politics on the appointment of members of governing councils in the south East State Universities in Nigeria.

Table 3: Summary of t-test analysis of significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female academic staff on the effects of politics on the appointment of members of governing councils in the south East State Universities in Nigeria

Group		N	\bar{x}	SD	df	p-value	Decision
Male Staff	Academic	186	2.59	1.12	299	.111	H ₀₁ not rejected
Female Staff	Academic	136	2.52	1.12			

Data in Table 3 for male and female academic staff on the effects of politics on the appointment of members of governing councils in the south East State Universities in Nigeria show that at 299 degree of freedom, the p-value was .111. The outcome of the p-value is greater than 0.05 level of significance set for this study. This signifies that the null hypothesis was not rejected and, therefore, there was no significant difference between the mean ratings of

male and female academic staff on the effects of politics on the appointment of members of governing councils in the south East State Universities in Nigeria.

HO₂: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female academic staff on the effects of politics on the appointment of Vice Chancellors in the south East State universities in Nigeria.

Table 4: Summary of t-test analysis of significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female academic staff on the effects of politics on the appointment of Vice Chancellor in the South East State Universities in Nigeria

Group		N	\bar{x}	SD	df	p-value	Decision
Male Staff	Academic	186	2.52	1.12	299	.106	H ₀₂ not rejected
Female Staff	Academic	136	2.52	1.12			

Data in Table 4 for male and female academic staff on the effects of politics on the appointment of Vice Chancellors in the south East State Universities in Nigeria show that at 299 degree of freedom, the p-value was .106. The outcome of the p-value is greater than 0.05 level of significance set for this study. This signifies that the null hypothesis was not rejected and, therefore, there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female academic staff on the effects of politics on the appointment of Vice Chancellors in the South East State Universities in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study show that the respondents agreed that politics has effects on the appointment of members of governing councils in State Universities in South East in Nigeria. In other words, Respondents agreed that partisan political affiliations, sectional considerations, ethnic sentiments, catchment area, the quota system and favouritism significantly influence the appointment of the members of governing councils in State Universities.

Some of the above findings are consistent with Ogbonnaya (2019) who posited that a good number of the members of governing councils and Vice

Chancellors of higher institutions are appointed on the basis of sectional, tribal, ethnic, religious sentiments and the catchment area policy. Ogbonnaya further stated that when this happens as is mostly the case; the councils of higher institutions will not succeed in accomplishing its constitutional objectives or functions. However, some of the findings are not consistent with the views of Schmidt (2011) who contended that members of governing councils who are appointed on the basis of political considerations faithfully implement the welfare programmes of their parties thereby improving the conditions of service of their University personnel. Schmidt also added that politically appointed members of governing councils sometimes champion the training and development of their staff through in-service and study-leave with pay programmes within and outside their institutions.

The findings also revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female academic staff on the effects of politics on the appointment of members of governing councils in the South East State Universities in Nigeria.

Evidence from the study revealed that the respondents shared the view that politics has effects on the appointment of Vice Chancellor in State Universities in South East of Nigeria. Majority of the respondents agreed that sectional, tribal, ethnic and partisan political considerations influence the appointment of Vice Chancellors of State Universities. The respondents also agreed that the catchment area policy and the quota system of appointment also constitute significant political factors that influence the appointment of Vice Chancellors, deputy Vice Chancellors and other principal officers of state universities.

These findings are in line with Knott (2011) and Mgbekem (2014) who reported that the governors' power to appoint Vice Chancellors and other

principal officers of the Universities undermine the constitutional independence of the Universities and is often an attempt by governors to bring the institutions under strict political control. Some of the items of the findings are also consistent with Schmidt (2011) who observed that governors often handpick members of governing councils and Vice Chancellors who share their political vision so as to bring Universities under partisan control. Florestano (2019) however disagreed with some of the findings when he remarked that most Vice Chancellors' appointments are devoid of political manipulation and influence. According to Florestano, as centers of learning and research, Vice Chancellors of Universities are mostly appointed on the basis of merit and experience rather than on political considerations. The findings also revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female academic staff on the effects of politics on the appointment of Vice Chancellor in the South East State Universities in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study concludes that politics influence university education in different ways. They include, the appointment of members of governing council, appointment of vice chancellors, funding, admission of students and location of state universities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were proffered.

1. Appointments and recruitments should be based on merit and competencies even if the policy of representation, quota and federal character are observed. This should be publicly advertised to create opportunities for the best candidates to be engaged even when quota and representative systems are applied in selected cases.
2. Appointments and recruitments should be based on existing vacancies in order to address the challenge of overstaffing and monitoring of

employees with a view to ensuring reduced cost of governance, efficiency and indiscipline in the service.

3. Public organizations should be allowed to fully control staff appointment and recruitments to conform to their specific needs at any given time without undue interference by the political and influential class.

4. Government should come up with a policy that ensures that prospective members of governing councils of universities are thoroughly screened by a Congregation Committee (CC) of each university and recommended or otherwise before their appointment. Since the congregation is made up of academic and senior administrative staff, it will enable them to know the political antecedents of the prospective members with a view to making proper recommendations.

5. The appointment of heads of universities, like Vice chancellors, Principal offers, Deans and Directors, should be made by a Senate Search Committee (SSC) with candidates of impeccable credentials as members, keeping the best interest of the institution in view.

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