
Analysis of Factors Responsible for Projects (Infrastructure Facilities) Abandonment in Public Universities in Nigeria and Way Forward

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Abstract: This paper discussed the factors responsible for projects abandonment in public Universities in Nigeria. Primary and secondary data were employed in the paper. The data were sorted from print resources and online resources. The paper concluded that poor funding, corruption, inflation, fall in national revenue, insecurity, political instability, weak school administrators, poor monitoring and evaluation, poor planning and lack of continuation in government policies were the factors responsible for projects abandonment in public Universities in Nigeria. Increment in the funding of public universities and other measures were recommended as way forward for sustainable facilities development in public universities in Nigeria.

Keywords: Abandonment, Estate surveyors and valuers, Value, Planning, Problems, Public Universities.

Introduction

Ogunode (2020) defined public universities as institution of higher learning owned by the government. Public universities are universities established to provide post-secondary schools knowledge and character trainings to Nigerians. Public universities are universities established by act of parliament to serve the interest of the general public. Public universities deal with the provision of teaching, research and communities services. The objectives of the universities in Nigerian Higher Education including professional education has the following aims: acquisition of knowledge, development of character and inculcation of the proper value orientation for the survival of the individual and societies; the development of the intellectual capacities of individuals to understand and appreciate environment; the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community; the acquisition of an overview of the local and external environments (FGN, 2014). Public universities in Nigeria are grouped into federal and state owned universities. The federal universities are owned by the federal government of Nigeria while the state universities are owned by the state government. The total number of federal and state public universities are 58 and 49 across the country (NUC, 2022).

The Nigerian government is responsible for the funding and provision of infrastructure facilities in all the federal owned universities while the state government is responsible for the funding of state owned universities as well as the provision of infrastructure facilities. To address the issue of infrastructural deficits in the public universities, the federal government

established tertiary fund among other schemes to provide infrastructural facilities in the public universities across the country.

One of the major problems facing the public universities in Nigeria is the problem of several abandoned project. Recently, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calabar bemoaned the high rate of abandoned projects in the institution and vowed to complete them before embarking on new ones. The VC, Prof. Florence Obi, made her feelings known to journalists while inspecting the ongoing remodelling, completion of abandoned projects and commissioning of a female hostel to mark her first anniversary in office. According to her, the institution has a bad record of being one of the universities with the highest number of Federal Government funded abandoned projects in the country. She said that building projects like the Pavilion One, Two, and Three, which are now funded by TETFUND, and the Faculty of Law, at the verge of completion, were built many years ago and left uncompleted by previous administrations (Wode, 2021).

Ojo (2017) cited in the Daily Trust dated June 28, 2015 that the Director of Administration, Chartered Institute of Project Management of Nigeria, Mr. David Godswill Okoronkwo, stated in an exclusive interview with the newspaper that there were approximately 56, 000 abandoned government projects across the country including those in educational institutions. He listed them according to geopolitical zones. In his words, “South-East has 15,000; South-West, 10,000; South-South, 11,000; North-West, 6,000; North-Central, 7,000; North-East, 5,000 and Abuja, 2,000.” All these projects were estimated at N12tn.

Ojo (2017) also observed that the former President Goodluck Jonathan inaugurated the 20-man Ibrahim Bunu-led Presidential Projects Assessment Committee on March 4, 2010, to among other things, take inventory of all Federal Government projects, assess level of funding, and project status. The committee on June 2, 2011 submitted its report to the ex-President. It made an inventory of 11,886 ongoing projects (as of then) with N7.78tn estimated cost out of which the Federal Government paid N2.696tn to contractors leaving a balance of about N5tn. Volume one of the report shows that of the geopolitical zones, the South-South zone has 1,755 projects amounting to N2.1tn followed by the North-Central with N630bn with 1,844 projects. The last in ranking is the North-East zone with 466 projects amounting to N98bn. These infrastructure facilities abandoned included those sited in educational institutions like federal colleges, polytechnics, Colleges of Education and Universities. This paper examines the factors responsible for projects abandonment in public universities in Nigeria.

Factors Responsible For Projects (Infrastructure Facilities) Abandonment in Public Universities in Nigeria

There are many factors responsible for abandonment of projects in

Nigeria’s public universities. Some of these factors include; poor funding, corruption, inflation, fall in national revenue, insecurity, political instability, weak school administrators, poor monitoring and evaluation, poor planning and lack of Continuation in Policies.(source)

Poor Funding

Poor budgetary allocation for capital projects in the various public universities is a major factor contributing to projects abandonment in public Universities in Nigeria. Public universities are underfunded Victoria & Owuama (2016); Ogunode, Chijindu, & Jegede (2022); Ogunode, Chijindu, & Jegede (2022); Ogunode, & Olugbenga, (2022); Ogunode, Akinjobi, & Musa, (2022) and this is affecting the development of capital projects in the various universities across the country according to Ogunode, Ahmed, Gregory, Abubakar (2020); Ogunode & Ahaotu (2020a); and Ogunode, Jegede (2021). Funding of capital projects in the public universities by government comes in two dimension, Federal ministry

for budgetary allocation and TETFund allocation. Both sources are from the national revenue. Ojiego (2020) observed that the mass failure of public projects over the years was blamed on inadequate budgetary provision, poor project conceptualization, institutional weakness, and corruption. Ewa, (undated) observed that disbursement delays is another cause factor considered critical with a relative importance. This has even made many contractors not ready to commit their personal funds on projects but only work within the release sums. This is echoed by PPAC (2011) on their report when they stated that 'consistent delays in payment to contractors lead to massive claims for overhead costs, interests and additional costs' as a result of poor funding plans. Oluwaseyi Olalekan Alao, Godwin Onajite Jagboro, (2017) also concluded that poor funding of ongoing capital projects is a major contributing factor for project abandonment in Nigeria. Olusegun and Michael (2011) carried out a surveyed in the six states of South Western Nigeria on factors responsible for project abandonment. The research revealed the causes of project abandonment include inadequate funding, delayed payment, poor project planning, inflation, the bankruptcy of contractor, variation of project scope, political factor, the death of a client, incompetent project manager, wrong estimate, poor cost control and faulty design. Ogunode (2020); Ogunode, Abubakar & Ajape (2021); Ogunode & Onyekachi (2021) identified the factors responsible for inadequate funding of public universities in Nigeria to include lack of political will, corruption, increase in population, inflation, fall in national revenue and poor financial planning and the implications of underfunding of the public universities include; inadequate infrastructural facilities, shortage of academics staff, poor quality of education, brain-drain and strike action.

Corruption

Corruption in the project management in term of contract awarding and procurement is another major cause of abandonment of projects in public Universities in Nigeria. Ebehikhalu & Dawam (2017) and Ogunode, Josiah & Ajape (2021) submitted that inadequate infrastructural facilities in many public universities in Nigeria have been linked to the high rate of corruption in the system. Money provided for infrastructural facilities are diverted and looted, leaving the universities to suffer a shortage of facilities. Priye (undated) observed that corruption began to affect education seriously in the middle and late 1980s as the psychosocial beast beclouded the minds of those who ruled Nigeria. The scramble to loot as much as possible by those in positions of power resulted in neglect of the educational sector. Suddenly, education that was considered being the cornerstone for the development and modernization of Nigeria was ignored, neglected, and starved of the funds and policy initiatives needed to move it forward. Increasingly, national and state governments started cutting educational funds, creating the impression that education was no longer an important strategic tool in directing the country's growth.(source) With this development, the looting of educational funds became acceptable. Thus, it became fashionable to loot funds allocated for academic enhancement, capacity building, infrastructural development, modernization, and rehabilitation of educational institutions. The looting involved educational policymakers, bureaucrats in various educational ministries, and school officials responsible for administering the schools (primary and secondary schools and universities). Umahi, H. (2016) observed that the Imo State University (IMSU), Owerri, awarded some contracts under the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund). Some of them were to be completed 2015. Today, some of them are still ongoing. The projects were allegedly stalled because money was not being advanced to the contractors as at when due, even as TETFund had made the funds available to the school. It is alleged that funds meant for the execution of the projects were lodged in fixed deposit accounts to yield interests for some persons to the detriment of the project and/ or the university. Sources disclosed that TETFund had released about N800million for payment to contractors handling various infrastructural projects in the university. The contractors volunteered that the refusal of the university to pay them despite the availability of funds had made them to abandon the project sites. Olusegun and Michael

(2011), Olalusi and Otunola (2012), Hoe (2013), Ihuah and Benebo (2014), Nagamany (2016); Mac-Barango (2017); Ogunode, Josiah & Ajape (2021); Ogunode, Oluseun (2020) have discussed the causes of abandonment of the project and identified corruption, communication gap, poor risk management, incorrect estimation, lack of available skilled personnel, misunderstanding of the work requirement, inadequate planning, inadequate finance, inflation, the death of the client, dispute, natural disaster, faulty design, etc.

Inflation

Inflation is another fundamental causes of abandonment of projects in public Universities in Nigeria. In a report by the Centre for the Study of Economies of Africa, Nigeria's inflation rate rose to 17.71 percent in May 2022. This is 0.89 percent point higher than 16.82 percent recorded in the previous month, although lower than 17.93 percent in May 2021. On a month-on-month basis, the headline inflation rate increased to 1.78 percent in May 2022, which is 0.02 percent rate higher than 1.76 percent recorded in the previous month. This is important to be addressed because the scarcity of foreign exchange is partly responsible for the continued depreciation of the Naira, resulting in high inflation. Erunke (2022) observed that Tertiary Education Trust Fund, TETFund blamed slow pace of work in its various intervention projects in public tertiary institutions across the country to fluctuations in prices of important building materials, COVID-19 lockdown and disruption to other economic activities. The TETFund submitted that projects experiencing delay as a result of inflation. TETFund acknowledged that there were challenges of high cost of materials. Nwanekezie, & Nwanguma, (2019) undertook a study on causes of abandoned projects and found that inflation, wrong estimates, inadequate planning, poor risk management, inadequate finance, etc., are the significant factors causing abandonment of building projects. Another study by Mac-Barango (2017) examined the causes and effects of abandonment of construction projects in Nigerian universities indicated inflation, bankruptcy of contractors, inadequate funding, inadequate planning, variation of project scope, faulty design, delay, and quackery are factors responsible for projects' abandonment in Nigeria.

Fall in National Revenue

The fall in the national revenue of Nigeria is another critical factor responsible for projects abandonment in public Universities across the federation. Ogunode (2021) observed that for the past five years now, Nigeria's revenue generation has continued to fall below the projected target and the implication of this is that many ongoing capital projects across the universities will be affected. For instance, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) shows that the average retail price of Automotive Gas Oil (Diesel) paid by consumers in Nigeria increased by 181 percent from N238.82 in May 2021 to N671.08 recorded in May 2022. On a month-on-month basis, the average retail price increased from N654.46 in April 2022, indicating a rise of 2.54 percent compared to the average retail price paid in May 2022. The rising cost of diesel is partly due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The economic sanctions imposed on Russia, a leading oil producer in the international market, have disrupted the global distribution chain for crude oil. Therefore the shortfall in revenue is no doubt affecting funding of such abandoned capital projects. Fund will not be released as planned. According to the documents released by Oken, (2021), the Federal Government recorded a revenue shortfall of N15tn from 2015 to 2020. The revenue shortfall led to a funding gap of N3.75tn in the implementation of capital projects of Ministries, Departments and Agencies, according to an analysis of the budgetary provisions and budget implementation reports from the Budget Office of the Federation. The short fall in the national revenue is affecting the funding of education, especially the capital projects in educational institutions. Mark (2021), observed that budget revenue projections of the federal government based on the amended 2020 Budget Framework was N5.365 trillion, showing a quarterly estimate of N1.341 trillion. However, the total revenue inflow of the Federal Government stood at N3.418 trillion as at

the end of December 2020, representing a N1.947 trillion (36.29 percent) shortfall from 2020 annual budget estimate. Ogunode (2021) observed that since the public universities and other federal higher institutions derive their funding from the national budget, low revenue generation will definitely affect the programme of the universities especially in the area of capital projects.

Insecurity

The insecurity problem facing the country now is another big factor responsible for project abandonment in Public Universities in Nigeria. Many contractors across the country have left project site because of insecurity, projects especially in the North-East South-East have been abandoned by various contractors handling them because of attacks and killing of their workers. Ogunode (2020); Ogunode & Atobauka, (2021a) and Ogunode, Jegede & Musa (2021) stated that insecurity is another problem facing the administration of public universities in Nigeria. Nigeria is facing insecurity challenge and this is affecting the entire educational institutions in the country. The Islamic sect called Boko Haram meaning (western education is forbidden) is attacking educational infrastructures in the Northern part of Nigeria. Many public universities located in the Northern Nigeria have been victims of continuous attacks. Many students, lecturers and administrators have been killed while others were kidnapped. Several various attacks on the universities have resulted to school closure leading to unstable academic programme and suspension of capital projects.

Political Instability

Political instability in term of changes in government and policies is also responsible for project abandonment many Public Universities in Nigeria. In Nigeria, election is conducted every four years to bring in a new government with fresh mandate in replacement of the existing administration. This changes in government affects award and completion of capital projects across the country. However, it has been observed that new administration or government in Nigeria do not often continue its predecessor's projects. In other words, new administration will commence new projects. Ewa, (2005) identified that many projects are conceived without a well-defined objective in mind, poor costing, no specific start and end points, poor documentation of contract, lack of performance criteria and properly developed monitoring and evaluation template by supervising organizations, fluctuation in government policies, lack of planning, project mismatch, over-ambitious projects, political influence in establishing projects, the 'Nigerian Factor', disbursement constraints, failure for successive regimes to issue appropriate white papers on failed contracts and granting of injunctions under exparte motions by Nigerian courts as factors responsible for project abandonment in Nigeria. Hoe (2013) found out some causes of abandoned construction projects including beneficiary of the abandoned project. The ranking factors affecting the owner of the project included cash flow problems, incompetence and siphoning out of money. The study also revealed that government regulations adversely affect or cause project failure in Malaysia. Ihuah and Benebo (2014) investigated the various causes of abandoning development projects and the effects of such causes on real properties and their values. The factors included inconsistency in government policies, payment remittance delay, lack of adequate fund allocation, leadership instability, death of the investor, improper project planning, and design, improper project costing among others. Ogunode, & Abubakar (2021) Ogunode (2020) and Olajide (2018) concluded that political instability in Nigeria have affected educational policies and many ongoing capital projects in educational institutions resulting to project abandonment in the schools.

Weak School Administrators

The weaknesses of some school administrators in term of poor human relation and organization is responsible for projects abandonment Ogunode (2020) opined that

appointment of weak administrators in the Nigerian public universities is another big challenge facing the administration of public universities in Nigeria. Many universities' administrators appointed to head the public universities are not qualified and less exposed to handle the administration and management of universities in Nigeria. Ogunode, Jegede, Adah, Audu, & Ajape (2021); Ogunode, Yiolokun & Akeredolu, (2019) cited Udida, Bassey, Udofia, & Egbona (2009) who submitted that some individuals appointed as vice chancellors of some university are weak, not competent and lack administrative potentials; such appointees must possess administrative qualities and must lead by example. The leader must have integrity, must be knowledgeable, and practice modern types of management leadership styles. He or she must be visionary and ready to adjust to situations in the system. The performance of the administrator should be sustained through the proper utilization of material and human resources in the achievement of the institutional goals and objectives. A lot of higher education system managers do not possess the charisma, or good human relations needed for effective and efficient leadership. The implication is that programme of the universities such as capital projects would suffer delay and may even be abandoned.

Poor Monitoring and Evaluation

Other factors identified include lack of accountability, inadequate monitoring instruments, political instability, non-usage of accurate data, and inconsistent economic planning. Ojiego (2020) noted systemic failure, poor planning, and inefficient management, projects in Nigeria record about 60 percent failure.

Poor Planning of Projects

Poor planning of capital projects is another major factor contributing to project abandonment across the public universities in Nigeria. Ewa (undated) did a study that explored the root causes of project abandonment in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria. The result from the study showed that the root causes of project abandonment in tertiary Institutions in Nigeria like any other government establishment are, lack of adequate planning for the project at inception, the lack of articulated vision and objectives, lack of adequate funds and budgetary allocation before projects are embarked upon, Inefficient and ineffective legal system, poor contract documentation, corruption and compromises, lack of municipal services, non-release of government white papers on investigations carried out on abandonment of projects, lack of true leadership, lack of continuity and Institutions' long term strategic plans to drive the Institutions, ambiguity in contract documentations. However, Ayodele and Alabi, (2011) also discovered that inadequate planning, inadequate funding/financing, inflation, bankruptcy of contractors, variation of project scope, political factor, death of client, incompetent project manager, wrong estimates, inadequate cost controls, faulty design and delays in payments were the cause of project abandonment. Al-Ahmad, Al-Fagih, Khanfar, Alsamara, Abuleil, and Abu-Salem, (2009) identified poor planning, unclear goals and objectives, having objectives changed during project implementation, unrealistic estimation of time and resources and lack of executive support and user involvement as responsible for project abandonment. Akhanolu et al. (2016) did a study that examine the causes and effects of abandonment of projects in Nigeria. The result showed the causes of project abandonment as lack of adequate fund allocation and payment delay, improper project budgeting, land or legal disputes, the death of the owner, improper project estimate, lack of project risk assessment, etc.

Lack of Continuation in Policies

Another major factor contributing to project abandonment across the public universities in Nigeria is lack of continuation in government policies. El-Rufia (2012) attributed the reasons for project abandonment in Nigeria' institutions to lack of continuation in policies, poor planning, haphazard procurement practices, incompetent project management and lack of

coherence and consistency with other programmes. Olalusi and Otunola (2012) also investigated possible causes of project abandonment major factor contributing to project abandonment in Nigeria, its impact on the immediate community contribution to infrastructure decadence and environmental pollution. The findings reveal that non-functional government policies, inadequate procurement procedures, incompetent contractors and poor designs contributed to project abandonment.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The paper identified that poor funding, corruption, inflation, fall in national revenue, insecurity, political instability, weak school administrators, poor monitoring and evaluation, poor planning and lack of continuation in policies were the factors responsible for projects abandonment in public Universities in Nigeria.

To address these challenges, the government should increase the funding of public universities and school administrators should ensure the funds are released to the contractors as at when due. The government should direct all anti-corruption agencies to monitor all funds released for capital projects in public universities. The government should prioritize capital projects in universities in case of fall in national revenue, government should provide adequate security in all public universities to guarantee safety of lives and properties. Government should appoint qualified school administrators, set up an effective monitoring and evaluation team, ensure effective project planning and develop the political will to continue with continue all policies within the universities for sustainable infrastructural facilities' development.

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