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# Stakeholders Participation in University Administration in Nigeria: Challenges and Way Forward

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**Abstract:** This paper discussed stakeholder participation in the university administration in Nigeria: barriers and the way forward. Secondary data were collected from online and print publications. The paper identified weak university administrators, poor engagement of stakeholders, poor capacity building, poor implementation of university policy on the engagement of stakeholders, poor agitation from stakeholders and fear of opposition from stakeholders as barriers to effective stakeholders participation in the university administration in Nigeria. Based on these barriers, the paper hereby suggested that; the government should always appoint competent people as heads of universities. People to be appointed should have a track record of effective human relationships with stakeholders. Universities leaders should always engage the stakeholders on the issues affecting the universities. Issues like fee increments and student expulsion should involve the stakeholders before taking decisions. Universities leaders should be trained after they are appointed university heads. They need training in human relations skills and team building skills etc.

**Keywords:** University administration, Stakeholder, Participation

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## Introduction

University education is the highest form of education given to adults with the view of collecting certificates after graduation. University education is a form of education with the capacity to transform an individual and society positively through the application of teaching, research and community services. University education is an advanced education in teaching, research and community service inclined. In Nigeria, university education is grouped among tertiary education. Solomon, Ogunode & Jegede (2020) viewed University education as the education that provides post-secondary school education for citizens. University education is an advanced education that develops the manpower of the country. University education is the most advanced education that gives direction to career development. The National Policy on Education Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014), defined Tertiary Education as the Post-

Secondary Section of the National education system, which is given by Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Technology including courses as given by the Colleges of Education, Advanced Teachers Training colleges, Correspondence Colleges and such Institutions as may be allied to them.

The goals of university education are captured in the goals of tertiary education which according to (FRN 2013) are to: Contribute to national development through high-level manpower training; provide accessible and affordable quality learning opportunities in formal and informal education in response to the needs and interests of all Nigerians; provide high-quality career counseling and lifelong learning programmes that prepare students with the knowledge and skills for self-reliance and the world of work; reduce skill shortages through the production of skilled manpower relevant to the needs of the labour market; promote and encourage scholarship, entrepreneurship and community service; forge and cement national unity; and promote national and international understanding and interaction.

Tertiary Educational institutions which also included the universities shall pursue these goals through: Quality student intake; quality teaching and learning; research and development; high standards in the quality of facilities, services and resources; staff welfare and development programmes; provision of a more practical based curriculum relevant to the needs of the labour market; generation and dissemination of knowledge, skills and competencies that contribute to national and local economic goals which enable students to succeed in a knowledge-based economy; a variety of flexible learning modes including full-time, part time, block release, day-release, and sandwich programmes; access to training funds such as those provided by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF), Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund); Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) that is well structured, coordinated and supervised; maintenance of minimum educational standards through appropriate regulatory agencies; an all-inclusive credible admissions policy for national unity; supporting affordable, equitable access to tertiary education through scholarships and students' loans; inter-institutional co-operation and linkages; and dedicated services to the community through extra-mural and extension services (FRN, 2013).

The realization of the university goals and objectives depends on effective administration (Ogunode, Akinjobi, & Musa, 2022; Ogunode, & Onyekachi, 2021). Administration is defined as the arrangement of institution resources for the implementation of the institution's programme to the attainment of institution objectives within a set time. Administration covers all aspects of education. Administration covers early childhood education, Basic education, Junior secondary school education, secondary school education and higher education including other forms of education. University administration is critical to the attainment of the university's goals. Ogunode (2020) defined University administration as the application of the universities' resources to implement the programme of the universities to realize the objectives of the universities. University administration is the mobilization and arrangement of both human and material resources for the achievement of the university's goals. University administration is the effective use of the resources of the university to implement the teaching programme, research programme and community service programme of the universities.

University administration is the deployment of the universities' resources to accomplish the universities' programmes. The objectives of university administration include: implementing the programme of the universities as defined; allocating resources for the

implementation of the universities programme; ensuring implementation of the teaching programme, ensuring implementation of the research programme; ensuring delivery of quality community services programme, to ensure effective staff development, to ensure effective student administration, to ensure smooth implementation of the academic calendar and to ensure quality education (Ogunode, 2020).

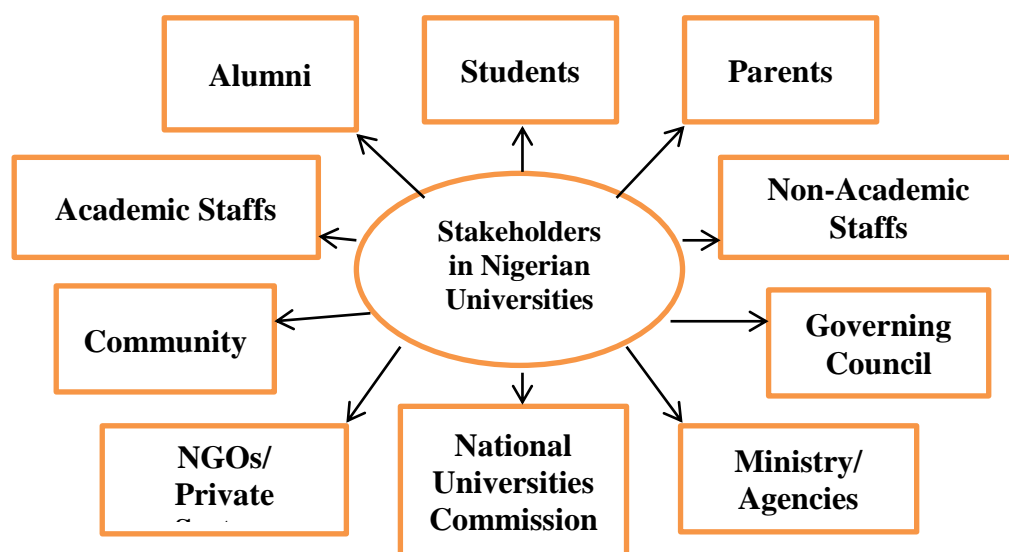
The university administration is handled by the university administrators. School administrator means different thing to different people. The school administrator can be referred to as school leader, school head, head-master, Head-mistress, or principal. School administrators at higher institutions include; Provosts for colleges of education, Rectors for the Polytechnics, and Vice-Chancellors for universities. Ogunode (2020) defined school administrators as the leaders that lead the school community in the direction of realizing the set goals and objectives of the institutions within a time frame. Cranston (2002) identified the duties of the school administrators to include: the demonstration of a variety of management and leadership abilities and, making complex decisions in collaboration with other staff in the school and the communities. Ahaotu & Ogunode (2021) identified that one of the major functions of the school administrator is to engage the stakeholder on the development going on in the school. The university administrators and managers are supposed to engage the stakeholder of the university in terms of taking a decision that affects the administration and management of the institutions. The university stakeholder is a critical component of the university. They are strong members in terms of decision-making and policy making. University stakeholders interact and it does not connote they concur on the same policy but their ideas and suggestions must be incorporated into policies and it must be transparent. The participation of stakeholders is important and germane to higher education. The university Vice-Chancellor has a critical role to play to ensure that the institution's mission statement is vigorously pursued by all stakeholders. The administrator should set the vision and empower other stakeholders to take responsibility for achieving it. Through collaborative efforts involving different stakeholders, universities could sponsor lecturers and other staff to training programs such as workshops, seminars and conferences both local and international for an update of knowledge and skills. Such training programs could involve trade unions, employers of labour and public assistance. This will help in shaping education and training to make it more relevant to the needs of the market.

The level of stakeholder participation in Nigerian educational institutions is low and this has resulted in crises in the universities. Adeola & Bukola (2014) noted that despite the various value attached to university education, it appears University education in Nigeria, is today faced with a lot of crises. The crises in Nigerian Universities today, have not been unconnected with the frequent student protest usually in the form of violent demonstrations. This situation has led to the perennial closure of the system as a result of maladministration and poor management (Okebukola, 2004; Ohiare, Ogunode, & Sarafadeen, 2021; Ogunode, Olatunde-Aiyedun, & Mcbrown, 2022). It has been observed that the issue of quality education in the universities has fallen, poor ranking of universities, corruption, and unstable academic calendar are the orders of the day (Ogunode, Yiolokun, & Akeredolu, 2019; Ogunode, Ugochukwu & Jegede, 2022; Ogunode & Adah, 2022). Students are only sure of the date of admission, the expected year of graduation is no longer known from inception. Parents/Guardians now incurred extra costs keeping their children/wards indefinitely in school. Also, it has been observed that irregular academic calendar has also encouraged

examination malpractices, cultism and other vices on Nigerian university campuses (Garba, 2014; Ebehikhalu & Dawam, 2016). The poor participation of stakeholder in the administration and management of universities have allowed the university leaders to do anyhow without questioning. The poor participation of the stakeholder in the administration of the universities has left the university system in its present condition. Hence, it is needful to discuss the barriers to effective stakeholder participation in university administration in Nigeria.

### **Concept of Stakeholder in Education (University)**

University stakeholder relations are a meaningful interaction between the university system and the stakeholders. It has to do with the healthy relationship existing between the university (involving students, academic staff, non-academic staff, and other personnel and the society including government, associations, old students and philanthropists on the issues and decision-making in the school. The university system has to depend on critical stakeholders for its survival. According to Lee (2021), stakeholders reduce the emphasis from the entire community to that individuals in the community who have vested enthusiasm for what is happening in higher education and those who are affected by policies in higher education. These are people who are involved in the process of achieving educational goals. Those who participate in the process of achieving educational goals and objectives of higher education are known as the stakeholders'. They are people whose concern is for the progress of the institution (Oduwaiye, & Famaye, 2023). In the words of McCowan, Janmaat, & Rao (2016) there are various stakeholders in higher education and these include lecturers, government, students, school owners, parents, Nigeria Universities Commission and community leaders. It was noted that the ideas, perceptions, interests and preoccupations of these stakeholders are different. At the same time, working together is important to achieve educational goals. Therefore, each of the stakeholders' participation is revealed in the following aspects. University stakeholders are groups of people that share an interest in the activities and programmes of the universities because of their resources in the institutions. University stakeholders are individuals who are interested in the activities of an organization because of their stake in the institution and because they want the development of the institution.



**Figure 1: Stakeholders in Nigerian Universities****Source:** Ogunode, Ayoko & Orifah (2023)**Students:**

The students are referred to as those who have been admitted into various tertiary institutions to acquire degrees that would enable them to be self-reliant and contribute to the development of the country. These are the first set of people to be interested in education. They need specialized training and in-depth knowledge. The students require the acquisition of skills, knowledge, competencies and entrepreneurship skills ((Oduwaiye, & Famaye, 2023). Ogunode, Audu & Ndubuisi, (2020) noted that students are learners in educational institutions. Studentship started from early childhood education to basic education to secondary school education and ends in higher institutions. Higher institutions students are learners in higher institutions. Higher institutions students are mature learners. Students in higher institutions are aged 18 years and above. Students of higher institutions are ready for learning and research. Some of the students of higher institutions are dependent while others are independent. Students in higher institutions are either doing a first-degree, second degree or third-degree (Ogunode & Abubakar, 2021). National Open University of Nigeria (2009) observed that students are the focal point of school administration. Therefore, whatever the school head does, must take into account the students, their welfare, and other activities that affect their lives and stay in school. Schools are set up not for teachers, not for parents, not for educational administrators but for students. The various decisions taken by school administrators, therefore, depend upon knowing the general and specific needs of the student population (Ogunode & Abubakar, 2021).

**Parents:**

These are grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, older brothers and sisters who check on the progress of students by assisting in checking topics and explanation of concepts taught for better understanding. They ensure students' achievement is increased. Asiyai (2015) submitted that parents' contributions are numerous in the improvement of the quality of university education in Nigeria. Parents are to ensure that their children are provided with adequate materials needed for their academic activities. Adequate provisions must be made for students in terms of buying their foodstuff, early payment of tuition fees, provision of accommodation and provision of books. Parents could also play the role of providing counseling to ensure that their children stay in school, attend lectures, refrain from joining secret cults, develop good study habits and learn effectively. Parents should also play the role of provision of spiritual support for their children while at school by praying for them. The primary objective of parents is the assurance of their children's quality education which will enable them to lead productive and rewarding adult lives in a global society (Cotton & Wikeland, 2001).

**Lecturers:**

These are people who teach the students and impart knowledge and skills to students. The lecturers make use of high-quality materials for students. The students are made comfortable for them to learn. The curriculum is interpreted by them to facilitate the teaching and learning of higher education.

**Nigeria Universities Commission:**

The body is in charge of the smooth running of academic programmes in various

universities. The academic programmes of universities are monitored by them and educational policies are implemented in each institution. Asiyai (2015) observed that the National Universities Commission is the regulator of university education in Nigeria. It regulates all the activities of public and private universities in Nigeria. The NUC accredits programs for university education in the country. It ensures that only accredited programs are run by universities. The NUC is charged with ensuring quality and quality assurance in Nigerian universities. The NUC has a quality assurance unit that is responsible for using international best practices on quality assurance. The NUC demands accountability from universities and checks the overall effectiveness and efficiency of program offerings and all activities of Nigerian universities. The NUC sets the minimum standards regarding the qualification of teachers, the quality of teaching in institutions, the number of students to be admitted and the university carrying capacity. As a way of improving quality, the NUC regularly monitors the activities of universities and conducts a need assessment exercise.

### **Non-Governmental Organizations, Local Communities and Private Sectors**

Non-governmental organizations, local communities and private sectors have numerous contributions to improving the quality of university education in Nigeria. An earlier study by (Asiyai 2008) showed that NGOs and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) have numerous contributions to garnering resources for quality education delivery. In developed countries, school improvements have been greatly achieved through the collaborative participation of different stakeholders such as non-governmental organizations and local communities. A study conducted in Pakistan by Barrs cited in Asiyai (2012) disclosed that community organizations provided monitoring of teaching by teachers which lead to significant improvement in the quality of teaching and improved accountability systems and ethos of schools. Studies carried out in the USA by Sanders, in Australia by Duncan, et al. and in the UK by Farrell all cited in Asiyai (2012) noted that local communities contributed to educational reform, school decision making and information access and in the rebuilding of secondary schools across England through philanthropic donations of funds (Asiyai, 2015).

The stakeholders are grouped according to Asiyai (2015) as internal or external. Internal stakeholders include government which is the owner of higher education institutions or service providers, students on whom all the activities of university education systems are centred, academics who are constantly engaged in teaching, research and community service, university administrators who manage the affairs of the institution by providing leadership, non-academic staff, and other management staff, principal officers, directors of institutes, heads of departments and internal members of the governing council. Internal stakeholders must be committed to the principles of SERVICOM-Service Compact with all Nigerians which is a government initiative in pursuing excellence in the delivery of services for all Nigerians. Universities in Nigeria must adopt the golden principles of accountability and transparency in the process of service delivery. In this way, improvement in the quality of university education is attainable. The external stakeholders include the National University Commission (NUC), non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, parents, employers of labour, trade unions, alumni association, industries/firms, the private sector, development agencies both local and international, and the society as a whole.

### **Barriers to Stakeholders' Participation in University Administration in Nigeria**

There are many barriers to stakeholder participation in the university administration in Nigeria. Some of the barriers include; weak university administrators, poor engagement of stakeholders, poor capacity building, poor implementation of university policy on the engagement of stakeholders, poor agitation from stakeholders and fear of opposition from stakeholders

### **Weak University Administrators**

Weak university administrators appointed to head universities in Nigeria have contributed to poor participation of stakeholders in the affairs of the universities in Nigeria. Most of these university administrators appointed lack human relations skills to relate with the community members and the university stakeholders. Some individuals appointed as vice-chancellors of some universities are weak, not competent and lack administrative potential; 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 institutional goals and objectives. Leaders in some universities are weak, uncoordinated and lack administrative skills. Some do not have administrative knowledge or skills. According to Taiwo (1980) and Ekaette (2001) in Ogunode, Ezema, & Ayoko, (2022), a lot of higher education system managers do not possess the charisma or good human relations needed for effective and efficient leadership. As a result of the poor leadership and ineffective style of administration, a lot of programs or activities are not carried out in such institutions such as the provision of grants for research and publications, staff welfare is neglected, no adequate control of staff and students, no vision for the University. Such leaders also do not have the zeal for supervision and monitoring of institutional activities. This can affect the performance of the system in that, workers can result to a nonchalant attitude toward work and hence no sustainability or continuity of good track records of performance in the system. Nigerian Higher Educational System needs leaders who can position it to an envying height of success and progress contributing to society's quest for self-reliance Ujomu (2001).

### **Poor Engagement with Stakeholders**

Poor engagement of stakeholders in the decision-making and taking of the universities has also constituted a barrier to stakeholders' participation in the affairs of the universities in Nigeria. Many public universities are known for poorly engaging the stakeholders in the universities on important issues affecting the universities. The universities manager only considers the final decision of the senate on major issues in the management and administration of the universities and neglects contributions from the stakeholders of the university. Many universities have been thrown into crises because management increased school fees without input from the students and parents. Union leaders have disrupted the academic programme of universities due to poor consultation with them. The attitude of most leaders in Nigerian higher institutions towards stakeholder participation in decision-making and the contribution of their inputs on issues concerning the institutions is negative. Most leaders in higher institutions do not regard the stakeholders as part of the system. The poor relationship between management and institution stakeholders has led to many crises and hampered the development of the institutions. John (2014) carried out a study and found that stakeholder engagement in the administration of universities is low.

### **Poor Capacity Building**

The poor capacity building programme of university administrators on public engagement in affairs and management of the universities. Capacity building is very important for leaders in higher institutions. It helps to improve their effectiveness and efficiency. Most university administrators and managers in Nigeria have not been fully trained on how to participate with the stakeholders in the affairs and administration of the universities. Leaders that are trained in human relationships with stakeholders performed better in terms of gaining support from the team and stakeholders. The inability of many higher institution leaders to access effective training and retraining programmes on human relations and teamwork has limited their performance and affected the development of the institutions they are heading. Michael (2017) lamented that the poor training school leaders in Nigeria are exposed to have limited the leadership capacity and affected school development. He argued that as school leaders they should always go for training to improve their leadership skills. Musa (2018) submitted that higher institution leaders in Nigeria lack effective training programmes needed for leaders at that level to succeed. Ogunode, & Oluseun (2020) concluded that inadequate funding, lack of a strategic plan for human resources development, institutional corruption, favouritism, strike actions, political influence and poor implementation of staff development programs as the challenges facing the administration of professional development programs in Nigerian higher education institutions.

### **Poor Implementation of University Policy on Engagement of Stakeholders**

The various Act establishing universities in Nigeria makes stakeholder engagement compulsory and a matter of necessity. There are many policies in the universities act that stipulates students' engagement, parent's engagement and community consultation. The poor implementation of these policies by the handler of the universities has contributed to poor participation of the stakeholders in the university administration. Policies formulation and enactment are not the problems of the Nigerian government and institutions but implementation of the policies is the problem. Nigerian higher institutions and universities have always had the best quality assurance policies in Africa but the implementation is the challenge. Punch (2022) reports that stakeholders identified that Nigeria has made several signs of progress in the development of the higher education system, however, policies, innovations, and practices seem disconnected or disjointed. Nigeria has one of the most robust education policies, but a major challenge is the implementation of the policies. Federal agencies such as the NUC, the NCCE, National Board for Technical Education, and TET-Fund are responsible for formulating, funding, monitoring and implementing higher education teaching and research policies. The NUC develops the minimum academic standards and accredits degrees and other academic awards. Also, these agencies are responsible for ensuring that quality is maintained within the academic programmes.

### **Poor Agitation from Stakeholders**

The weakness of stakeholders in the Nigerian university system has also constituted to poor participation of stakeholders in the administration of the universities in Nigeria. Some stakeholders in the universities are very weak and inactive towards issues on the university administration. Some unions in the universities are not active to engage the universities on the issue concerning them due to weakness of leadership. Akuezi, (2017) noted that the root of the disturbing problems in the higher institutions in Nigeria is the attitude of the various



stakeholders towards the management of various higher institutions spread across the country. The stakeholders are weak in pushing forward their inputs and opinions on issues affecting the educational system. This problem of not actively participating and agitating for good governance in the various educational institutions has contributed to the poor quality of education and the mismanagement of educational resources in the country. It has been observed that many stakeholders in the higher institutions in Nigeria are less interested in what is going on in the various higher institutions across the country. This poor agitation and less interest have led to a crisis in the education sector, especially the higher institutions. This condition among others has resulted in systems poor performance and sustainability of the credible tempo of community services. The less interest of stakeholders in the affairs of university administration is a challenge to the full participation of the stakeholders. It has created a gap between poor administration and management in the system.

### **Fear of Opposition**

The fear of opposition from the university community and the stakeholders have prevented many universities manager from participating the stakeholders in the affairs and decision-making of the institutions in Nigeria. It has been observed that the introduction of change principles in the institutions has always been opposed by the stakeholders in the institutions. For instance, if the university management is deciding to increase the school fees or introduce policies that will discomfort the personnel in the system they may be afraid of engaging the students and staff in such issues because of opposition. The fear of opposition to policies and decisions made in most universities has made administrators of such institutions not to engage the stakeholders. Ojo (2015) and Abdul (2018) stated that the fear of opposing management policies and programme have made many leaders of higher institutions not engaging the stakeholder in the affairs of the institutions. In supporting this submission, Akin (2015) stated that many leaders in educational institutions do not have confidence in the students and parents in mobilizing support for their policies and programme.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This paper examined stakeholder participation in the university administration in Nigeria: barriers and the way forward. The paper concluded that weak university administrators, poor engagement of stakeholders, poor capacity building, poor implementation of university policy on the engagement of stakeholders, poor agitation from stakeholders and fear of opposition from stakeholders are the barriers to effective stakeholders participation in the university administration in Nigeria. Based on these barriers, the paper hereby suggested that;

1. The government should always appoint competent people as heads of universities. People to be appointed should have a track record of effective human relationships with stakeholders.
2. Universities leaders should always engage the stakeholders on the issues affecting the universities. Issues like fee increments and student expulsion should involve the stakeholders before taking decisions.
3. Universities leaders should be trained after they are appointed university heads. They need training in human relations and team-building skills
4. Universities administrators should always ensure that policies that deal with accountability and stakeholders are fully implemented in all aspects of the university's administration

5. Stakeholders in the universities business should be active and demand inclusion always in the administration and management of the universities

6. Universities administrators should do proper consultation when introducing new policies to gain the support of the stakeholders. This will help to reduce opposition to policies.

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