

## **ACADEMIC STANDARDS OF EXTENSION AND SATELLITE PROGRAMMES OF NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES: MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL**

By

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### **Background:**

Over the last two decades or so, the over-all statutory funding allocations to Nigerian universities have shown progressive decline at a time inflation has risen to an annual average of 90%. Amidst this under-funding, the high inflationary tendencies and mismanagement of school funds, proprietors of the currently existing 37 universities in Nigeria (Federal and State Governments; in Nigeria, as of now, there are no privately-owned universities) have often expected the universities to source for local income, using resources available to them. The expectation is that each university should generate 10% of its total annual recurrent expenditure from local sources. In response to the groans under-funding, the desire to stem the ravages of inflation as well as generate some income to argument government's declining financial statutory allocation, some universities have put in place different extension/satellite undergraduate and post-graduate degree programmes in Nigeria and in a number of cases, even abroad. In the late 1970's and the 1980's, government tended to encourage such academic extension programme because its philosophy tallied with its ambition of providing education for manpower development of citizens. However, in the last eleven years, the number of undergraduates extension/satellite programme of Nigerian universities have increased from 16 to 900 (including certificates, diploma and undergraduate programmes) while for the post graduate programme, over the same period, the number has increased from zero to 35 (Okon, 1997). This sudden increase in the number of programmes and students' enrolment have, Ali (1996) noted, imposed a number of problems and severe demands on the capability of the affected institutions to fully execute such materials/extension academic programmes. In the last ten years for instance, as a result of brain drain, no Nigerian university has had its full complement of approved academic staff numbers. Facilities are inadequate, insufficient or decrepit. One consequence of these problems, for instance, is the feeling that these universities are overstressing themselves and abusing their academic freedom. They note the limited monitoring of extension programmes by universities that run them. Most of the programmes are seen as money spinning entrepreneurial initiatives. Because of these and other associated problems, there are concerns by some very senior university academics and administrators about the need for either phasing out some of the 'mushroom' programmes or establishing and complying with stringent monitoring procedures and standards so as to ensure and maintain academic standards of the extension/satellite programmes. As of now, governments cannot regulate or control extension/satellite programmes because the university autonomy clause precludes them from doing so. An extensive literature search shown that there is no empirical evidence on the academic standards of extension/satellite programme of Nigerian universities; this study was therefore undertaken to fill this empirical gap since the programme are here to stay and will remain so into the foreseeable future.

### **Statement of Problem:**

There is evidence that with the sharp perennial decline in the statutory funds allocation to universities in Nigeria, the abilities of universities in sustaining their various academic and other activities have declined considerably, even for academic programme that are run within campuses, let alone those that are extension/satellite in nature. This situation has further been worsened by funds mis-management, delays in receiving statutory funds allocation, as well as the galloping annual rate of inflation. Most universities have therefore resorted to augmenting their statutory allocation of funds by generating needed income locally. Some universities do so by offering extension/satellite campuses programmes, often with large student enrolments. The sudden proliferation of programmes and the un-precedented increase in student enrolments and the need for organising such programmes over a wide areas, by institutions, also running full-residence programme, have created different management and control problems.

Therefore, the problem of this study, posed as a question is: What are the management problems of extension/satellite programmes of Nigerian universities and what kind of control measures are put in place to ensure that academic activities of such programmes are well executed so as to ensure high academic standards of their products?

### **Methods:**

Eight out of the present 37 (thirty seven) universities in Nigeria were randomly sampled and consulted as well as requested to participate in this study conducted during the middle of the 1997-98 school year. To ensure an even distribution of universities in Nigeria that participated in the study, the country was divided into five equal geographical zones. The zones were the North-west; the North-east; the Middle-Belt; the South-east and the South-west. From each zone, two universities were randomly sampled and requested to participate in the study. In the case of one randomly sampled university that did not have any extension/satellite programme, this particular university was replaced with another one, in the same zone that had extension/satellite programme. In all, 16 undergraduate degree programmes and 8 masters degree programmes involving 20,416 students formed the focus of the present management and control investigation organised by the eight university samples of this study. In particular, the sampled universities that managed these programmes were expected to provide information to the researcher with regard to the management structure in existence for the day to day administration of the programme; the nature and scope of transportation; communication; information management especially with regard to workers awareness of an compliance with relevant university senate regulations: the quality, varsity and sufficiency of infrastructural facilities; the frequency and duration of classes as approved n the time-table as against the actual delivery of instructions; the nature and scope of coverage of approved courses or otherwise; the timely release of results; as well as the nature and scope of graduate output by discipline and quality of candidates' degree results. It was felt that by investigating these issue, it would be possible to establish the nature and scope of management procedures now in place for running extension/satellite programmes, as a means of searching and identifying more progressive ways of sustaining and/or enhancing academic activities of such programmes. The date of this study were collected from a questionnaire instrument and an observation schedules. The questionnaire instrument was the Management and control of Extension/Satellite programme questionnaire. This questionnaire was developed by Ali (1995) and validated in Nigeria in 1996 and have

been successfully extensively used in Nigeria and Kenya (Ali 1995; Imoh 1986; Ombina 1997 and Fayle, 1998).

The instrument consisted of twelve sections each of which dealt with the twelve respective issues investigated in this study. the observation schedule was modelled after the questionnaire and used by the researcher to actually confirm responses made by each university as against evidence on the ground at each university/extension campus location.

On the basis of the responses made on the administered instrument and the on-site documentation, using the Observation Schedule, the following findings were made:

### **Findings:**

The major findings of this study are presented in Tables 1 through 3. With regard to the existing management structures, for the day to day administration of extension/satellite programmes, it was found that three broad categories of management structures existed. In two universities, there is a full-fledged administrative unit with a full complement of staff working as a centralized structure and set-up for the sole purpose of over-seeing the administrative needs and affairs of the extension/satellite programmes. A small cadre of senior administrative staff is deployed to the extension/satellite centre to oversee them. These details are indicated in Table 1.

The second structure is not centralized but rather a diffused administrative arrangement whereby existing units in the Vice-Chancellor's Office, the Registry and Bursary undertake the various day to day administrative needs of extension/satellite programmes. Such units also normally undertake the day to day administrative functions of the regular full-time on-campus programmes. Within this diffused structure, administrative staff from the universities, time and again, visit and liaise with their own deployed staff at extension/satellite centres when such visits are needed. Three universities were found to adopt this management procedure and some complaints arising from this type of management structure included the apparent lack of unified system of control as well as commitment of staff in terms of carrying out-station assignments, meeting of deadlines, and so on and so forth.

The third structure that was observed in three universities, is one in which a skeletal staff of usually two to three non-academics operate at each extension/satellite centre, on behalf of the University. These staff are very senior and part of the main Registry employees. They liaise with the Registry only, from the station and through visits to the universities in the day to day execution of their duties. Staff of the main Registry usually perceive of extension/satellite centre staff as outsiders who often come to the main Registry only when they have problems.

**Table 1**

Management of Structure for the day to day Administration of Programmes

<b>Structure A</b>	<b>No. of Universities meeting this Structure/Remarks</b>
Full-fledged administrative unit with a full complement	Off the eight Universities

of staff working in a centralised structure/unit in the university under the Registrar. Fully and only responsible for extension and satellite programmes unit generally consists of an admissions sub-unit, exams and records; bursary; secretarial; and monitoring. The units have office spaces, teaching and research equipment and material resources including adequate transportation and constant communication links with a well set-up coordinating staff at extension centres.

sampled, only two had this structure for the day to day administration, of the Extension/Satellite programmes.

### **Structure B**

There is no centralised structure/unit in the university responsible for undertaking the daily administration of extension/satellite campus programmes. It is a diffused structure and duties are carried out by the existing organs of the university, e.g Admissions unit handles regular students and extension/satellite students' admission matters. Casual (Skeletal) administrative staff are maintained at the extension/satellite centres.

Three other Universities adopt this management structure.

### **Structure C**

There is a skeletal administrative staff operating at the centre. They are Registry staff and liaise with their counterparts diffused in the university administrative set-up.

Three universities adopt this management structure.

With regard to the transportation and communication between the affected University and its extension/satellite centre, three major findings were made. Firstly, in two Universities an effective system of transportation and communication were found to exist on a regular and systematic basis between satellite/extension centres and the relevant University. This facilitated the various management and administrative activities, especially as it concerned the various indices of leading educational indicators that were involved in the day to day management of the programmes at the two centres (frequency and duration of classes; timely evaluation of courses and release of results and other aspects of monitoring programmes such as admission of qualified candidates and the employment and use of qualified teachers at extension centres rather than the use of surrogate unqualified teachers). The second findings is that transportation and communication between four universities and their extension/ satellite campuses were present but not well organized or even reliable. In the remaining two Universities there were no existing transportation and communication structures between the universities and their satellite campuses. It was found that the universities use public transportation and public communication network which, by and large, in the Nigerian context can be characterized as too expensive and very unreliable. Non of the universities had either a computer-based management information system, whether local or wide area network, with their respective centres.

Through the use of the observational schedule for determining the management of actual teaching and infrastructural facilities for teaching and learning as specified by the Nigerian Federal Government, in line with the minimum academic standards laid down

by the National Universities Commission, it was found that six of the sampled universities got unsatisfactory rating (less than 40%) in the context of the five areas of management of facilities that were observed. The five areas include: compliance with approved classroom/laboratory specifications, awareness and compliance with minimum number of lectures; provision of class list; compliance with evaluation guidelines and compliance with students admission guidelines.

**Table 2**

Status of Transportation and Communication Links Between University Campus and Extension/Satellite Centre

<b>Item</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
<i>Transportation</i>	1. Cars/buses are available and used for regular and systematic commuting to and from centres.	2 Universities maintain this status.
	2. Public transport only is available for commuting to and from centres.	4 Universities maintain this status.
<i>Communication</i>		
E-mail ) Fax )	Present and reliable	2 universities achieved this status
Telephone )	Present but not well organised	4 universities achieved this status
Radio ) LAN ) WAN, etc. )	No communication structures exist.	2 universities are within this status.

Furthermore, it was found that none of the Universities' extension/satellite programmes held all the regular classes scheduled in the time-table as and when due. Classes started late in 70% of the cases audited. Indeed, only one University can be characterised as being satisfactory with regard to the frequency of holding classes as and when due, as indicated in the time-table of lectures. Large classroom/halls were seldom available at all the centres. Similarly, on the basis of observation made, it was found that some lectures were overcrowded at all the centres. All the universities were offering only courses that were approved within a particular programme to students. In other words, no university was found to either exclude approved courses or offer courses that were not approved to students of a particular programme. None of the universities had a library at the satellite/extension centre.

It was found that because of a wide variety of administrative lapses, no university was able to release its results as and when due. In fact, three universities were two years behind in releasing the semester and final year results of their students partly because there were no time-table of events indicating to teachers and lecturers deadline dates for submission of results and answer scripts of their students. In one university, the delay was also caused by the fact that some lecturers decided to withhold the results in courses they taught because they had not been paid the approved honorarium for teaching such courses.

The graduate output as indicated by the total number of those who finally graduated from a programme was very high in all the five universities. It ranged from 70% to 90% of graduate output over a five year period. From the student result records, it was found that graduate output was generally higher for the arts and humanities disciplines compared to the sciences and other disciplines. The quality of graduates produced as determined by the class of degree or the cumulative grade point average of a candidate shows that, in the general, the quality of degree results showed some considerable decline in all the universities, although such as decline was prominent in one university than the others. Another particular finding is that the number of students that graduated from the universities showed a steady increase. Perhaps, noteworthy of this increase is the one in two universities in which students enrolment in their satellite/extension undergraduate degree programmes rose by 600% over a period of two years, using centre facilities that were clearly over-crowded and often confusing to lecturers and students alike.

**Table 3**

Graduate Output: Numbers/Discipline and Class of DEGREES

<b>Year</b>	<b>No. of Graduates Produced</b>	<b>Dropout Rate</b>	<b>Science:Arts Ratio of Graduates</b>	<b>First and Second Class Degree</b>
1992	411	2%	85:15	46%
1993	439	7%	80:20	38%
1994	680	11%	85:15	39.5%
1995	997	8%	87:13	24%
1996	1,610	5%	83:17	20%

### **Discussion of Results:**

The evidence obtained in this study shows that most of the universities do not have adequate and sustainable management structures for the day to day management of satellite/extension programmes. This observation is also true as far as transportation, communication and facilities for teaching and learning are concerned. With very limited internal systems of management and control of resources, given that there is no well established centralized management structure that oversees academic programme implementation at far away centres, it is hardly surprising that some lecturers start lectures late or cut classes entirely. Some administrative staff at extension/satellite centres abandon their duties sometimes for their own personal pursuits. Indeed, this explains also why the release of students results is usually not timely, although these satellite/extension programmes end up graduating students who, as should be expected, show increasingly poorer academic performances. Some of the problems high-lighted above exist in some form in the main campuses of the sampled universities. The only difference is that many lecturers/administrators in the main campuses may not be fully aware of the shoddy and grossly inadequate and/or substandard academic/administrative input in extension/satellite campuses' programmes. It is possible that if these lecturers and administrators were aware of the difficulties and problems in these extension/satellite campuses and the concomitant effects they have on the quality of academic activities there, they would have called for either better monitoring and control, down-sizing of programmes, or periodic phasing out of such unmanageable programmes. Indeed, some Senate Committees of the different universities are not fully or involved at all in the monitoring of academic activities going on in these extension/satellite centres; something

that is needed to ensure that the programmes offered at satellite campuses are of high quality standards. Even then, in the case of two of the universities sampled, the evidence suggests that all their extension/satellite centre academic programmes should be phased out since they lack the management capacity and infrastructural facilities for implementing such programmes. This concern has been expressed by Birma, (1997) as a way of stemming the deteriorating academic standards of extension/satellite programmes of Nigerian universities.

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