

## **Critical Issues in the Management of Students in Tertiary Institutions in South East Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria.**

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### **Abstract**

*The researchers examined critical issues in the management of students of tertiary institutions in South East geo-political zone, Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses were involved in the study. The study is an inferential survey involving a four point scale. The population of the study was 8481 staff members from the five state upowned universities in south east states of Nigeria. The sample for this study was made up of 848 staff members. This was sampled using proportionate cluster random sampling technique, choosing 10% of the staff members from each of the universities. The instrument for data collection was a set of research-structured rating scale titled “Critical Issues in Managing Students of Tertiary Institutions Scale (CIIMSTIS)” with 16 items in a four point scale to solicit information from the respondents. Data generated from the research questions were analysed using mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested using one sample t-test statistic at 0.05 level of significance. It was found out that university managers encounter a lot of problems in the management of students of tertiary institutions. The study also gave possible solutions to the problems listed.*

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**Key words:** *Critical issues, Students, Management, tertiary institutions.*

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### **Introduction**

The Nigerian tertiary education is a section of the educational system that is responsible for training and producing the required manpower that is vital for national transformation and economic development. It is the frontier of education and main index of national development and transformation where skills, knowledge and information are acquired as the vehicle for productivity, wealth creation, prosperity, healthy living, competitiveness, communication expansion, scientific and technological advancements. According to Ekundayo and Ajayi (2009), higher education plays a crucial role in the supply of high level manpower for the socio-

political and economic development of a nation. They educate future leaders and develop the high-level technical capacities that underpin economic growth and development. Hasley (2006) suggested that the scope and reach of higher education never cease to unfold. Higher education's role therefore, is to see society as its life that requires continuous inquiry to get better. Inquiry to better society becomes the culture of higher institution that needs to be perpetuated, that has to evolve and regulate its dynamics (Williams & Anekwe, 2010) to always stretch society to its life situations. Basically, this is done through proper management of students.

Management by very simple definition is the act of controlling or handling public affairs or business enterprise (Okeke and Uwazuruike, 2016). By extension, management is the process of planning, organization, directing, controlling and evaluating to accomplish predetermined objectives through coordination or use of human and material resources. Therefore, management of students in tertiary institutions involves planning, organization, directing, controlling and evaluation of students to accomplish predetermined objectives. Students in the context of this work refers to a group of people attending school such as universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and monotechnics, with a view to acquiring knowledge and skills needed to function in their immediate environment and society at large.

Management of students has proven to be a herculean task especially with the incessant students' crisis that has plagued Nigerian tertiary institutions. As long as students are on the campus, they are the non-established; they are without full time employment and are dependent on their families, educational institutions or on their own part time work for survival (David, 2007). Furthermore, because students are non-established, they are foot loose; they are not restrained by either economic or social obligation and have considerable energies to use up. Thus, management of students requires utmost carefulness. The issues involved in the management of students in Nigerian tertiary institutions will be analyzed in this paper.

### **Concept of Management**

The concept of management is as old as the human race itself. According to Okeke & Uwazuruike (2016), Management is the art or science of achieving goals through people. Since managers also supervise, management can be interpreted to mean literally looking over and making sure people do what they are supposed to do. Managers are therefore, expected to ensure greater productivity. More broadly, management is the process of designing and maintaining an environment in which individuals, working together in groups, efficiently accomplish selected aims (Rebore, 2003). In its expanded form, this basic definition means several things. First, as managers, people carry out the managerial functions of planning, organizing, staffing, leading, and controlling. Second, management applies to any kind of organization. Third, management applies to managers at all organizational levels. Fourth, the aim of all managers is the same; to create surplus. Finally, managing is concerned with productivity this implies effectiveness and efficiency.

Thus, management refers to the development of bureaucracy that derives its importance from the need for strategic planning, co-ordination, directing and controlling of large and complex decision-making process. In support of this, Olum (2004) stated that essentially, therefore, management entails the acquisition of managerial competence, and effectiveness in the following key areas: problem solving, administration, human resource management, and organizational leadership.

Management therefore is the process of planning, organization, directing, controlling and evaluating to accomplish predetermined objectives through coordinated use of human and material resources. Onye (2010) defines management as an act or science of getting work done with the help of other people within a given time line. From the above definition, we can say

that management involves setting goals within a time frame and making sure that it is accomplished using the available resources. On the other hand, Anyanwu (2010) opined that management is a social process where few individuals at a particular period and location, are placed in leadership positions of an organization or system, to make decisions and ensure the effective implementation of the decisions. These individuals are therefore held responsible for the success or failure of that system or organization within the given period and location. Thus, it may be right to say that management is what a manager does.

### **Factors Militating Against the Management of Students in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria.**

The current education reforms in education sector in Nigeria in the areas of planning, curriculum innovation and teacher education among others are management mechanisms to revamp education industry, to instill discipline in various institutions of learning. Government on her own side introduced the free education scheme and bursary award for students of tertiary institutions of learning. Government took these strides to enhance equal educational opportunities. Despite the efforts of government, there has been increase in students' crisis in almost all the higher institutions of learning especially in Nigerian universities (Odu, 2013). Crisis in Nigerian tertiary institutions is not a welcome development, rather it is cankerworm, hydra headed, disturbing to parents/guardians and citizens of the nation. Students crisis in the institutions of learning constitutes a havoc as it often lead to temporary closure of the institution, boycott of lectures, suspension and expulsion of students and student leaders, loss of lives, damage of school properties, disruption of school administration and truncation in academic programmes of the university (Egwu, 2003). A lot of factors militate against the smooth running of higher institutions in Nigeria and they include:

**Cultism:** Cultism as one of the causes of students' crisis is described as an assemblage of people who share unconventional ideas, and beliefs and involve themselves in eccentric conduct and manifestation mostly shrouded in secrecy; carry out secret cult activities and membership, organization, rules and mode of operation are supposed to be unknown and unknowable to non-members (Umeh 2001 and Igodo 2002). Infighting and internal wrangling by cultists led to the formation of spinster groups such as Seadogs, Buccaneer confraternity, the Vikings, the Black Beret, the Daughters of Jezebel among others (Egwu, 2003).

Impulsive desires for supremacy are among the reasons behind cult clashes, murder, maiming, rape, acts of sickening and barbarism in our institutions of higher learning (Odu, 2013). Some of the special features of campus secret cults in Nigerian universities are nocturnal meetings held at odd places like cemeteries, hilltops or forests, knife and dagger pulling, gun drawing at non-members or members of opposed campus secret cults; torture, distinctive marks on the body; drinking human blood and others. Consequences of these nefarious acts lead to indefinite closure of the institutions which the university authorities cite as insecurity of lives and property. Cult menaces in our institutions of higher learning are gaining momentum daily taking more dangerous dimensions and in fact, running a parallel government with the university authorities. Measures targeted at stemming the menace of cultism in institution of higher learning appear not yielding positive fruits.

**Communication Gap:** This is another factor that aggravates students' crisis in Nigeria universities. Effective communication diffuses tension among students and authorities in the institution. Despite this fact, some authorities of Nigerian universities shut their administrative doors to students' complaints and grievances which may likely result to students registering some unacceptable social behaviour such as violent demonstration of 1981. Igodo (2002) stated

some psychological consequences of shutting administrative doors on students complaints and requests when he remarked, “they feel they are being processed by a system to which they strongly object but are powerless to challenge or change”.

When students are denied the opportunity of being part of policy making decision in related matters of their welfare they feel subjected and dehumanized. Students believe they should have significant voice in determining some issues patterning their welfare. When they ask to be heard and refused being heard and when legitimate channels are closed there is bound to be crisis. When students’ body or representatives are excluded from participating in the deliberation on issues that significantly influence their educational objectives, a feeling of isolation and ostracism is created. Malevolent transformation of feeling of living among enemies is also created. This increases the probabilities of constant student-authority clashes in universities.

**Youthful exuberance:** Youthful exuberance especially the negative characteristics is another serious issue that spark off students’ crisis in our institutions of higher learning. Social irrelevance of youth behaviour, confrontation, victims of intellectual arrogance, emotional instability are characteristics of adolescents which when over-stretched results to disastrous consequences such as riots and demonstration (Umeh, 2001). Egwu (2003) observes that increase in physical characteristics of the adolescent often push them to over react. He compared their youthful exuberance to active volcano. That is, they cease every opportunity to display their strength and often do so in the wrong place, against wrong person as a result of misplaced aggression. In the words of Igodo (2002) he attributed those negative attitudes to students’ immaturity and with abundant energy and their belief that all scores should be settled violently. Anything and everything is capable of arousing sentiments and wraths of students to warrant an unguided outpouring into the streets to protest (Umeh, 2001). **Home background of students** to some extent dictates the quality of students’ behaviour at a stage in life. Students as products of the home, reflect the nature of their homes through their behaviour. Some undesirable behaviour of students directly or indirectly leads to students crisis such as intimation, assault and insult, wanton destruction of property, participation in secret cults, drug offences, lesbianism, Egwu (2003) observed. Student management crisis, some of which have been identified by Ekundayo and Ajayi (2010), and the traces are noticeable as (i) decline public expenditure; (ii) deteriorated infrastructure/facilities/equipment for teaching, research and learning. These are either lacking or very inadequate and in a bad shape to permit the universities the freedom to carry out the basic functions of academics; (iii) student unrest and constant strikes by both students and academic staff.

**Financial Crisis:** There is growing shortage of funds and learning resources in the university system. The major challenge facing the management of students in Nigerian tertiary institutions is inadequate funding. Emmanuel (2015) argued that there was an increase in the proportion of total expenditure devoted to education, but this has been considered to be rather grossly inadequate considering the phenomenon increase in student enrolment and increasing cost, which has been aggravated by inflation. The apparent shortage of fund available to the university system has been responsible for declining library, social and laboratory facilities in Nigerian universities in recent years. This in no small way makes the governance of the university system a herculean task. It is also the cause of **deteriorated infrastructure** which is worrisome to note in our Nigerian universities. All the resources required for education production process are in short supply. Lecture halls, laboratories, students hostels, library space, books and journals, office spaces are all seriously inadequate (Emmanuel, 2010).

**Erosion of University Autonomy:** This is another cause of students' crisis, William and Anekwe (2010) describe university autonomy as protection of the universities from interference by government officials in the day to day running of the institution especially on the issues related to the selection of student, the appointment and removal of academic staff including the vice-chancellors, the determination of content of university education and the control of the degree standard and the determination of size and the rate of growth. According to Ekundayo and Ajayi (2009), government involvement in university governance has been a point of strife between the government and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) over some time now. University autonomy is essential to the advancement, transmission and application of knowledge and this is the more reason ASUU has been more vociferous in this demand. University autonomy and academic freedom has over the years been a recurring issue in the ASUU's demand from the federal government.

### **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE MANAGEMENT OF STUDENTS IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS**

It has become obvious that the broad aims of producing high-level manpower for national development for which tertiary education is meant for, is not really being achieved as a result of the multifaceted problems bedeviling the management of students in the tertiary education system. It therefore becomes necessary to suggest ways of making the system more effective and efficient in relation to contemporary Nigerian society. The following solutions will help:

**1. Adequate funding:** The gross under-funding of the educational system in the country has been rendering tertiary institutions incapacitated. Government should therefore allocate more funds to the universities so that they can be more effective in their day-to-day operations. Tertiary institutions should also seek alternative sources of revenue generation to augment what the government allocates to them and effectively monitor and manage fund presently being allocated to the sector.

**2. Need to improve the infrastructure base:** If quality is to be enhanced in our nation's universities these days, the infrastructure base of the system needs to be improved upon. As Ochuba (2001) has rightly put it, the present situation calls for an urgent need for the government to make available enough funds for the rehabilitation of existing facilities. Governments should intensify efforts in providing more physical facilities in the universities. Besides, corporate bodies, philanthropists and alumni associations should also assist in the provision of these facilities.

**3. Granting of autonomy to varsities:** The issue of autonomy to varsities is a matter of necessity if quality output is expected, uninterrupted academic calendar is to be guaranteed, an enabling teaching-learning environment is to be assured and the incessant face-off between ASUU and the government to be put to rest. Babalola, Jaiyeoba and Okediran (2007) argued that there cannot be absolute autonomy, but a critical mass of qualified autonomy is needed for a university to operate as a functioning university. However, these areas of autonomy should be jointly agreed upon by both the government and the stakeholders of the university system.

**4. Volatile and militant students' unionism:** To reduce the extent of volatile and militant students unionism in campus, it is advisable that the students are involved in decision-making particularly on issues that border on their welfare. Mgbeke (2007) suggested the following as means of curbing students crisis, (1) university administrator should avoid being high-handed with students. (2) Vice chancellors should make themselves accessible to students (3) University administrator should establish frequent forums for negotiation, dialoguing and exchanging of ideas between students and university administrators.

**5. Combating secret cults:** Eradicating cultism in Nigerian universities is a joint effort of all the stakeholders (government, university authority, religious leaders, students, and parents).

They should come together and decide on how cases of cultism should be dealt with as research evidences have shown that most cult members are children of the highly placed in the society.

### **Statement of Problem**

In Nigeria, the management of higher institutions has become a herculean task because of so many problems bedeviling them. This is mainly because of issues like poor funding, cultism, deteriorated infrastructure, communication gap etc. All these have made students and staff not to achieve the full aim of tertiary education in Nigeria. These therefore have become a source of worry to the researchers and they now ask; Could it be as a result of poor budgeting by the government? Could it be as a result of maladministration of Nigeria tertiary education?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The general purpose of this study is to examine the critical issues in the management of tertiary institutions in South East Zone, Nigeria. Specifically, this work sought to:

- i) Examine the causes of the problems in the management of students in tertiary institutions in South East Zone, Nigeria.
- ii) Proffer possible solutions to the problems of managing students of tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions are posed to guide the study:

1. What are the problems encountered by education managers in the management of students of tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria?
2. What are the possible solutions to the problems of managing students of tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria?

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

**H<sub>01</sub>:** The mean score of staff members on the problems encountered by education managers in the management of students of tertiary institutions is not significantly greater than the criterion mean of 20.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** The mean score of staff members on the possible solutions to the problems in the management of students of tertiary institutions is not significantly greater than the criterion mean of 20.

### **Method**

The study is an inferential survey involving a four point scale. The population of the study was 8481 staff members from the five state owned universities in South East States of Nigeria. The sample for this study was made up of 848 staff members. This was sampled using proportionate cluster random sampling technique, choosing 10% of the staff members from each of the university. The instrument for data collection was a set of researcher-structured rating scale titled “Critical Issues in Managing Students of Tertiary Institutions Scale (CIIMSTIS)” with 16 items in a four point scale to solicit information from the respondents. The instruments were validated by specialists and found reliable with an index of 0.81 using Cronbach alpha. The data that was generated from the research questions was analysed using mean and standard deviation, while the hypotheses were tested using one sample t-test statistic at 0.05 level of significance.

### **Results**

**RQ<sub>1</sub>:** What are the problems encountered by education managers in the management of

students of tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria? and **H<sub>01</sub>**: The mean score of staff members on the problems encountered by education managers in the management of students of tertiary institutions is not significantly greater than the criterion mean of 20.

**Table 1:**

Sample Size (n), Summation ( $\sum X$ ), Mean( $\bar{X}$ ), Standard Deviation (S), and one sample t-test statistics of significant difference between observed and expected means.

S/N	Item statement:	n	$\sum X$	$\bar{X}$	S	REMARKS		
1.	Truancy is a major problem encountered by education managers in tertiary institutions in the South East.	848	2885	3.40	.69	Agreed		
2	Cultism contributes greatly to tertiary institutions' problems.	848	2806	3.31	.70	Agreed		
3	The most rated challenge of tertiary educational managers is students indecent ways of dressing.	848	2821	3.33	.59	Agreed		
4	Influence of parents on the social and academic performance of their wards poses a lot of problems to educational managers of tertiary institutions.	848	2844	3.35	.60	Agreed		
5	Allowing students to become part of the decision making body in the management of tertiary institution always pose a challenge to the institutions.	848	2824	3.33	.82	Agreed		
6	The existence of communication gap between the managers and students of tertiary institution is a great challenge to institution managers.	848	3071	3.62	.50	Agreed		
7	Inadequate/nonfunctional classroom poses a great challenge to management of students in higher institutions.	848	3228	3.81	.40	Agreed		
8	Most often government or politicians try to control the administration of higher education which leads to unsafe environment for the institution managers.	848	3030	3.57	.50	Agreed		
<b>Cluster mean</b>				<b>27.72</b>				
<b>Mean of Items Means</b>				<b>3.465</b>				
<b>n</b>	$\bar{X}$	$\mu$	S	S.E	df	t <sub>cal</sub>	t <sub>tab</sub>	<b>Decision</b>
<b>848</b>	27.72	<b>20</b>	<b>3.043</b>	<b>.104</b>	<b>847</b>	<b>73.911</b>	<b>1.645</b>	<b>Ho Rejected</b>

**Table 1** shows the mean score of the response of staff members on the problems encountered by education managers in the management of students of tertiary institutions in South East zone. The result revealed that all the items 1-8 were considered as agreed having recorded mean score above the criterion mean of 2.50. The standard deviations proved they are also far away from the mean and also that scores in the distribution are close to one another. The table also reveals that education administrators encounter a lot of problems in the management of students of tertiary institutions.

Further analysis using inferential statistics of one sample t-test revealed that the t-calculated of 73.911 is greater than t-tabulated of 1.645. Therefore, null hypothesis is rejected while alternative hypothesis is accepted. So, the mean score of staff members on the problems encountered by education managers in the management of students of tertiary institutions in South East Zone is significantly greater than the criterion mean of 20. This implies that university managers encounter a lot of problems in the management of students of tertiary institutions.

[RQ<sub>2</sub>: What are the possible solutions to the problems of managing students of tertiary institutions in South East Nigeria? and HQ<sub>2</sub>: The mean score of staff members on the possible solutions to the problems in the management of students of tertiary institutions in South East Nigeria is not significantly greater than the criterion mean of 20].

**Table 2:**

Sample Size (n), Summation ( $\sum X$ ), Mean( $\bar{X}$ ), Standard Deviation (S), and one sample t-test statistics of significant difference between observed and expected means.

S/N	Item statement:	n	$\sum X$	$\bar{X}$	S	REMARKS		
9.	Our higher institutions if well and adequately funded will do greatly in terms of management.	848	2719	3.21	.73	Agreed		
10.	The improvement of infrastructure like adequate and comfortable classroom, provision of convenience (Rest Room) e.t.c. will help create conducive environment for learning.	848	2933	3.46	.61	Agreed		
11.	The totality of school management if left in the hands of school administrators will help foster peace and development in the school system.	848	2795	3.30	.80	Agreed		
12.	The decision making body of every institution should have the students' representatives in it to avoid/bridge communication gap.	848	2874	3.39	.76	Agreed		
13.	Schools and parents should collaborate in order to combat secret cult in the school system.	848	2608	3.08	.68	Agreed		
14.	The school has more work to do in the war against cultism which is the greatest cause of crisis in our higher institutions.	848	2595	3.06	.74	Agreed		
15.	It is the duty of the government to provide fund but not to control its implementation.	848	2765	3.26	.76	Agreed		
16.	Cult members when apprehended should be disciplined according to law irrespective of whose child/ward he/she is.	848	2546	3.00	.72	Agreed		
	<b>Cluster mean</b>			<b>25.75</b>				
	<b>Mean of Items Means</b>			<b>3.219</b>				
<b>n</b> 848	$\bar{X}$ 25.75	$\mu$ 20	S 4.323	S.E .148	df 847	t <sub>cal</sub> 38.727	t <sub>tab</sub> 1.645	<b>Decision</b> <b>Ho Rejected</b>

Table 2 shows the mean response of staff members on the possible solutions to the problems of managing students of tertiary institutions in South East zone. The result revealed that all the items numbered 9-16 were considered as agreed having recorded mean scores above the



criterion mean of 2.50. The standard deviations showed that they are also far away from the mean and that scores in the distribution are close to one another. The mean of mean of 3.219 shows that these solutions, if effectively employed will go a long way in solving the problems encountered by tertiary institutions' administrators in students' management.

The use of one sample t-test in the analysis using inferential statistic revealed that the t-calculated of 38.727 is greater than the t-tabulated of 1.645. Therefore, null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis accepted. So, the mean score of staff members on the possible solutions of problems of management of students in tertiary institutions in South East Zone is significantly greater than the criterion mean of 20. This implies that if the given solutions are effectively employed in the management of tertiary institutions, there will be great improvement.

### **Discussion of Findings:**

This study revealed that university managers encounter a lot of problems in the management of students in tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria. These problems range from cultism, communication gap, youthful exuberance, deteriorated infrastructure, home background of students, inadequate funding, to erosion of university autonomy. The findings agreed that cultism contributes greatly to tertiary institutions' problems; inadequate and deteriorated infrastructures pose a great challenge to management of students in higher institutions. The findings collaborated with the submission of Odia and Omofonmwan (2007) that the gross underfunding of the educational sector in the country and the neglect of the maintenance of physical facilities has deteriorated in many of these schools. Ekundayo and Ajayi (2009) reported that inconsistency in the disbursement of funds and budgeting were challenges to effective management of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Some students' home background is also a challenge to education managers who try to compromise some rules in the course of carrying out their duties. Most often government or politicians try to control the administration of higher education which leads to unsafe environment for the institution managers. The findings revealed that education managers will do greatly if the totality of school management is left in their hands. This will also help foster peace and development in the school system. This is in line with the findings of Ameen, Oluwaselu and Dauda (2018) who submitted that government does intervene in the running of Colleges in Kwara and this was a big implication in the management of the institutions.

The researchers found out that these problems can be solved if tertiary institutions in South East Nigeria are adequately funded; their infrastructure improved; autonomy granted, students involved in decision making and cultism combated.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion it is evident that tertiary education is the bedrock of development in the country but it's bisected with myriads of problems as regards students' management which is caused by inadequate funding, deteriorated infrastructure, erosion of university autonomy, volatile and militant students unionism, secret cults, communication gap, family background, and so on. However, for meaningful development to take place in the tertiary education system, the government must be ready to address the issue of funding the system adequately which is the major cause of all the crises.

### **Recommendations:**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government should allocate adequate fund to higher institutions for effective management of students of higher institutions.

2. University administrators should be allowed to run and manage the affairs of the university without intervention from the government.
3. Students representatives should be allowed to be in the decision making body of their institutions.
4. The government, parents, school administrators, students representatives and every other stakeholder in education should work in synergy so as to combat cultism in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

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