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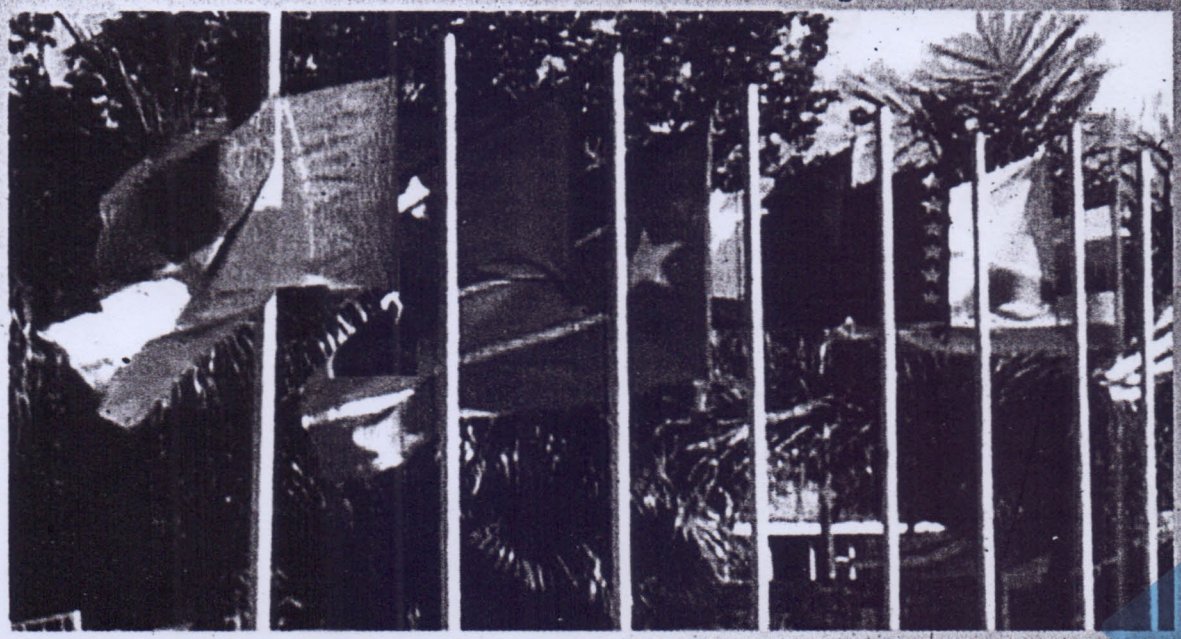

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ACCESS TO RESEARCH FUNDING AND ACCOUNTABILITY AMONG UNIVERSITY LECTURERS IN SOUTH WEST OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigates the level of access to research funding and accountability among university lecturers in South West of Nigeria. Specifically, the study sets out to examine the extent to which lecturers in the universities are given grants to conduct researches and ascertain the level of accountability of research grants. The study also tried to find out if corruption and embezzlement reduces the amount of resources set aside for research activities and the extent to which research proposals meet the necessary criteria of the funders. Two hypotheses were formulated to guide the investigation. The study adopted the descriptive survey as its design and the population was made up of university lecturers from federal and state universities. The sample size comprises of 120 lecturers from each university out of a total of ten universities bringing the total number to 1200 lecturers. Stratified random sampling technique was employed to select the lecturers on equitable basis. Observation, interview and questionnaire were the major instruments for data collection. The questionnaire was validated and the reliability was ascertained with a coefficient of 0.81. The Chi-square was the statistical method used for data analysis. Some of the major findings of the study are that the level of accountability of research grants received by the lecturers is very high. Almost all the lecturers who receive the grants account for them within the expected time limit and research reports are also forwarded as early as such research is concluded. The study concluded by recommending that lecturers should be encouraged to have access to research grants among others.

Introduction

It has become glaring that significant expansion in manpower demands for the organized public sector formal sectors is unlikely in Nigeria because of the fact that university education system which

produces the high level manpower need in the country is grossly under-funded. A look at the table 1 below gives a clear picture of the problem.

Table1: **Funding of University Education in Nigeria, 1999-2001**

Year	Total Amount Request by University (in Naira)	Total Amount Received by Universities	Amount Received as % of amount requested
1999	40,884,109,125.00	11,831,930,271.93	28.92
2000	65,579,997,692.00	30,143,004,497.91	45.96
2001	68,911,759,219.11	31,170,080,668,17	45.23

Source: NUC (2004)

A competent and flexible workforce that can acquire new skills as economics change is a necessary prerequisite for economic and social development. This will to a larger extent reduce poverty and the country will surely benefit in the form of higher productivity and opportunities (Uzoka, 2006).

Since universities have the main job of turning out the most highly qualified individuals, they must as a result provide high-level training and research so as to master and develop the requisite expertise and technologies (Zeleza, 2004).

The phenomenon of globalization, which has changed various sectors of world economy have also had some remarkable impact on education as there is an increased recognition of the economic potential of higher education. Globalization and the growth of education at primary and secondary levels have implications for university education. The provision of the Universal Basic Education (Education for All) which was launched in September 1990, make for all school children to be in the Nigerian classrooms for nine years duration. It is however unfortunate that not much corresponding preparation and provision of resources is made of university level. As intended, one consequence of the policy is that the number of students who complete secondary schools increased. A residual consequence that has not been adequately planned for is the increase in the number of students seeking entrance to universities.

The universities are increasingly unable to absorb students' demand which has increased astronomically. The total student population of universities has grown from a mere 1,395 in 1960 to 40,000 in 1976 and to 172,000 in 1988 and in 2000, it stood at 448,230 (Uvah, 2005). Currently, the student enrolment stands at

1,096,312 (Okogie, 2008). There is no way the rigid expansion cannot but have a deleterious effect on the quality of instruction and research especially as it has not been accompanied by an equivalent expansion of knowledge infrastructure and facilities in the existing institutions. Funding of research may not be of importance to the government. The problem of research is also affected because of poor teaching conditions which result in lecturers' moonlighting in order to "make both ends meet" Williansky, Randall, Shatack, Kiven, 2005).

It appears research in the 21st century is not so much concerned about the pursuit of knowledge and advancement of learning of its own sake; rather it is more about delivering economic benefits and bringing about improvement of quality of life of the people in the country (Sawyerr 2004). Hence, the importance of research cannot be overemphasized.

Statement of the Problem

Financing of university education is one of the most compelling and challenging issues in Nigeria and this is because the cost of running these institutions are exceptionally high. Measures to promote and improve the quality of university education to meet the challenges of a constantly changing environment are often constrained by inadequate financial resources. Refer to table 1.

University education is in crisis, and characterized by the decline in quality of teaching, research, inadequate and obsolete infrastructure and equipment, poor library facilities and unstable academic calendar. It is obvious that research funding may not be in the priority list of the government. If universities in Nigeria cannot excel in research, it is likely that they may not be able to provide or create new knowledge and this will undermine the very core job of the university and also sustainable development. It is against this backdrop that the study sets out to examine the access to research funding and accountability among university lecturers in South West of Nigeria.

The study sets out specifically to examine the extent to which lectures in the universities are given grants to conduct researches and ascertain the level of accountability of research grants. The study tried to find out if corruption and embezzlement reduces the amount of resources set aside for research activities and the extent to which research proposals meet the necessary criteria of the founders.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the investigation:

1. There is no significant relationship between the extent to which lecturers receive grant and the level of accountability.
2. There is no significant relationship between corruption/ embezzlement and the amount of resources set aside for research.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted the descriptive survey as its research design. The design was adopted since the researchers' aim was to describe and examine the relationship between access to research funding and accountability of funds among university lecturers in South Western part of Nigeria.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The population of this study comprised all the lecturers in all the states and federal universities in south western Nigeria. As at the time of this study there were five federal universities and eight state universities in the six state of the south western Nigeria with an estimated lecturers' population of 7224. The sample size comprised of 120 lecturers selected from each university out of a total of ten universities from six States in South Western Nigeria used for the study. These universities and the lecturers were selected on the basis of stratified random sampling based on five federal universities and five state universities to have a fair selection of universities to be used. The stratified random sampling method was used to pick the lecturers on equitable basis. Purposive sampling technique was also used to select lecturers who have benefited from the research grants and also to interview members of staff of the bursary department most especially those people in charge of research grants. Other consideration was based on the fact that universities selected (Federal and State) have been in existence for a period of not less than ten years and that such university has recognized and adequate programmes of research grants available to be sourced by the academic staff.

Instruments

Observation, interview and questionnaires were the major instruments used in collecting data for this study. The observation was based on

bursary records relating to lecturer's mode of retiring amount of money granted vis-à-vis the number of grants released by the university concerned for a period of five years (2004 – 2008) extracting from the bursary's files. A set of questionnaire was developed and administered on the lecturers to elicit information with respect to their perceptions on the relationship between access to research funding and accountability among university lecturers in South West Nigeria. The questionnaire was administered on lecturers who have benefited from such grants and those who are yet to benefit but they are aware of the availability of such grants. Members of staff of the bursary department most especially those people in charge of research grants were interviewed to determine the extent to which lecturers receive such grants and their assessment of the level of accountability of the lecturers to grant after being used. Out of the 1,200 copies of the questionnaire administered to the participants (i.e. the lecturers), only 1,080 (90 percent) of them were finally used for the analysis. Chi-square statistical tool was used to test the hypotheses stated at p 0.05 level of significance.

The lecturers' questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part sought information on lecturers' biographic data with particular reference to name of university, location of university, name of settlement of university, state of location of the university, status of the university (i.e. state of federal), lecturers' sex, age, marital status, educational qualifications, lecturers' academic position (i.e. Lecturer I, II, Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor or Reader, Professor) and number of years of teaching experience. The second part was a rating scale which the lecturers were asked to rate some items based on their belief about access to research fundings in their different universities and how such funds are being accounted in terms of making research reports available to the university community that sponsored them. The rating scale section was based on adapted four point Likert scale (4 – 1) with the highest rating of 4 indicating the highest level of agreement and the least of 1 showing the lowest level of agreement. The response pattern was meant to determine the observed frequency, the expected frequency and the total frequency in order to determine the Chi-square value from the response pattern. There are twenty nine items on the questionnaire. The first part contains eleven items while the second part contains eighteen items based on access to research funding and accountability among university lecturers in South West of Nigeria.

Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

For the purpose of validity, the designed questionnaire was presented to members of the research committee at the Faculty of Education level and some members of the research committee at the university level all from the University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria. The experts agreed that the items of the research instruments were relevant and appropriate. As a result of the experts' opinions, some of the items were restructured, while some were modified to meet the needed requirements for testing the hypotheses stated.

The reliability of the questionnaire was done by the use of test-retest technique. The final questionnaire was administered over five weeks to a sample of thirty lecturers of four universities representing one university from each state where two of the universities were state universities while the other two universities were federal universities to ensure balancing. The Pearson Product Moment Coefficient of reliability of the two set of scores was calculated and found to be 0.81. This figure was found to be highly significant at $P < 0.05$ and therefore imply that the questionnaire was largely reliable.

Presentation of Data and Interpretation of Results

The results of this study are presented below:

Table 1: Performance functions between access to research grants and the level of accountability

Variable	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	Total Frequency	X^2	Table Value	N	Remark
Level of Accountability and Access to Research Grant	2,274	2160	12,996	6.02	19.68	12	H_0 Accepted

$P < 0.05$; DF = 11

The calculated Chi-square value from the table above is 6.02 while the table value is 19.68 at $P < 0.05$ with a degree of freedom of 11. Since the calculated value was found lower than the critical value, it means that operational hypothesis one which states that "there is no significant relationship between the extent to which lecturers receive grant and the level of accountability" is upheld. This implies that the level of accountability of research grants received by the lecturers has nothing to do with the extent to which lecturers received such grants.

It was observed through the bursary records as noticed by the researchers that not less than 90% of the lecturers who receive such grants account for them within the expected time limit. It was also observed that research reports are also forwarded as early as such research is concluded. This was clearly evident as the few lecturers that had access to this research grant make sure they present their research reports to their universities not later than three months after the expiration of the time meant for the completion of such research. This therefore implies that lecturers granted research grants have accounted for such grants as expected and that such high level of accountability have not in any way influenced the extent to which lecturers receive such grants. This was further corroborated through the records that few lecturers have been able to receive this grant over the years when compared with the amount of money set aside for such project. The record showed that among the federal universities, the percentages of lecturers who have access to research grants and were granted ranged from 5.19% to 1.18% while those of the states ranged from 4.47% to 1.68% approximately. The low level of extent of receiving research grant is therefore a reflection of other factors rather than that of accountability by the lecturers.

The table 2: shows the extent of relationship between corruption/ embezzlement and the amount of resources set aside for research.

Table 2: Relationship between corruption/embezzlement and the amount of resources se aside for research

Variable	Amount of Resources for Research						
	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	Total Frequency	X^2	Table Value	N	Remark
Level of corruption/ Embezzlement and Amount of resource for research	2,332	2,160	29,584	13.70	19.68	12	H_0 Accepted

$P < 0.05$; DF = 11.

The calculated Chi-square value from table two above is 13.70 and the degree of freedom is 11 while the critical value is 19.68 at 0.05

level of significance. Since the calculated value was found to be lower than the table value, it therefore implies that the operational hypothesis two which states that "there is no significant relationship between corruption/embezzlement and the amount of resources set aside for research" is hereby accepted.

This implies that apart from the fact that there was no evidence of embezzlement with regard to the research grant set aside, it was also confirmed that amount set aside for research grant is a responsibility of a high powered committee which has a criteria for determining how much is to be set aside for such activity. It was also observed that quite a tangible amount of money was always set aside for research grant but very few lecturers always qualified to benefit from such grant due to checks and balances put in place for such benefit. Furthermore, it was observed that to qualify for research grant, lecturers are expected to give a thorough defence of their research work before the Faculty Research Committee and the entire university research committee. Any research proposals not found acceptable by the two committees are always denied any form of research grant. This fact was corroborated by the lecturers who have not accessed this grant either because they have not applied for fear for being turned down or they have been turned down due to non compliance with the guidelines set aside for accessing the grant. The staff of the bursary department also supported this position by saying that grants are made available to lecturers certified by the faculty committee and the university committee.

Discussion of Results

This study revealed that there is no significant relationship between the extent to which lecturers receive grant and the level of accountability. The study also revealed that there is no significant relationship between corruption/embezzlement and the amount of resources set aside for research. The level of accountability of research grants received by lecturers was found not to have anything to do with the extent to which lecturers receive such grant. This is evident from the fact that even though there were few lecturers who have benefited from their universities' research grants, it was also observed that preponderant majority of those who received such grants were able to account for such grants through prompt presentation of research reports to their universities. This therefore implies that access to research funding by university lecturers has

never been addressed on the basis of non-accountability on the part of the lecturers.

On the issue of corruption/embezzlement and the amount of resources set aside for research, the result of the study showed no evidence of corruption/embezzlement in the management of research grants. However, for better access to research grant by lecturers in the universities, research committee both at the Faculty and the Central Research Committee at the university level should not be too strict with difficult criteria to be met before grants are provided for lecturers to be able to carry out research.

Conclusion

This study has drawn extensive information from bursary records relating to grants released by their universities for a period of five years i.e. the period between 2004-2008. Lecturers' responses to a set of questionnaire also constitute the relevant information for this study. The universities studied cut across states and federal universities who have been in existence for a period of not less than ten years and that such universities have programmes for setting aside research grants. The result had shown that there is no significant relationship between access to research grant and the level of accountability among universities in South Western Nigeria. The findings have also shown that there is no significant relationship between corruption/embezzlement and the amount of resources set aside for research. This implies that lecturers who promptly account for the research grant received by them should be encouraged to have further access to research grant for further research work and the fact that more lecturers should be encouraged to have access to research grants by the different research committees since there are enough money available to go round more lecturers. This is necessary since the amount set aside for research grant is always available for a long period of time.

Recommendations

It is therefore recommended that granting such money to lecturers will prevent such money from being misappropriation of funds. Lecturers who have access to such research grant will also be encouraged to engage in meaningful research which will be of benefit to the university and to the community at large. This will be aimed at encouraging such lecturers' productivity level with the aim of enhancing better academic performance of students irrespective of

whether such university is state or federal. This is quite desirable considering the astronomical increase in the number of students' enrolment in Nigerian universities.

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