

Academic Calendar Stability in South-West Nigerian Universities and its Impact on Quality of its Education.

Department of Educational Management, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria
Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti,
Nigeria Correspondence: Ibijola, Elizabeth Yinka (Ph.D.)

Abstract

This study examined calendar stability in Nigerian university system and its impact on quality of its education. The purpose of the study was to investigate if there was any significant relationship between calendar stability and quality of university education. Descriptive survey design was used for the study. Population consisted of the public universities in south-west Nigeria. 300 subjects were sampled from 6 public universities in the zone. This comprised 50 respondents from each university. Multi-stage stratified random sampling techniques were used to draw the sample. An instrument titled 'Calendar Stability in Nigerian University System and its Effect on Quality of its Education' (CSNU) was used for data collection. A 4-point Likert rating method was adopted. A reliability co-efficient of 0.91 was obtained using split-half method. Frequency count, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions. t-test statistics were used for hypotheses testing. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. This study revealed that, stability in academic calendar has no significant relationship with quality of education, that calendar stability in South-West Nigerian Universities was at a moderate level. In view of the findings of the study, it is recommended that other variables that are likely to affect quality, such as quality of teachers, availability of human and material resources should be investigated.

Key words: *University education, academic calendar stability, quality of education.*

Introduction

It is a common knowledge that the issue of quality decline in university education in Nigeria today, is in the public domain (Okonjo-Iweala, 2012; Faborode, 2012; Babalakin, 2012, Ibijola, 2015, Amaka, 2015, Ibijola 2017). Studies have investigated the problems from different angles ranging from problem of funding, inadequate infrastructure, curriculum, and teachers' quality among others. However, some authors and researchers are also attributing the decline to the calendar instability in Nigerian university system. Ayodele in Akomolafe and Ibijola (2011) asserted that irregular academic calendar has encouraged examination malpractices, cultism and other vices on Nigerian university campuses. Akomolafe and Ibijola (2011) further asserted that the calendar instability has not been unconnected with the incessant staff union strikes and the common students protest which often led to the loss of time in the teaching/learning processes and that this has contributed greatly to the issue of half-baked graduates and the employability status of Nigerian graduates.

The elements of stability in the context of university education, according to Uvah (2005), include calendar stability, financial stability, management stability, and stability of the policy environment, each of which greatly affects the overall stability of a university system. Nir and Kafle (2013) corroborated this assertion when they concluded that stability in the educational system encompassed political, economic and social stability, and that each of these is vital to the development of the educational system. Calendar stability occurs when a university system runs its normal annual timetable from the beginning to the end without interruption. For instance, the traditional calendar for universities in Nigeria starts in September and ends in June of the following year. Most Nigerian universities today seem to have lost this tradition as the issue of calendar instability within the system seems to have come to stay and consequently the issue of having a unified university calendar is gradually becoming history (Akomolafe and Ibijola, 2011).

Calendar instability in Nigerian universities is often fueled by many factors which include lack of accountability and transparency on the part of management, insufficient engagement of students, intense union activism by students and staff, cultism and breakdown in communication among others. Akpotu (2004) attributed the calendar instability within Nigerian university system to the incessant strike actions by Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU) and other labour unions within the system. Akpotu (2004) asserted that the instability has brought about destabilization of the learning process and led to low quality service from lecturers because of their desire to cover lost content. Akpotu further asserted that, a total of 99.55 weeks (i.e. 3.32 academic years) were lost in Nigeria universities within a period of six years. This according to him, represented a total of 11.4 million man-hours and 28.54 million student-hours at the cost of N49,211,035,332.0 or \$684,198,230.0. Ayodele (2005) viewed the situation as economic wastage that might consequently result to half-baked and unemployable graduates. When the calendar is stable, university can engage in exchange programmes with other universities both within and outside Nigeria. University management would have time to plan for the next session and both staff and students would have stipulated time to rest and refresh themselves.

An institution is financially stable when its funding is consistent, predictable and adequate. A healthy funding pattern would be characterized by steady increases rather than decreases or wild swings over the years, while management or leadership stability may manifest when the university managers are in office for the designated period. According to Uvah (2005), the frequent change of university administrators could lead to management instability because each administration would have a different focus and vision for the university. Such discontinuity according to Uvah could lead to lack of focus in the system. Frequent shifts in Government policies can also lead to instability in the university system. For example, the frequent change of government in Nigeria especially during the 1990s, led to non- implementation of agreements between government and university unions on several occasions. This gave rise to incessant

strikes and long closures in the university system during the period. A stable policy environment was helpful to healthy development of the university system.

Uvah (2005) observed that there is a strong linkage between the quality of university educational delivery and a stable university environment. A stable university environment avails students of the required number of lecture hours for registered courses which will contribute substantially to quality university education delivery. Exchange programmes for sharing of knowledge, experiences, and information would be more feasible given this scenario. Also, the products of this educational environment would be well grounded in their areas of study. On the other hand, a university that is bedeviled with incessant instability will definitely turn out poorly trained graduates because academic staff will rush students through their courses to make up for the time wasted as a result of instability. The frequent industrial action often embarked upon by university teachers and the indiscriminate closure of universities facilitate examination malpractices.

Oto (2006) submitted that, the shutting down of universities often lead to desperation on the part of students who explore “all means” to secure academic pass mark. Instability within the university system in the long run would breed half-baked and unemployable graduates that would be a liability rather than asset to the country. Uvah (2005) submitted that, when university calendar is unstable, it leads to loss of opportunities such as participation in academic exchange programmes, lecturers not able to cover the curricula sufficiently among others. This according to him could lead to poor quality graduates. Consequently, the level of the instability in Nigerian university system seems to have been injurious to Nigerian university education which may have a long run effect on the quality of its graduates. It is on this premise that this study investigated the issue of calendar stability in south-west Nigerian universities and its impact on quality of its education.

Statement of the Problem

The significance of calendar in academic institutions cannot be over emphasized, as it serves as a source of information to staff and students in planning and organization of academic activities. Important as calendar stability is in academic institutions, the issue of its instability in Nigerian university system has become a common knowledge that stakeholders now link it with the issue of quality decline in Nigerian university education. In addressing the problem of the study, the level of calendar stability in South-West Nigerian universities and the level of quality of its education based on employers of university graduates’ assessment were investigated. The level of calendar stability in federal and state universities were also investigated and compared.

Purpose of the Study

This study investigated calendar stability of South-West Nigerian universities and its impact on quality of its education with the purpose of ascertaining if calendar instability has impact on quality of education. The study also investigated academic calendar

stability in the state and federal universities, and tested for significant difference between the two variables.

Research Questions

Four research questions guided the study:

- i. What is the assessment of calendar stability of South-West Nigerian universities?
- ii. What is the assessment of calendar stability of federal universities, South-West Nigeria?
- iii. What is the assessment of calendar stability of the state universities, South-West Nigeria?
- iv. What is the assessment of quality of Nigerian university education by the Nigerian employers?

Research Hypotheses

- i. There is no statistically significant difference between calendar stability in federal and state universities, South-West Nigeria.
- ii. Calendar stability will not significantly impact quality of university education.

Methodology

Descriptive survey design was used for the study. The population consisted of the public universities in South-West Nigeria and the employers of university graduates in the zone. Six hundred subjects were sampled in the study. This consisted of 300 subjects sampled from the 6 public universities in the population. Fifty respondents were drawn from each of the 6 universities, and 300 employers of graduates from the population. Fifty employers were sampled from each state. Multi-stage, purposive and stratified random sampling techniques were used to draw the samples. South-west Nigeria is one of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria and it comprised 6 states. Each of the states has both state and federal universities, out of which 3 state and 3 federal universities were purposively sampled. Fifty respondents were randomly selected from each of the sampled universities. The instrument used for data collection was a self-designed, titled 'Calendar Stability in Nigerian University System and its Effect on Quality of its Education' (CSNU). The (CSNU) was made up of three parts; A, B, and C. Part A was on respondents' bio data, Part B consisted of 10 items that sought information on Calendar Stability in South-West Nigerian Universities, while Part C consisted of 10 items on employers' assessment of Nigerian graduates. Part B was responded to by the university lecturers, while Part C was responded to by employers of university graduates. Experts in the field of Educational Management and Test and Measurement from the Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti validated the instrument. A reliability co-efficient of 0.91 was obtained using split-half method. Responses for Part B of the instrument were indicated in terms of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1), while responses on Section C were indicated as Very Good (4), Good (3), Average (2) and Poor

(1) on a 4-point scale. Frequency count, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions. The t-test statistic was used for hypotheses testing at 0.05 level of significance. An analysis and comparison of the academic calendar stability was done between the federal and state owned universities in the South-West Nigeria to ascertain if there was any significant difference due to difference in ownership. The results are as presented.

Results

To answer the research questions, respondents' scores were grouped into 3 levels (high moderate and low). Respondents whose scores ranged from the minimum score, and the difference between the mean and the standard deviation were grouped as low: {Min score - (X- SD)}. Respondents whose score ranged from the sum of mean and standard deviation, and the maximum score were grouped as high: {(X + SD) - Max score}, while the moderate level constituted the respondents whose scores fell between the low and high level.

Question 1: *What is the assessment of academic calendar stability in south-west Nigerian universities?*

To find answer to this question, the minimum score (10), maximum score (40), mean score (27.75) and standard deviation (3.97) of calendar stability in the South-West Nigerian universities were used to categorize the respondents' assessment as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Assessment of Academic Calendar Stability in South-west Nigerian Universities

Assessment of Calendar Stability	Frequency	Percentage
Low: Min score - (X-SD); {10.00-(23.78)}	44	14.7
Moderate (23.79 - 31.71)	211	70.3
High: (X+SD)- Max score; { (31.72) - 40.00}	45	15.0
Total	300	100.0

Table 1 revealed that 44 respondents representing 14.7% of the sample assessed the academic calendar stability as low. 211(70.3%) represented moderate level of academic calendar stability, while 45(15%) assessed academic calendar stability as high. This implied that academic calendar stability in South-West Nigerian universities was moderate.

Question 2: *What is the assessment of academic calendar stability of federal universities, South-West Nigeria?*

In order to find answer to question 2, the mean score and standard deviation on academic calendar stability in federal universities were used to categorize the respondents' assessment into Low, Moderate and High as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Assessment of calendar stability in federal universities, south-west Nigeria.

Assessment of Calendar Stability	Frequency	Percentage
Low 10.00- (23.78)	21	14.0
Moderate (23.79 - 31.71)	114	76.0
High 31.72 - (40.00)	15	10.0
Total	150	100.0

Table 2 revealed that 21 respondents representing 14% of the total sample assessed academic calendar stability in federal universities, south-west Nigeria as low. 114(76%) assessed it as moderate while 15(10%) assessed it as high. This implied that the academic calendar stability at the federal universities was moderate.

Question 3: *What is the assessment of academic calendar stability of the state universities, south-west Nigeria?*

To find answer to this question, the mean score and standard deviation on academic calendar stability in the state universities were used to categorise the respondents' assessment into low, moderate and high as presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Assessment of academic calendar stability in state universities, south-west Nigeria.

Assessment of academic calendar stability	Frequency	Percentage
Low 10.00-(23.78)	23	15.3
Moderate (23.79 - 31.71)	97	64.7
High 31.72 - (40.00)	30	20.0
Total	150	100.0

Table 3 revealed that 23 respondents representing 15.3% of the total sample assessed academic calendar stability in state universities, South-West Nigeria as low, 97(64.7%) assessed it as moderate while 30(20%) assessed it as high. This implied that academic calendar stability in state universities, South-West Nigeria was moderate.

Question 4 *What is the assessment of quality of Nigerian university education by the Nigerian employers?*

Table 4: Quality of Nigerian University Education based on Employers' Assessment of Quality of Nigerian Graduates

S/N	ITEMS	V. GOOD	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	MEAN	SD
1	Ability for good leadership qualities.	91	108	86	15	2.92	0.89
2	Ability for sound decision-making.	106	104	74	16	3.00	0.90
3	Ability to exercise practical skills.	72	117	90	21	2.80	0.89
4	Level of dedication to duty	44	160	83	13	2.78	0.74
5	Ability to perform under pressure.	68	105	102	15	2.72	0.91
6	Ability for good expression	59	142	89	13	2.81	0.80
7	Ability to get much done within a given time.	83	112	91	14	2.88	0.87
8	Ability to relate well with others	95	83	93	29	2.81	0.99
9	Punctuality and regularity at work.	113	99	69	21	3.02	0.93
10	Ability to accept responsibility without complaint.	47	124	90	39	2.60	0.90
mean		77.8	115.4	86.7	21.1	2.8	

Quality of education was assessed by the Nigerian employers as moderate with an overall average mean of 2.8. Using a cut-off mean of 2.5, all the items had mean score

above the cut-off i.e. above 2.5. The assessment was based on ability for good leadership (mean=2.92); ability for sound decision-making (mean=3.00); ability to exercise practical skills (mean=2.80); level of dedication to duty (mean=2.78); ability to perform under pressure (mean=2.72); ability for good expression (mean=2.81); ability to get much done within a given time (mean=2.88); ability to relate well with others (mean=2.81); punctuality and regularity at work (mean=3.02); and the ability to accept responsibility without complaint (mean=2.60). This means that Nigerian graduates are performing well above average in all items listed in Table 4.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no statistically significant difference between academic calendar stability in federal and state universities, South-West Nigeria.

In order to test this hypothesis, scores on academic calendar stability (Part B of CSNU), in the federal and state universities were computed and subjected to statistical analysis using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: t-test results on Academic Calendar Stability in Federal and State Universities, South-West

Type of institution	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	P
State	150	28.12	4.16	298	1.619	0.106
Federal	150	27.38	3.74			

p>0.05

Table 5 revealed that state universities had a mean score of 28.12 on academic calendar stability while federal universities had (mean=27.38). However, there is no significant difference between the federal and state universities' level of calendar stability. (t=1.619, p>0.05). The null hypothesis was not rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is no statistically significant impact of calendar stability on quality of education.

In order to test this hypothesis, scores on academic calendar stability (Part B of CSNU); and employers' assessment of Nigerian graduates (Part C of CSNU) were computed and subjected to statistical analysis using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: t-test results on the effect of Calendar Stability on Quality of Education

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	P
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Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	P
Calendar Stability	300	27.75	3.97	288	0.073	0.348
Quality of Education	300	28.34	7.32			

p>0.05

Table 6 revealed that there was no significant effect of academic calendar stability on quality of education ($t = 0.073$, $df = 288$, $p > 0.05$). The null hypothesis was not rejected. This implied that calendar stability will not significantly impact quality of education.

Discussion

The assessment of quality of education by the Nigerian employers was above average with an average mean of 2.8. The assessment was based on ability for good leadership; ability for sound decision-making; ability to exercise practical skills; level of dedication to duty; ability to perform under pressure; ability for good expression; ability to get much done within a given time; ability to relate well with others; punctuality and regularity at work; and the ability to accept responsibility without complaint. This study established no significant relationship between academic calendar stability and quality of university graduates. This implied that the issue of academic calendar instability within Nigerian university system had no impact on the quality of its education. Uvah (2005) negates this finding when he posited that the quality of university education is strongly linked to stability, and the submission of Akpotu (2004) who concluded that instability in academic calendar led to low quality service from lecturers. The study also revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between the level of calendar stability in Nigerian federal and state universities.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that academic calendar stability has no impact on quality of education.

Recommendation

In view of the findings of the study, it was recommended that other variables that are likely to impact on quality, such as quality of teachers, availability of human and material resources should be investigated.

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