


Academic Staff Research Productivity in Private Universities in Southwestern Nigeria: Factors Related to Low Research Productivity

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ABSTRACT

Research productivity (teaching, research, and community service) in any university is the totality of academic staff academic achievement within a given period of time which is partly used for university ranking. There has been a renewed interest in the debate about the quality and quantity of research output and the factors which influence the output of university lecturers at the same time. Therefore, this study assessed the level of academic staff research productivity in private universities in Southwestern, Nigeria. The survey design of the correlational type was adopted. Proportional to size and stratified random sampling techniques were used to select 30% of academic staff across the various ranks in the selected universities, making a total of 657. Academic staff research productivity ($= 2.02$) was low as against the norm test of 3.00. Low research productivity can be overcome if investment in research at private universities is increased and academic staff utilise them in line with the emerging digital trend in universities around the world.

KEYWORDS

Academic staff in Nigerian private universities, Research productivity

INTRODUCTION

Research productivity provides a good platform for academic staff to become successful. University lecturers are today being asked to increase their research output and productivity in order to meet the ever-changing demands of the 21st century. This is because research productivity shows the development of academic knowledge and reinforces the skills needed for effective knowledge transfer

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count” (Hadjinicola and Soteriou, 2005). Academic staff members conduct research, and their productivity is measured in various ways. Research productivity in academic institutions is reflected in the number and quality of articles published by the affiliated faculty. Often, departments evaluate their faculty on their “publication Research provides a good platform for academic staff members to become successful academics. This is because research develops academic knowledge and reinforces the skills needed for effective knowledge transfer. It also inspires academics towards hard work, fills the gaps of previous researches and creates an opportunity for future research.

Research is required for the improvement of general knowledge; research enables the academic staff to understand their own selves, to analyse their own abilities; research also enables the academic staff to fully understand their disciplines, which is imperative for effective teaching and learning. Egwunyenga (2008) defined academic staff as individuals employed in academic institutions whose responsibilities are to teach and conduct research leading to improvement in society. In his study, Popoola (2008) referred to them as lecturers and defined them as staff in academic institutions whose duties pertain to teaching, learning, research and community services. Irrespective of the fact that these authors have different terms for academic staff, they agreed on their functions.

Private universities are universities owned and funded by an individual, established primarily to support and cater for teaching, learning and research activities of the parent institution. Private universities are set up primarily to deliver quality education. Quality, in turn, is a function of cost-effectiveness; the capacity to apply state-of-the-art technology; accountability and transparency in expenditure and governance; strict adherence to the requirements set out in the academic brief, master plan and strategic plan; and uncompromisingly strict adherence to the estimates contained in the annual budget (Osagie, 2009). In the words of Isibor (2011), the positive impact private universities had on the development of education in Nigeria cannot be overemphasised. According to him, private universities have impacted positively on the education sector. In 1993, the federal government provided the law for the establishment of private universities in Nigeria; and in 1999, three pioneer private universities were established: Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo; Igbinedion University, Okada; and Madonna University, Okija. Thus, universities in Nigeria are managed by the federal and state governments, as well as individuals/organisations depending on ownership.

The universities that are managed by the federal/state governments are referred to as public universities, while those owned by individuals/organisations are private universities. Many of the private universities in Nigeria are relatively new and operate with a limited number of academic and other staff. One of the unique qualities of private universities in Nigeria is that they have very few regular staff. The general trend is that of a large number of part-time academic staff or sabbatical staff and a very few numbers of full-time academic staff. This feature is not peculiar to Nigeria alone. In a study carried out by Varghese (2004), it was found out that reliance on part-time academic staff is a common feature of private universities irrespective of their locations and orientations. According to the National Universities Commission (NUC), Nigeria presently has 43 federal universities, 52 state universities and 79 private universities.

Globally, the top-ranking league universities are, indeed, private. Of the top 50 universities in the world in 2012, 35 were in the USA, and only one of them, the University of California, Berkeley, is public while the rest are private.

A number of private universities, such as Afe Babalola, Bowen and Babcock, now run very good medical programmes. Recently, surgeons from the Babcock University School of Medicine successfully carried out a heart surgery in their newly constructed Tristate Heart and Cardiovascular Centre (Daily Trust, Oct. 12, 2015, p. 14), while Landmark University is blazing a commendable trail in agriculture in its attempt to be a world-class university with an agrarian focus. Redeemer's University Centre for the Genome of Infectious Diseases (ACEGID) came first of all the 19 ACEs in the west and central Africa, and it is turning out to be a novel world-class centre of excellence, having been instrumental in the diagnosis of the first case of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in Nigeria. ACEGID scientists also successfully sequenced the Ebola virus from Sierra Leone and have, indeed, developed

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