



**An Investigation into the Causes of Unstable Academic Calendar in Nigerian
Higher Institutions: A case Study of Federal University Wukari, Taraba,
Nigeria**

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Abstract:

This study investigated the causes of unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher institutions (A case study of federal university wukari, Taraba state, Nigeria. The population of the study was 4000 students from which a sample of 400 was selected from four departments in the area of study using the simple random technique. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled: “Causes of Unstable Academic Calendar on the Academic Performance of Students Questionnaire” (CUACAPSQ) and was validated by two experts in statistics department. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using the test-retest method and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis which yielded a coefficient of 0.67. Data collected were analyzed using simple percentage. The results, among others, showed that that ASUU/NASU Strike, students’ election, communal crisis, increase in school fees, cultic conflict, National programme and public holiday are factors responsible for unstable academic calendar of higher education in Nigeria. It was also established that half bake graduates, poor coverage of syllabus, resources wastage, students’ involvement in criminal activities and students prolonged years of graduation are the effects of unstable academic calendar. The following were recommended that the government should always try to honour whatever agreement reached with the academic communities and that most protracted strikes can be averted if necessary steps are taken to build a good relationship between both parties.

Keywords: Academic Calendar, Nigerian Higher education, Challenges.

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1.1 INTRODUCTION:

Higher education refers to post-secondary education (or study beyond the level of post-secondary education) where a degree, diploma, or certificate is awarded at the end of study. Higher education builds on the level of competence, knowledge and skills normally acquired in secondary education. The exact definition of this level, of higher education institution or programme varies from one country to another. Consequently, the concept of higher education institution may also vary. For example, in some countries, teacher education is considered to be a field of higher education. In some countries, it is considered to be part of post-secondary education but not part of higher education. The Association of African Universities (AAU) Working Group on Higher Education recommends that higher education should include tertiary education institutions other than universities. In addition, at the second African Union (AU) Meeting of Experts, higher education was described as including all post-secondary education, including universities, polytechnics and technical colleges, teachers training institutions, institute for medical training and agriculture (and other fields), distance education centers, and research centers and institutes, with the possibility of expanding to include other forms of post-secondary education.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The objectives of the study are to:

- i. To determine the causes of unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education;
- ii. To determine the effects of unstable academic calendar on the academic performance of students.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- i. What are causes of unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education?
- ii. What are the effects of unstable academic calendar on the academic performance of students?

1.4 METHODOLOGY:

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population comprised final year students of University of Abuja, Nigeria. The sample for the study consisted of 400 final year students who were selected using simple random technique from four departments in



faculty of education. 100 students were selected from each of the department making a total of 400 students as respondents.

1.4 INSTRUMENTATION:

The instrument used for data collection for the study is a questionnaire titled “Causes of Unstable Academic Calendar on the Academic Performance of Students Questionnaire” (CUACAPSQ). It consisted of three sections. Section ‘A’ sought for demographic variables of the respondents; section ‘B’ is a ten-item question rated on Yes and No responses which sought for information on the causes of unstable academic calendar in the higher institutions. Section C is a four-item open ended questions which sought for information on the effects of unstable academic calendar on the academic performance of students. The instrument was validated using both face and content validity procedures. The questionnaire after being drafted was presented to experts in science education.

1.5 OBJECTIVES UNIVERSITIES EDUCATION:

Specifically, the goals of higher education (including university education) in Nigeria are to:

- (1) contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training;
- (2) develop and calculate proper values for the survival of the individual and society;
- (3) develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments;
- (4) acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individual to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;
- (5) promote and encourage scholarship and community service;
- (6) forge and cement national unity understanding and integration [Noun,2009].

The National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004), defines Higher Education as the Post-Secondary Section of the National education system, which is given of Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Technology including courses as are given by the Colleges of Education, Advanced Teachers Training colleges, Correspondence Colleges and such Institutions as may be allied to them. University governance is the management of academics, human (management of men and women) and material resources in the production of persons that are found worthy both in character and learning. Management of university education can be looked at from two dimensions: the external and the internal dimensions. The external



dimension is the control by the federal government through the National University Commission (NUC), a body charged with the coordination of university management in the country. On the other hand, the internal management of each university is represented by a simple organogram. The Vice-Chancellor is the administrative head of the university. The Registrar is responsible to the Vice-Chancellor for the day to day administration of the University. The Registrar is by the virtue of that office, Secretary to the Council; the Senate; Congregation and Convocation. The Registrar oversees the administration of affairs such as academic; establishment; information; public relations; students affairs; recruitment and promotion of staff; keepers of records and Secretary to committee and as from time to time assigned to him by the Vice-Chancellor. The Registry is presently organized into three main divisions: Academic, Personnel & General Administration. The office of the Registrar oversees the academic planning unit of the universities. This Unit is in charge with the responsibility of developing the academic calendar for strategic the universities. The academic calendar of the universities is the life wire of the universities. The universities cannot administratively function without a calendar. The achievement of the universities objectives depends largely on the capacity of the management and the various department and units in the Universities. For the universities to effectively managed and administered there is need for calendar. There is need to planning the academic calendar of the schools in regarding their programme for the year. The main aim of the university management is the coordination of the activities of staff and students without interfering with academic decisions. There is need to plan the academic calendar of the universities, there is need to plan all the academic programmes of the universities to achieve coverage of syllabus and scheme of work. The academic calendars set the direction for the universities. In Nigeria, majorities of the universities do not achieve their planned academics calendars. This paper aim to find out factors militating against the achievement of universities academic calendars in Nigeria.

1.6 CONCEPT OF ACADEMIC CALENDAR:

Academic calendar is also known as academic year programme is a comprehensive document that contains the schools programmes in a year. An academic year or school year is a period of time which schools, college and universities use to measure a quantity of study. The Academic Calendar contains important dates, deadlines, holidays and exams per academic year at the University of the People. Academic calendar is the calendar that contains the school



programme in details. Academic calendar is a details document that shows school activities within a year. The Planning Calendars include basic start/end dates of future academic-year calendars to assist departments and students planning ahead. More detail is added as the year approaches and eventually is published as the more-detailed Academic Calendar. Factors consider before writing academic calendar of the universities include National public holidays and National programme.

1.7 NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES ACADEMIC CALENDAR:

The National Universities Commission an agency of the Federal government of Nigeria is an external regulating Body of the Nigerian universities. Among other things, the Commission is saddled with the responsibilities of directing the affairs of all the universities in Nigeria. The laws establishing public universities in Nigeria also permit them to manage their internal affairs which include the drawing or drafting the academic calendar for their various academic programmes offering in the universities. According to the students Handbook of Federal University Wukari (2012) the university shall operate a two semester system [Harmattan and Rain Semester] for regular courses. The Harmattan and the Rain Semester shall last 17 to 18 weeks, including registration, teaching and examination period]. Not less than 15 weeks shall be devoted to actual teaching with about 2-3 weeks examinations. The Faculty and Departmental timetable shall be scheduled such as to avoid clashes while ensuring adequate covering of all the courses on offered at all levels of studies in the university. The university operates the semester system for its academic programmes. Each academic session shall comprise of two semester and each semester shall last for a period of eighteen [18] weeks consisting of one [1] week for registration, fifteen [15] weeks for lectures and two [2] weeks for examination. One week for lectures shall consist of 40 hours of classroom and or laboratory activities. Teaching and laboratory activities shall start daily at 8.00am and end by 5.pm. With a lunch break in the afternoon. The university operates the course credit system. One credit system unit is defined as one hour of lecture or tutorial per week per semester and its equivalents shall be: two hours of seminar; six hours of laboratory or field work, clinic practice/practicum or studio practices; six hours of teaching practice and one week of industrial attachment (FUW, 2012). Below is a sample of an academic calendar of the University of Agriculture Markudi for 2018/2019 academic session.

**1st Semester**

Monday, 18th February, 2019 - Registration and clearance (3 weeks)

Friday, 8th March, 2019

Wednesday, 13th March, 2019 - Examination (2 weeks)

Wednesday, 27th March, 2019

Thursday, 28th March, 2019 - 1st semester break (4 days)

Sunday, 31st March, 2019

2nd Semester

Monday, 1st April, 2019 - Students return to campus

Monday, 1st April, 2019 - Registration (1 week)

Friday, 5th April, 2019

Monday, 8th April, 2019 - Lectures (10 weeks)

Friday, 14th June, 2019

Monday, 8th April, 2019 - Late Registration (1 week)

Friday, 12th April, 2019

Friday, 12th April, 2019 - End of Add/Drop of Courses

Monday, 17th June, 2019 - Revision (1 week)

Friday, 21st June, 2019

Monday, 24th June, 2019 - 2nd Semester Exams (3 weeks)

Friday, 12th July, 2019

Sunday, 14th July, 2019 - 2nd Semester break begins

Friday, 9th August, 2019 - Second semester results to be ready for consideration by all Departmental Boards (4 weeks after Exam)

Friday, 23rd August, 2019 - Second semester results to be ready for consideration by all College Boards (2 weeks)

Friday, 30th August, 2019 - Second semester results to be ready for consideration by Senate Committee on Exams (1 week)

Thursday, 5th September, 2019 - Second semester results to be ready for consideration by Senate (1 week) (UAM, 2018).



The legend of academic calendar of the Nigerian universities include both first Semester second semester. Registration - 2 weeks, Orientation (Fresh Students) - 1 week Lectures - 10 weeks, Lectures - 12 weeks Revision - 1 week, Revision - 1 week Examination - 3 weeks and Examinations - 3 weeks. In Nigeria, the longest holiday is from Mid-July to second week of September for Secondary schools and a longer duration within same period for tertiary institutions. Holidays are basically determined by schools and it starts from June to Early days in September.

1.8 RESULT AND ANALYSIS:

Research Question 1: The following are the causes of unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education?

Table 1: causes of unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education

S/N	ITEMS	YES/Agreed	%	NO/Disagreed	%	TOTA
1	ASUU/NASU Strike	367	91.75	33	8.25	400
2	Students election	309	77.25	91	22.75	400
3	Communal crises	292	73	108	27	400
4	Increase in school fees	311	77.75	89	22.25	400
5	Cultic conflict	287	71.75	113	28.25	400
6	Natural disaster	264	66	136	34	400
7	National programme	241	60.25	159	39.75	400
8	Public Holidays	274	68.5	126	31.5	400

The data in Table 1 showed the respondents view on the causes of unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education. The result revealed that 367[91.75] of the respondents agreed that ASUU/NASU Strike is causes of unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education while [8.25%]of the respondents disagreed that ASUU/NASU Strike is the causes of unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education. Item two revealed that that 309[77.25%] of the respondents agreed that students election is causes of unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education while 91[22.75%] of the respondents disagreed that students election is the causes of unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education. Item three revealed that that 292[73%] of the respondents agreed that communal crises is causes of unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education while 108[27%] of the respondents disagreed that communal crises is the causes of unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher



education. Item four revealed that that 311[77.75%] of the respondents agreed that increase in school fees is causes of unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education while 99 [22.25%] of the respondents disagreed that increase in school fees is the causes of unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education. Item five showed that that 287[71.75%] of the respondents agreed that cultic conflict is responsible unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education while 123[28.25 %] of the respondents disagreed that cultic conflict is the causes of unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education. Item six showed that that 264[66%] of the respondents agreed that Natural disaster is responsible unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education while 134[44%] of the respondents disagreed that Natural disaster is the causes of unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education. Item seven showed that that 241 [60.25%] of the respondents agreed that National programme is responsible unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education while 159[39.75%] of the respondents disagreed that National programme is the causes of unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education. Item eight revealed that that 274 [68.5%] of the respondents agreed that public holidays is responsible unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education while 126[31.5%] of the respondents disagreed that public holidays is the causes of unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education.

Research Question 2: The following are the effects of unstable academic calendar on the academic performance of students in Nigerian higher education?

Table 2: Effects of unstable academic calendar on the academic performance of students

S/N	ITEMS	YES/Agreed	%	NO/Disagreed	%	TOTAL
1	Half baked graduates	382	95.5	18	4.5	400
2	Poor coverage of syllabus	312	78%	88	22%	400
3	Resources wastage	301	75.25	99	24.75	400
4	Involvement of crime activities by students	331	82.75%	69	17.25	400
5	Students engages in social vices	400	100	-		400
6	Prolonged years of graduation	400	100	-		400



The data in Table 2 item one showed the respondents views on the effects of unstable academic calendar on the academic performance of students in Nigerian higher education. The result revealed that 382[95.5%] of the respondents agreed that the effects of unstable academic calendar is responsible for the half bake graduates in the society while 18[4.5%] of the respondents disagreed the effects of unstable academic calendar is responsible for the half bake graduates in the society today. Item two showed that 312[78%%] of the respondents agreed that the effects of unstable academic calendar is responsible for the poor coverage of syllabus in the in the higher institutions while 88[22%%] of the respondents disagreed the effects of unstable academic calendar is responsible for the poor coverage of syllabus in the in the higher institutions. Item three showed that 301[75.25%] of the respondents agreed that the effects of unstable academic calendar is responsible for the resources wastage in the higher institutions while 99[24.75%] of the respondents disagreed the effects of unstable academic calendar is responsible for the resources wastage in the in the higher institutions. Item four showed that 331[82.75%] of the respondents agreed that the effects of unstable academic calendar is responsible for the students involvement in crime activities during the break while 69[17.25%] of the respondents disagreed the effects of unstable academic calendar is responsible for the involvement in crime activities during the break. Item five showed that 400[100%] of the respondents agreed that the effects of unstable academic calendar is responsible for the students engagement in social vices during the break. Item six showed that 400[100%] of the respondents agreed that the effects of unstable academic calendar is responsible for the students prolonged years of graduation.

1.9 DISCUSSION OF FINDING:

The result collected in table item one showed that 367 [91.75] of the respondents agreed that ASUU/NASU Strike is the causes of unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education. This result supported the finding of Adeniyi (2016) who discovered that 80% of strike in Nigeria is as a result of ASUU strike. Item two revealed that 309[77.25%] of the respondents agreed that students election is causes of unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education. This result also affirm the finding of Ayeni (2014) who disclosed that unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education can be traced to post student election crisis.

Item three showed that 292[73%] of the respondents agreed that communal crises is causes of unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education. Item four revealed that that



311[77.75%] of the respondents agreed that increase in school fees is causes of unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education. The result for item three and item four supported the result of Abu (2016) who found out that communal crisis and students – management dispute are responsible for unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education.

Item five showed that that 287[71.75%] of the respondents agreed that cultic conflict is responsible unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education. Item seven showed that that 241 [60.25%] of the respondents agreed that National programme is responsible unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education. Item eight revealed that that 274 [68.5%] of the respondents agreed that public holidays is responsible unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education. This result is in agreement with that of Abdul (2014) disclosed that National programme like election, census and other public holidays in Nigeria is among the factors responsible for unstable academic calendar in Nigerian higher education.

Result from table two showed that item one revealed that 382[95.5%] of the respondents agreed that the effects of unstable academic calendar is responsible for the half bake graduates in the society. This result affirm the findings of Abu (2014) who concluded in his research that unstable academic calendar in the Nigerian higher education is a major factor contributing to poor quality of graduate in the country.

Item two showed that 312[78%%] of the respondents agreed that the effects of unstable academic calendar is responsible for the poor coverage of syllabus in the in the higher institutions. Item three showed that 301[75.25%] of the respondents agreed that the effects of unstable academic calendar is responsible for the resources wastage in the higher institutions. Item four showed that 331[82.75%] of the respondents agreed that the effects of unstable academic calendar is responsible for the students involvement in crime activities during the break.

Item five showed that 400[100%] of the respondents agreed that the effects of unstable academic calendar is responsible for the students engagement in social vices during the break. Item six showed that 400[100%] of the respondents agreed that the effects of unstable academic calendar is responsible for the students prolonged years of graduation. This result is in agreement with Adniyi (2016) who found out that 75% Nigerian students engages in various social vices during the holiday or strike period.



1.10 RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **Proactively handling Strike issues:** Meanwhile, government should always try to honour whatever agreement reached with the academic communities. Most protracted strikes can be averted if necessary steps are taken to build a good relationship between both parties. It is worth emphasizing that any government with a poor education system is heading towards a black future. At the same time, the various unions in our institutions of higher learning should device other means other than strike to resolve aggrieved issues. Strike action be the last resort. This is because of the negative effect frequent strikes have on students and the entire academic community.

2. **Students Crisis:** The state and the management of Nigerian universities should maintain standing committees on riot prevention. Such committees would be charged with the responsibilities of identifying potential causes of riots on the campuses and of maintaining a permanent channel of communication with all student organizations on the university campuses. About 40% of the membership of such a committee should be students and youth.

3. **Acknowledge only Relevant National Holiday:** Teaching is periodic and learning process must take time into cognizant. The federal and state governments should always consider the students' academic process before declaring public holiday(s) and consult the Ministry of Education with regards to the school curriculum and academic calendar.

4. **Provision of adequate security:** The government and the universities management should provide adequate security in the universities environment to safe guard the school from external attack.

5. **Peace Education:** The universities management as part of their community service programme should institutionalize peace awareness programme in the host community to sustain peace building and community development.

1.11 CONCLUSION:

This study from the findings concluded that ASUU/NASU Strike, students' election, communal crisis, increase in school fees, cultic conflict, National programme and public holiday are factors responsible for unstable academic calendar of higher education in Nigeria. It was also established that half bake graduates, poor coverage of syllabus, resources wastage, students' involvement in criminal activities and students prolonged years of graduation are the effects of unstable academic calendar.

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