

## Students Perceptions and Utilisation of University Services: The Case of a Nigerian University

M. Olalekan Arikewuyo\*

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### 1. Introduction

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bec students are the central focus of any educational system. All activities within the institution are geared towards producing people who would be useful for the society as a whole. There is no doubt about the fact that the school system is expanding in Nigeria. The figure given is not an "instance", there are 48,242 primary schools and an enrolment of 16,761,591; 7,104 secondary schools with a student enrolment of 4,448,981 and 36 universities with a student enrolment of 236,261 (Imogie, 1998). Despite this expansion, the system is being marred by a number of problems, a part of which is lack of adequate facilities.

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### Introduction

The students are the central focus of any educational system. All activities within the institution are geared towards producing people who would be useful for the society as a whole. There is no doubt about the fact that the school system is expanding in Nigeria. The figure given is not an "instance", there are 48,242 primary schools and an enrolment of 16,761,591; 7,104 secondary schools with a student enrolment of 4,448,981 and 36 universities with a student enrolment of 236,261 (Imogie, 1998). Despite this expansion, the system is being marred by a number of problems, a part of which is lack of adequate facilities.

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At the university level, a range of services are expected to be provided by the authority for the comfort of the students. Such services are also necessary for the academic uplift of students. Some of these services include: feeding and catering, medical and health, works and transport, guidance and counseling, postal, library, academic affairs, student affairs, bursary, sports and recreation, accommodation, consultancy, ventures, to mention a few. Indeed, according to Moses (1977), these services are necessary to support the core business of the university, namely teaching and research and should form a very large part of the university's budget.

For instance, the library, according to Salisu (1989), provides a positive and progressive programme which integrates library resources with classroom activities thereby adding to the educational opportunity of every learner (student) in the institution (University). The library also provides a variety of library resources to support the curriculum. A guidance and counseling unit, according to Soetan (1988), should be geared towards the production of self actualised young men and women, who understand themselves and their capabilities and whose education would direct them towards a meaningful and effective existence not only in their immediate environment, but also in the country as a whole.

Students also need to be provided with some recreational facilities, which according to Bucher (1985), should contribute to the satisfaction of basic human needs for self-expression, promotion of total health-physical, emotional, mental and social, provide an antidote to the strains and tensions of life, provide an avenue for abundant personal and family living and development of good citizenship. Ogungbenro (1992) therefore listed recreational activities which the institution should provide as games and sports, gymnastics, music, dancing, arts and crafts, drama, nature and outing activities etc.

A good means of transport is an indispensable part of the school system. The school bus, apart from conveying students to and from schools, also carries out other essential services that make learning more effective. Such services, according to



Afolabi (1992), include educational trips such as excursions, study projects, visits to places of interest for sports, cultural and social activities and for emergencies.

At the secondary school level, Ogunsonya and Ilori (1993) have discovered that these services are grossly inadequate. But what is the level of these services and how are they utilised at the university level? This is the problem this study attends to.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Ogun State University was established in 1982 as a non-residential university. The university provides certain services which are geared towards making students comfortable within the University set up. However, this study investigated the perceptions and utilisation of these services by the undergraduates of the University. Specifically, the study endeavoured to find answers to the following questions:

- What is the perception of students of Ogun State University about the level of services provided by the institution?
- To what extent are these services utilised by the students?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were tested in the study.

- There will be no significant relationship between students' sex and utilisation of university services.
- There will be no significant relationship between location of campus and students utilisation of university services.



## Research Methodology

The population of the study consisted of the undergraduates of Ogun State University in Ago-Iwoye and Ijebu-Igbo campuses. Two out of the five faculties located at Ago-Iwoye campus were selected. These were the faculties of Science and Basic Medical Science. The two faculties of Arts and Social Sciences, based at Ijebu-Igbo, were also included in the samples. One hundred and twenty-five students were randomly selected from each campus. This made a total of two hundred and fifty students altogether.

The instrument used for the study was the Students' Perception and Utilisation of University Services Questionnaire (SPUUSQ), which was designed by the researcher. Section A of the instrument asked the students to indicate the level of the services. The mode of responses included: adequate, fairly adequate, inadequate, and not available at all. Section B of SPUUSQ asked the students to indicate their utilisation of the services. The mode of responses here was: frequently, once in a while, and never. The instrument was subjected to content validity by experts in Management and Personnel Services.

**Table 1: General Perception of University Services by Students of Ogun State University**

| Services                 | Adequate   | Fairly Adequate | Inadequate | Not Available |
|--------------------------|------------|-----------------|------------|---------------|
| Feeding and Catering     | 4 (02%)    | 199 (91%)       | 16 (07%)   | -             |
| Medical and Health       | 22 (09%)   | 41 (16%)        | 187(75%)   | -             |
| Works and Transport      | 69(27.8%)  | 89(35.6%)       | 92(36.8%)  | -             |
| Guidance and Counselling | 42 (16.8%) | 69 (27.6%)      | 139(55.6%) | -             |
| Postal                   | 78 (31%)   | 147 (59%)       | 25(10%)    | -             |
| Library                  | 57(23%)    | 77(31%)         | 116(46%)   | -             |
| Academic Affairs         | 38 (03%)   | 198 (79%)       | 44 (18%)   | -             |
| Students Affairs         | 66 (26.4%) | 118 (47.2%)     | 66 (26%)   | -             |
| Bursary                  | 16 (6.4%)  | 113 (45.2%)     | 121(48.4%) | -             |
| Sports and Recreation    | 5 (02%)    | 52 (20.8%)      | 193(77.2%) | -             |
| Accommodation            | --         | 52 (21%)        | 32 (13%)   | 166(66%)      |
| Consultancy              | 46 (18.4%) | 46 (18.4%)      | 92 (36.8%) | 66(26.4%)     |
| Ventures                 | 50 (20%)   | 59 (24%)        | 66 (26%)   | 75(30%)       |

The data were then analysed using the simple percentage and the chi-square statistical technique. The simple percentage



was used to analyse the research questions while the chi-square statistic was used to test the hypotheses.

The analyses are presented in tables as follows:

Table 1 showed that none of the services being provided by the Ogun State University was adequate. On the other hand, feeding and catering, postal and academic affairs services were considered to be fairly adequate. Also, medical and health, guidance and counselling, library, bursary, as well as sports and recreational services were considered to be inadequate. Finally, the majority of the students (66%) considered accommodation services as not available at all.

**Table 2: Utilisation of University Services by Students of Ogun State University**

| Services                 | Frequently | Once in a While | Never      |
|--------------------------|------------|-----------------|------------|
| Feeding and Catering     | 55(22%)    | 98(39%)         | 97(39%)    |
| Medical and Health       | 114(45.6%) | 96(38.4%)       | 40(16%)    |
| Works and Transport      | 97(30%)    | 112(45%)        | 41(16%)    |
| Guidance and Counselling | 48(10%)    | 50(20%)         | 152(61%)   |
| Postal                   | 78(31%)    | 168(67%)        | 04(02%)    |
| Library                  | 80(32%)    | 167(67%)        | 03(01%)    |
| Academic Affairs         | 61(24%)    | 189(76%)        | -          |
| Students Affairs         | 71(28.4%)  | 138(55.2%)      | 41(16.4%)  |
| Bursary                  | 39(16%)    | 221(84%)        | 228(91%)   |
| Sports and Recreation    | -          | 22(09%)         | 228(91%)   |
| Accommodation            | -          | -               | 250(100%)  |
| Consutancy               | -          | 53(21.2%)       | 197(78.8%) |
| Ventures                 | 10(04%)    | 42(17%)         | 198(79%)   |

Table 2 above revealed that only medical and health services were frequently used by the students of Ogun State University. On the hand, works and transport, postal, library, academic affairs, student affairs and bursary services were utilised once in a while by the students. Also, most of the students indicated they never used sports and recreation, accommodation, consultancy and ventures services.



## Testing of Hypotheses

*Hypothesis 1:* There will be no significant relationship between students' sex and utilisation of university services.

The analysis is presented in Table 3 below:

**Table 3: Students' Sex and Utilisation of University Services**

| Sex    | Frequently | Once in a While | Never   | Total | X <sup>2</sup> Calculated | X <sup>2</sup> Critical | df |
|--------|------------|-----------------|---------|-------|---------------------------|-------------------------|----|
| Male   | 48 (43)    | 57 (55)         | 32 (39) | 137   | 4.17+                     | 5.99                    | 2  |
| Female | 30 (35)    | 43 (45)         | 40 (33) | 113   |                           |                         |    |
| Total  | 78         | 100             | 72      | 250   |                           |                         |    |

Table 3 showed that there was no significant relationship between students' sex and utilisation of university services. This was because the  $x^2$  calculated, which was 4.17, was less than  $x^2$  critical, 5.99. The degree of freedom was 2 and the hypothesis was accepted at the probability level of 0.05.

*Hypothesis 2:* There will be no significant relationship between campus location and students' utilisation of university services.

The analysis is presented in Table 4 below:

**Table 4: Campus Location and Students' Utilisation of University Services**

| Campus  | Frequently | Once in a While | Never   | Total | X <sup>2</sup> Calculated | X <sup>2</sup> Critical | df |
|---|------------|-----------------|---------|-------|---------------------------|-------------------------|----|
| Ijebu-Igbo (Arts and SMS)                     | 35 (36)    | 51 (50)         | 46 (46) | 132   | 0.09                      | 5.99                    | 2  |
| Ago-Iwoye (Science and Basic Medical Science) | 31 (30)    | 41 (42)         | 39 (39) | 111   |                           |                         |    |
| Total   | 66         | 92              | 85      | 243   |                           |                         |    |

Table 4 indicated that there was no significant relationship between campus location and students' location of university services. At the  $\alpha$  level of 0.05, hypothesis 2 was retained.



This was because the  $X^2$  calculated (0.09) was less than  $X^2$  critical (5.99).

### **Discussion of Findings**

This study revealed that services were grossly inadequate at Ogun State University. This could be seen from Table 1 where none of the services was considered adequate.

Feeding and catering services were discovered to be fairly adequate and students utilise them once in a while. As a non-residential institution, the University was never involved in feeding students. Catering services were provided on the campus through some private operators. The non-involvement of the University in feeding students might not be unconnected with the observations of Abimbola (1990) and Ajibade (1993) that issues related to feeding and catering services provided by universities were part of the causes of students protests. Even after the federal government withdrew meal subsidy in 1984, Abimbola (1990) reported that students still protested against certain policies or the introduction of certain menus or the prices of food they ate in the various eating places. As a matter of fact, one of the advantages of non-residential universities, according to Arikewuyo (1992), was that the huge sum of money which the government used to spend on meal subsidy and housing could now be spent on academic programmes.

Medical and health services at Ogun State University were inadequate, though students utilised them frequently. The inadequacy of health services in the University posed a very dangerous trend that should be checked, because as the popular saying goes, "health is wealth." The present findings further agreed with Fajewopnyomi and Afolabi (1993) study that most schools in Nigeria lacked adequate health care facility. In addition, availability and frequency of services from health workers and knowledge about health needs of children were generally poor in many schools in Nigeria. Balogun (1980) discovered that the major health problems of university students were:



- medical (skin diseases, allergic conditions, diseases of eye, ear, nose and throat and diseases of gastro intestinal and genitourinary tracts);
- surgical (incision and drainage of abscesses; suturing of lacerations, removal of foreign bodies, dressing of burns and ulcers);
- mental (nervousness and fatigue, psychotic disorder and alcoholism);
- social (financial problems, accommodation and maladaptation).

It should therefore be noted that these health problems could only be ameliorated when health services were adequately provided by the university.

Works and transport services were considered to be fairly adequate and utilised once in a while by the students. Apart from the buses on the university's fleet, private commercial vehicles also use the various university routes in order to complement the efforts of the authority. Being a non-residential University, the importance of an efficient and reliable transport system in Ogun State University cannot be ignored. Guidance and counseling services were perceived as inadequate by the students and this perhaps accounted for the reason why sixty-one percent of the students felt they never utilised the university's counseling services. This study further confirmed the findings of Eweniyi (1996), who, in a study in the same university, discovered that students had a negative perception of the counseling centre and even considered the personnel at the counseling centre as inadequate.

Sports and recreational services were also considered inadequate. This was the reason why ninety-one percent of the students never utilised sports and recreational services at Ogun State University. Some of the factors that militate against effective participation in recreational activities in



Nigeria, according to Mgbor (1995), included ignorance of the value of recreation, lack of recreational facilities and skills, as well as economic difficulties. These problems were attested to by the Vice Chancellor of Ogun State University at the meeting of the congregation held on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> October 1996. At that meeting, "the vice-chancellor regretted that there was no fund to provide for more recreational facilities, otherwise the university would have provided them for the students. He hoped that they would still be provided when funds were available" (Minutes of Congregation, Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup> October 1996, P.4). Sixty six percent of the students felt that accommodation services were not available at all while one hundred percent agreed that they never used the university's accommodation. Though a non-residential institution, the authority, at the inception of the University, engaged in providing "University assisted hostels". But the arrangement was later jettisoned when landlords began to complain about the shoddy manner in which students used their houses.

Consultancy services were considered inadequate and never utilised by the students. This may not be unconnected with the fact that the offices of the university consultancy were centrally located at Ijebu-Ode (about twenty kilometers from Ago-Iwoye), without any presence on the two campuses of the University. The university venture has just been established and this may be the reason why the students have never used it. In addition, it is only located at the Ago-Iwoye campus.

Library services were considered to be inadequate at the university and students used the library once in a while. The library is an essential service and could be regarded as the heart of an educational institution. Every serious minded student should therefore use the library frequently. According to Fayose (1988), for any course of study to be worthwhile, a wide range of reading was required and the library should be the best source for obtaining reading materials. Indeed, no matter how wealthy a student is, he is not likely to buy all the books he would need throughout his years of study. It is the library that could provide him with the necessary books, periodicals, journals, research reports, etc., that are useful for



his course. Academic affairs, student affairs and bursary services were considered fairly adequate and utilised once in a while by the students of Ogun State University.

Finally, the study discovered that the sex of students as well as location of campuses had no relationship with the utilisation of university services. With the exception of the consultancy services, whose offices are located at Ijebu-Ode (about twenty kilometers from Ago-Iwoye), all other university services are centrally located at the Ago-Iwoye main campus. The library, however, has a medical library at the College of Medicine in Sagamu (about forty kilometers from Ago-Iwoye).

### **Implications of findings**

The university cannot achieve its objectives of teaching, research and services without the provision of certain basic facilities and infrastructure which students need for the day-to-day activities within the university environment. Unfortunately, most services are inadequate in many Nigerian universities. This assertion was further buttressed by Nwagwu (1997), who observed that the crisis of shortage of infrastructure and facilities could be felt at all levels of Nigeria's educational system. He contended that library facilities and books, classrooms, furniture, laboratories and workshops, were grossly inadequate in our schools. Chuta (1995) also agreed with these findings when he contended that in many institutions, apart from hostel room shortage, student buses had broken down beyond repair; besides, electricity and good drinking water were not assured on a daily basis.

Despite the decline in these services and facilities, student enrollment continues to rise by every session. At inception in January 1983, Ogun State University had a little over five hundred students: During 1995/96 session, the population was about seven thousand, excluding part-time and sandwich students. New academic programmes also continued to be introduced by the university. The implication is that student enrollment, continues to rise. Ogunsanya and Ilori (1993) observed that some of the reasons responsible for inadequate



services in educational institutions included poor management of resources in schools, non-professionalisation of jobs in the educational system as a result of which the field has been opened to all-comers, no professional code of ethics, embezzlement of funds meant for the school and lack of commitment of school personnel. Adesina (1900) also added that the quality and quantity of services which a school could provide, depended largely on the level of financial resources available to it. Indeed, poor finance has affected the physical development of Ogun State University's permanent site. At the time of conducting this study, the Ogun State government did not complete a single building at the site. All the structures being used there now were donated by private individuals and corporate bodies. This is not a good omen for the development of a young university like Ogun State University.

It has also been observed that one of the causes of student crises in Nigerian universities is lack of adequate facilities for the institutions. As shown in this study, none of the university services was adequate. Many Nigerians have also suggested that the problem of cultism in the universities could also be reduced to the barest minimum if services such as guidance and counseling, library, sports and recreation, etc. were adequately provided for students' use.

The idea of multicampus system should be abandoned by every university in Nigeria. Apart from being too cumbersome, the system is highly capital intensive, because it involves a lot of fund. The federal and state governments, whose universities are still operating the multi campus system, should scrap the policy immediately.

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