

Salary Disparities and Employees Productivity in Nigeria: A Study of State-Owned Tertiary Institutions in the South – East Zone.

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Abstract

The study examined salary disparities and employee productivity. The insinuations of salary inequalities and their implications on the productivity of Lecturers in State-Owned Universities in the South East of Nigeria have become a very serious course for concern. Content Analytical Approach was used while equity theory of wage was adopted as a theoretical framework of analysis. The study surveyed extant literature in the field. Data were extensively sourced from documentary papers from which the three major objectives of the study were accomplished. After a pragmatic review of the prevalent salary structures of State-Owned Higher Institutions in the South East, the study found that unnecessary and unacceptable gaps exist between the salaries payable to lecturers, and this to a large extent dampens the morale of lecturers especially in State-Owned Universities. The general implication is that it leads to the abysmal performance of the employees and it creates room for the incessant industrial action and the eventual distortion of the academic calendar. We argued that all the Governors in southeast Nigeria should expedite action and adopt the “equity theory of wage” and maintain the principle of comparative norms by paying the University lecturers what is obtainable in other State-Owned Institutions of learning in the country. We further argued that southeast Governors in Nigeria should discontinue playing politics with the education sector which is the hub upon which other sectors of the economy depend for growth and national development.

Keywords: Wage, Salary, State-Owned Universities, Employees Productivity, Southeast Niger

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I. Introduction

States in the South East of Nigeria comprising of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo established State-Owned Universities like their counterparts in the country. This was done to complement the Federal Universities where they exist. These Universities maintain and pay differentiated salary structures to the lecturers with the same academic qualification, occupying the same position and on the equivalent grade level. The enhancement of salary structures and the development of infrastructural facilities have been causing a problem to the extent that lecturers of the said Universities have been on strike since July 2010.

Salary differentiation as matter of fact dates back to the industrial revolution in Britain around the 17th century and spread to other countries of the world including Nigeria. This incident of salary differentials in Nigeria is the viewpoint of the colonial government introduced in work organization to determine, differentiate and regulate salary levels of different categories of workers in an establishment. However, the colonial government encouraged collective bargaining with minimal government intervention and accorded official recognition to trade unions as a legal institution in salary determination. (Aminu, 2008).

Differentiation of salary may be agreed upon and determined by industrial union representatives (ASUU) and management of the Institution for the benefit of lecturers (labor) and the University. Lecturer in a University, the receiver of wage and as one of the factors of production, is the mental and physical effort of human beings geared towards the achievement of institutional objectives. Many Universities to maintain a proficient labor force (lecturers) and to ensure academic growth in terms of quality of graduates produced require experts and professionals that need to be commensurately remunerated to retain them.

As earlier stated, differentiated wage and salary structures exist in Nigeria like other countries in every sector of the economy both in academics and other public sector organizations. This is normally entrenched in the laws or rules governing the organization, but the government on many occasions had always set up ad hoc bodies to consider wages and salary revisions, well-differentiated especially during the military regime and the period of labor grievances or disputes. The salary scale may be agreed upon and at times based on the ability to pay by the proprietors. Based on the premise, it is clear that from 1941 to 2009; more than thirteen (13) such ad hoc bodies or commissions were instituted to review salaries and wages of public sectors including the University system. It is on record that in 1977, the Federal Government established Productivity, Income, and Wages Analysis Agency, purposely to collate and analyze statistical data on wages, income, and price changes in private and public sector organizations. This body was intended to serve as a permanent institution to replace institutionalized customs of ad hoc wage commission. Industrial wage differential in public sector organization, a University community inclusive often reflect variation in the level of skills, education and training, qualification and the type of effort expended as well as differing demand and supply situation of labor within the economy. This is normal but the problem with the South Eastern States is that salaries of these categories of lecturers are based on the ability to pay and non-implementation of the last Academic Staff Union of Universities/Government agreement reached and signed in 2009.

This issue of wage differences in some Nigerian Universities is of great concern at both the state and national levels. At the state level, evaluation of wage rates and earnings between two or more institutions may be used to establish the degree to which earnings over a while have distorted, and appraise the expertise differentials, that is wages of professors and those who are not professors. Also, at the national level, wage and salary differentiation for the same occupation in different economies may be compared to determine whether similar skills of workers receive a similar premium or differentiated wage.

Justification of the study

The growth and development of any University depend to a large extent on the quality of graduates produced. This is normally achieved via enhanced income of the lecturers' appropriate utilization of professionalized human capital and the availability of dependable infrastructural facilities for development. Within the State-Owned Universities in the South East of Nigeria, comprising of Abia State University Uturu; Anambra State University Uli; Ebonyi State University Abakaliki, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, and Imo State University, evidence abound of infrastructural underdevelopment, poor academic performances, lack of adequate funding of the Universities and poor conditions of service to serving lecturers culminating to incessant industrial action. The Universities are in a state of decay (Nwankpu, 2010). It has been observed that these Universities maintain and pay highly differentiated salaries to their lecturers who are on the same grade levels, performing analogous functions, and with the same educational qualifications. For instance, the gap in professor's salary from two different State-Owned Universities may be up to two hundred and sixty-five thousand, three hundred and seventy-one naira forty-eight kobo (N265, 371.48) likewise other lecturers downstream. This criterion of salary delineation created problems ranging from the demoralization of lecturers, intellectuals' exhaustion, migration of professors, killing the education sector, enhancing extortion of money from students, illegal sales of the so-called handout, creating avenues for students to indulge in criminal activities, room for the incessant industrial action and the eventual loss of academic calendars with the concomitant mass production of unbaked graduates who cannot fit in any public and private sectors employment. With these problems over time, ASUU is asking for full implementation of the agreement reached in 2009 by maintaining a standard of payment (benchmark) in all Nigerian Universities, while the proprietors are saying go back to work with a little increase in pay and to continue negotiation which ASUU refused. Against this backdrop, the broad objective of this study is to found out the insinuations of salary inequalities on the productivity of Lecturers in State-Owned Universities in the South East of Nigeria. The specific objectives of this study are:

- (i) To identify the factors militating against the smooth operations of State-Owned Universities in the South Eastern States of Nigeria for the past six months
- (ii) To examine the insinuations of such factors on the productivity of the lecturers in the State-Owned Universities in the South East and the students.
- (iii) To verify whether setting a standard of pay (benchmark) in all State-Owned Universities in Nigerian as requested by ASUU will eliminate the problem of incessant industrial action.

II. Literature Review

In Nigerian academic system, especially in the University community, lectures earns varied salary and wages depending on whether the lecturer is a professor, senior lecturer, or lecturer I, lecturer II, and even assistant lecturer and graduate assistant. Akin to the above premise is the studies of Lindauer and Sabot (1983), House (1984), Boudarbat (2004), and Hyder and Reilly (2005) in Aminu (2008) where they argued that public

sector employees earn a varying amount of income based on some identified attributes especially in Africa with particular reference to Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya. These attributes include education, skills acquired, and productivity rate. Agreeing with these authors, but the differences in salary structures of lecturers supposedly are based on academic qualification and position and not on the ability to pay.

Under normal circumstances, collective bargaining contracts provide for different rates of wages for diverse categories of employees performing the same kind of work. Such differences are clearly defined, except where and when used by the employers to discriminate based on race, color, religion, sex, or nationality.

The most frequent wage differential involves premium payment for work on relatively undesirable shifts such as afternoon, evening, night, and even morning hours (Sloane and Witney, 1977). It has been observed that this type of wage differentiation is mostly adopted by public sector organizations especially those that provide essential services such as medical health workers, security operators, and thus require different shift duties and not in the University communities where lectures provide the same academic services. The only genuine and acceptable salary and wage differentials in lecturer's pay should be based on substantive positions and grade levels such as professors, senior lecturers I or II, assistant lecturers, and graduate assistant, but this is not true to State-Owned Universities in the South Eastern States in Nigeria.

Public sector pay in Nigeria had stagnated at a point since 1993 despite the rapidly increasing general price level (Aminu, 2008). This development does not exclude the University Communities. For instance, the gap in professor's salary from two different State-Owned Universities is up to two hundred and sixty-five thousand, three hundred and seventy-one naira forty-eight kobo (N265,371.48) likewise other lecturers downstream. The stagnation in public sector (University lecturers) pay may have been responsible for brain drain as is prevalent in the State-Owned Universities in Nigeria. It has also been observed that a sizeable number of visitors especially the State Governors in the South East usually do not comply with directives on the agreed implementation of the new salary structure as can be seen in some State Universities in Nigeria today.

In the process of wage determination in Nigerian Universities, most visitors more often than not consider a range of factors in determining whether or not to adopt wage differentiation. These factors range from wage rates, job classes, wage range, skills available, ability to pay, the social importance of the job, and even competition within the environment of the business enterprise. Ugwunna (2006) commenting on wage differentiation in Nigeria argues that differentiation of wages depends to a large extent on the demand and supply conditions of labor, the length of time for training, the rate of productivity, and the social importance of the job. Ugwunna further argued that jobs with hazy duties and responsibilities are normally allocated different wage rates. Besides this theory, are regional, industries, and shift differences that cause an employer to pay different combinations of wage and salary rates. For instance, lecturers in the University, medical doctors, engineers, and other civil servants such as accountants and administrative officers receive differentiated wages. This may be attributed to the length of training expended and the essentiality of the job.

Industrial wage differentials can be explained in terms of three interrelated variables namely-competitions in the product market, value-added by employees, and labor cost as a percentage of the total cost, (Holley and Jennings, 1991). Contributions made by workers as a factor of production to the value of the final products, services and comparing employees effort to industrial growth helps to explain other reasons for industrial wage differentials. In an unionized organization such as Universities, negotiation between union and management determines labor share of the value-added, but the government in most cases regulates and determines the amount to be paid to her employees through constituted ad hoc committee or other established bodies such as wage and salary review commission, but this contravenes the principle of collective bargaining.

Public sector workers, University communities inclusive deserve adequate compensation commensurate with their labor input in other to bring efficiency in the sector, (Obasanjo, 1999; Nkwede, 2018; Egwu, 2018). The emphasis here is that lecturers and other public sector employees should be paid equal to their contributions to the organization. Commenting on this view, Abiodun (2007) strongly agreed that the incessant call for wage increase is based on the gap created between the private and public sector wages and this invariably does not match with the rate of increases in prices of commodities. In Nigeria, what is clear is that the government in power often determines when and how to review wages and salaries of workers and that the issue of the forces of demand and supply rarely apply except when government attempts to be objective.

Human capital models of earnings determination suggested that the observed wage differences among individuals are brought about by a combined team of school and past investment that involves education, training, and work experience, (Becker, 1964 and Mincer, 1958, 1974). The emphasis here is that those with the same academic qualification and in the same position should be equitably remunerated regardless of the University.

Salary in this paper refers to remuneration paid to lecturers in institutions of higher learning. Fundamentally, this means the basic wage rate, monthly earning, and other compensation earned in a regular job. This may be structured following provision in the contract of agreement between the Management and Academic Staff Union of Universities.

Wage differentiation plan in different organizations varies in structures and contents, but their goals are essentially the same, though not in a University system. Holley and Jennings (1991) argued that the essences of wage variation are- to increase employee’s productivity attract prospective employees to the organization and reward employees monetary for their increased productivity. This is more appropriate in other public sector institutions, but not in a University system.

Theoretical Framework

Collection of concepts, principles, rules, methods, and procedures which have been tried and checked by general experience as explaining a given field of study, is referred to as a theory, (Anugwom, 2007). The hunt for a universal or satisfactory theory of salary and wage or a perfect solution to their problem is another endless mission in any academic work. It is indispensable to emphasize, however, that these theories of wage are not perfect or irrefutable. Nevertheless, any theory or study which helps to understand how superlative to decide salary and wage at any work organization must be valuable. Wage theories developed in three stages namely- the medieval period of churchmen where we had just wage; the period of British classical economics with the theories of wages fund by J.S. Miller, residual claimant by Francis Walker, exploitation theory of wage postulated by J.B. Clarke, (Attamah, 2001). This study is anchored on or underpinned by the equity theory of wage as propounded by Adams (1965) in (Mullins, 1999). Equity theory suggests that employees should be paid salaries and wages corresponding to the value of their contributions to the organization. Equity focuses on employee’s feelings of how fair they have been treated in comparison with the treatment perceived by others. This is perceived when the ratio of the person's total outcomes to total inputs equals the ratio of the other people’s total outcomes to total inputs, in this case, there is equity. Banjoko (2007) posits that an employee is not much concerned with the absolute amount of money paid out to him but with the perceived relationship of what he gets concerning others, that is what their counterparts receive. Banjoko went ahead to say that the feeling is that if employees (lecturers) receives the same salary with his referent others who possess the same job inputs such as education, skills, and experience and achieves the same amount of inputs, such a person is most likely to feel a sense of equity. Otherwise, there is inequity which brings horrible experiences such as anxiety, which invariably may result in changes in inputs, outcomes, and cognitive distortion.

Here, in inequity implementation, the strategy that is usually adopted is that of job evaluation. This approach is the most pragmatic way of ensuring the proper valuation of each employee’s contributions to the institution.

Robbins (1993) in a review of research, suggests that where people perceive inequitable situation for themselves, they can be predicted to make one of six choices:- changing their inputs, that is not exerting as much effort; change their outcomes, for instance, individuals paid on a piece-rate increase their pay by producing higher quantity even if of lower quality; distort their perceptions of self, this is where one may say I used to think I worked at a moderate pace but now I realize that I work a lot harder than everyone else; distortion perceptions of others, for instance, Mr. Eze’s job is isn’t desirable as I first thought; choose a different reference point, for instance, I may not be doing as well as Mr. Ekwe, but I’m doing better than how Mr. Udensi’s did at my age, and finally leaving the field that is quit the job. Equity is much anxious about the relative nature of the reward. Cole (2004) posits that the attractiveness (valence) of reward in a work context is the extent to which they are seen to be comparable to those available to the peer-group.

In other words, if the ratio of lecturer’s outputs to inputs is equivalent to the ratio of productivity to the inputs of the relevant other (lecturer); such a person will feel satisfied. The emphasis is as it concerns lecturers is equitable based on grade levels and positions. This can be expressed mathematically as

$$\text{Equity} = \frac{X}{Y_a} = \frac{X_b}{Y_b}$$

- Where X_a = Outcomes of lecturer A
- X_b = Outcomes of referent other lecturer B
- Y_a = Inputs of lecturer A
- Y_b = Inputs of referent other lecturer B

In the above circumstances, the amount of effort or inputs of lecturer A and these outputs are equal to the inputs and outputs of the referent other, here referred to as lecturer B. In this case, equity is achieved and there will be no apprehension.

On the other hand, if the ratio of inputs-outputs of lecturers A is higher than that of lecturer B and they are paid the same salary, lecturer. A will feel discontented because the principle of equity has been violated and bring tension. This is expressed as

$$\text{Inequity} = \frac{X_a}{Y_a} > \frac{X_b}{Y_b}$$

In a situation like this, lecturer A is dissatisfied because he receives the same pay as lecturer B although the ratio of his outputs is greater than that of lecturer B or that they are not on the same grade level or position. This perception of inequity in wage results in serious tension. The solution to this type of problem according to Robbins (1993) and Banjoko (2001) is by creating an equitable situation through the following avenues- Decreasing his output while holding his inputs constant, increasing his output while holding his inputs constant, decreasing his both outputs and inputs, choosing different comparison referent others, and finally quitting the jobs. This is exactly what is happening between the State-Owned Universities and their respective Government in the South East. We are advocating that the equity theory of wage should be based on the same profession, experience, education, skills acquired the same grade levels, and position the lecturers occupies and not with the absolute contribution of prospective employees.

Indeed, equity theory is based on the view that equal wages for all categories of workers on the same grade levels should be adopted. The equity theory however does not compensate for job interest, personal achievement, and exercise of responsibility as intrinsic motivators for higher and improved performance. This theory does not encourage creativity, further education, competition, and discourage hard work among the employees. However, equity theory and the principle of comparative should be applied regardless of the shortcoming to eliminate the ills or pitfalls of wage disparities in all the State-Owned Universities in South-Eastern Nigeria.

III. Methods

To achieve the objective of the study, Content Analytical Approach was adopted for this study. Data were collected using a documentary instrument, direct observation, and oral interview with relevant officers and academic staff of Universities in Southeast Nigeria who have a direct connection with subvention, disbursement, and utilization in the Universities.

Analysis

➤ **Factors Affecting Wage differentials in State-Owned Universities in Nigeria**

Numerous factors are affecting wage differentiation in State-Owned Universities in Nigeria especially when critically examined and compared with other Universities in developing countries such as Ghana and the host of others. The factors affecting salary determination are complex and closely related to the economic and social system of Nigeria. Before this period, governments adopt, establish and determine wages, salaries, and other related benefits been paid to their employees and lecturers inclusive. Sometimes on the ability to pay, but presently and under normal circumstances, ASUU and management officials of a University have to agree on what the term salary means before they can successfully bargain over the issue. This argument is appropriate and in consonance with the principle of collective bargaining which emphasizes collective agreement to be reached on the issues of wages, salaries, and other related conditions of service. The major factors that affect wage differential are the ability to pay, competition, and the living wage (Sloane and Witney, 1977).

Government directives on wage and salary determination spell out what should be paid to workers at the Federal and State levels and at times ask State Government to negotiate with her employees based on the ability to pay as in the case of Obasanjo's administration in 2000. Another outstanding factor affecting salary differential is the existing political forces, which according to the study by Gunderson (1979) influences public sector wages indirectly through institutional channels. This in the end determines the framework for the bargaining process. These institutional forces relate to rights to organize, appropriate, crisis/dispute settlement procedure, the allowable number of bargaining issues, appropriate wage criteria, and comparable wage survey. University salary can equally be affected by such aggregate policies such as wage-price guidelines, deliberate and stealth attempts/decisions to contain the growth of the public sector by the government that is.

Factor to be considered in wage and salary determination is the unpredictable forces of the labor market (demand and supply) in the setting of wages (Fapohund, 1979). This author further stresses that in the case of contemporary Nigeria, wages and salaries are normally determined and regulated by administrative decisions of the government. These administrative decisions include salary and wage commissions, price and income policies, and any other ad hoc committees that may be instituted for wage and salary determination. However, this should not be done in the absence of ASUU or their representatives to avoid unpleasant development such as industrial action by lecturers.

Anugwom (2007) identified five factors that affect wage differentials to include- industry average/going rate, ability to pay, cost of living, a living wage, and productivity of the industry concerned. The emphasis here is based on other public and civil servants excluding lecturers. In addition to what Anugwom said is that education; a span of training, seniority, hazardous nature of the job also affect wage differentials which may be applied to differentiate between the categories of lecturers.

From the review of some related literature on the factors affecting wage differentials in State-Owned Universities in Nigeria, it is clear that the most noticeable ones among them are- the ability to pay, education; length of training, seniority, hazardous nature of the job, and at times politically, motivated.

Ugwunna (2006) posits that the quality of employees the organization needs for effective operations, the competition of other organizations, and the ability to pay affects wage differential. Having discussed the factors affecting salary differentials in State-Owned universities in Nigeria, let us quickly look at the strategies that are usually adopted to achieve effective wage differentiation.

➤ **Strategies for Determination of Wage Differentials**

Dissimilar strategies exist for fixing and determining wages and salaries of lecturers of State-Owned Universities in Nigerian. Aminu (2008) quoting Akinwale (2000) identified the followings strategies for wage and salary fixation- (i) job evaluation and government policy, (ii) ability to pay on the part of the employers (iii) cost of living, and (iv) collective bargaining between the visitors and ASUU.

The most interesting strategy is the last one in which the government bargains with the ASUU or their representatives. In this case, the wages and salaries committee is constituted or set up by the government and expected to come up with a recommendation based on the collectively agreed salary structure. Wage bargaining or negotiation committees are bi-partite where the government or their agency engages in dialogue with representatives from unionized labor (Owoye, 1994). The labor market does not function in a perfect manner to assure itself that employees of equal ability are equitably remunerated. Ogunbamero (2004) in his report declared that the deregulation of collective bargaining with various tiers of government and their agencies are required to negotiate directly with their appropriate industrial unions. This supposedly should apply to all levels of governments as introduced by the economic bill for the ability to pay by the employers of labor, though maybe detrimental for union without bargaining power.

➤ **Methods of Wage Determination in State-Owned Universities**

Different methods exist by which wages and salaries of lectures in State-Owned Universities in Nigeria may be determined. These techniques according to Anugwom (2007) include- collective bargaining, direct negotiation, statutory procedures, (voluntary and compulsory arbitration), wage commission, minimum wage board and minimum wage determination process, and voluntary award by the visitors.

In State-Owned Universities, the methods of wage and salary determination are by using the concept of collective bargaining in which lecturers or their representatives at times negotiate with the management or their agencies on the issues of wage and other conditions of service. In collective bargaining, the collective agreement is reached between ASUU and the management of the institution. The agreement so reached is supposed to be binding on all the parties involved but in most cases, the government violates the agreement reached and may through their agencies award salary package of their choice without due bargaining process with labor thereby creating room for dispute. Another method of wage determination is by wage commission in which government severely uses ad hoc committees to fix wages and the salary of their employees. In fixing the salaries and wages of workers, it is usually differentiated based on educational qualification and skills among other things, (Anugwom, 2008), and more on the ability to pay.

Besides the wage commission, is the statutory arbitration procedure that may either be compulsory or voluntary for the employers and ASUU representative to meet within a specific period especially when a dispute has to be avowed. For instance, the Wages, Salaries and Emolument Relativity Panel of 2004/2005 and the Consolidation of Public Sector Emolument Panel of 2005/2006 this process becomes compulsory especially when the dispute is referred to Industrial Arbitrary Panel. For instance, some State governments agreed to pay CONUAS II now since 2008. This method is not the best approach to wages and salary determination as it is being done in an atmosphere of chaos.

IV. Results/Discussion

• **Effects of Salary Gap on the Performance of Lecturers**

Salary as a partial motivator for the University lecturers determines the operational performance of the system, especially when effectively and appropriately or objectively applied. The overall University performance should be related to such variables as increasing quality graduates produced, improved service delivery, available infrastructural development, or obtaining the best results in important areas of organizational activities. This corroborates Reddin, (1970) Drucker, (1988) in Aminu (2008) when emphasizing organizational performance. This is achieved through the production efficiency and effectiveness of lecturers. Mullins (1999) distinguished between efficiency and effectiveness by saying that while the former is concerned with doing things right and relates to inputs and what a manager does, the former is concerned with doing the right things relates to outputs of the job and what managers achieve, Mullins further argued that performance is related to

the goals of the institution including informal and formal goals of individual participants and managers to achieve productivity as shown in table one below.

Table 1: Outlay of the Payment Positions in some State-Owned Universities in Nigeria as at June 2022.

| S/n | State University | Fees Chargeable | June, Fed Allocation | Allocation Ranking Order/Position | Professor's Salary at Bar |
|-----|---|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | Anambra State Univ. Uli | N36,000 | N5,885,230,866.28 | 15 th | N245,000.25 |
| 2 | Gombe State Univ. | N21,000-27,000 | N2,308,273,857.77 | 33 rd | N502,430.25 |
| 3 | Univ. of Ado - Ekiti | N90,000-200,000 | N2,438,822,806.85 | 29 th | N502,430.25 |
| 4 | Ekiti State Univ. of Sc. & Tech., Ikere | N75,000-89,000 | N2,438,822,806.85 | 29 th | N502,430.25 |
| 5 | Benue State Univ., Markudi | N20,000-30,000 | N2,770,947,636.82 | 20 th | N502,430.25 |
| 6 | Abia State Univ., Uturu | N45,000 | N2,071,774,499.65 | 36 th | N245,000.25 |
| 7 | Kaduna State Univ., | N26,000-36,000 | N3,283,806,784.47 | 9 th | N502,430.25 |
| 8 | Enugu State Univ. of Sc. & Tech. | N40,000-75,000 | N2,585,900,626.20 | 25 th | N245,000.25 |
| 9 | Ambrose Ali State Univ. Ekpoma | N49,000-62,000 | N2,464,818,160.54 | 28 th | N502,430.25 |
| 10 | River State Univ. of Sc & Tech. | N49,000-62,000 | N2,464,818,160.54 | 28 th | N502,430.25 |
| 11 | River State Univ. of Edu. | N12,000-20,000 | N2,464,818,160.54 | | N502,430.25 |
| 12 | Imo State Univ. Owerri | N30,000-50,000 | N2,784,487,150.24 | 19 th | N245,000.25 |
| 13 | Nasarawa State Univ. | N18,000-22,000 | N2,297,780,113.21 | 34 th | N502,430.25 |
| 14 | Ebonyi State Univ. Abakaliki | N40,000-60,000 | N2,2,358,540,895.84 | 32 nd | N237,058.77 |

Source: Nkwede, Ereke & Udeuhele(2022).

Productivity is defined as an estimate of output per labor-hour worked in an organization, (Ivancevich, Lorenzi, Skinner and Crosby, 1994). From all signals, it is apparent that productivity is adversely affected which is palpable when one pays a visit to some State-Owned Universities especially in the South Eastern States of Nigeria. This is observable when we look at the poor quality of students produced, decayed infrastructural facilities, non-professional teaching staff, lack of quality services by lecturers, and the subsequent students' involvement in criminal activities such as cultism and exams malpractices of all kinds.

Professors in different fields migrate to other Universities with higher pay thereby leaving the students at the mercy of graduate assistants and lecturers II who are less qualified to handle senior classes in the University. In most cases, students are seen roaming about in the University premises without reading their books and at the end of it, all indulge in exams malpractices such as cheating and even sorting some of the lecturers to enable them to pass their exams. A visit to some departments in Ebonyi State University portrays that most of the senior academics in the Department have left to other universities with higher pay packages.

Most of the few lectures available are seen roaming about, with students not doing their works as required by their professional ethics, while some do not even come to school at all. Others often come and leave the school any time they like, thereby resulting in the collapse of the institution, causes migration among the senior academics and the consequent loss of the factor of production within the University system.

• **Consequences of Industrial Action by Lecturers in State-Owned Universities in the South East**

The disparities between salary structure of State-Owned Universities in the South East results in disputes with its concomitant incessant industrial action by the lecturers in their respective Universities. This is inimical to the healthy growth of the State-Owned University in the South East of Nigeria and the economy of the country as a whole. There are some consequences of disputes/conflicts which according to Schmidt in Aminu (2008) include- some people feel defeated and demeaned, strikes, dismissal of employees, the distance between people increased, there is a climate of mistrust and suspicion, individuals and groups concentrated on their narrow interests, decrease in employee turnover, distorted perception, the rise of strong leaders and in negative stereotype, the emergence of blind spot-failure to utilize some areas of compromise as a result of quarrels, and subsequently strike by ASUU members. In a University system, the above-enumerated consequences are pragmatic and factual.

Anugwom (2007) citing Ubeku (1975) enumerated the negative impact of industrial action by employees to include- termination of the contract, breach of contract by the employer, suspension of mutual

obligations, loss of income by the workers, during the period especially when the policy of no-work-no-pay is applied. Emphatically, as it concerns a University, the economy of the State will be adversely affected as students will longer pay their school fees.

Based on the pragmatic review of the relevant literature of the salary structure in the State-Owned Universities in the South Eastern Nigerian, evidence abounds that there are high degrees of differentiated salary payable to lecturers of Ebonyi State University and other four State-Owned Universities in South-Eastern Nigeria. Also revealed in the course of this study is that the many professors in Ebonyi State University have left the University to other Institution because of higher wage that is usually offered by similar Universities in the country. Evidence has also shown that a salary package that is highly differentiated in a University system offers no motivation to lectures in lower-paid Universities. The same may even apply to those at a higher level especially when marginal diminishing return sets in and for the fact that they were already known that what they receive is higher than that of their counterparts. For instance in Ebonyi State University the evidence is clear. This trend calls for a standardized wage system payable to lecturers' increases efficiency in the production process to those that are highly paid and encourages hard work, retraining among the lecturers of the institutions with lower pay.

In addition to the above is that most State Universities in the South East are being politicized by the politicians thereby killing the education sector, promoting industrial disharmony, promotes "greed" "corruptions" and an unparallel quest for money thereby resulting in fraudulent practices and illegal sales of junk reading materials called to hand out by the monger lecturers to make both ends meet. This leads to questions on how and when shall these evil syndromes be stopped in the Nigerian education sector.

It is obvious that while the other four State-Owned Universities in the South East of Nigeria are paying their lecturers with salary differentials. This gap is too much and may induce or force lecturers of the State-Owned University to refuse in entirety any explanation that may be given by the State Government for such high levels of disparities in the wages and salaries structures. A rational human being will under no circumstances agree to any reasons for such disparities as the same lecturers buy from the same markets, pays the same rent, and even incurs the same transportation cost, possesses the same academic qualifications, and on the grade level.

V. Conclusion

Attempts have been made in this paper to identify the implications of salary and wage disparities in State-Owned Universities in South-Eastern Nigeria, its effect on the productivity of the lecturers, the consequences of incessant industrial action by the lectures of State-Owned University and its effect on the economy of the nation as a whole From the review of relevant documents and evidence that abound, we conclude that wage and salary differentiation has positive and negative impacts on the visitors of the Universities, lecturers and the economy of the country. In the first place, wage differentiation has the following negative effects- loss of capitals, lives, causes the total collapse of the institutions using withdrawal of accreditation, expensive to operate, brain drain and compulsory, causes migration especially among the lower-paid professors of the State-Owned Universities and the consequent loss of the factor of production, acts as a magnet by attracting new lectures into the new area with higher wage thereby depleting the existing institutions of its manpower. The application of the concept of "absolute ability to pay" destabilizes other universities that cannot pay as much as their counterparts. We also conclude that the problems of incessant industrial action by lecturers of South East Universities emanate from government mendaciousness of purpose by not abiding by the collective agreement reached with ASUU or their representative concerning wage, other related benefits of employments. It is obvious that while some State-Owned Universities in the South East pay their lecturers with Harmonized Tertiary Institution Salary Scale (HATISS) their counterparts in some States are paying with Consolidated University Academic Salary Structure (CONUASS). This action is enough to induce strike, dissatisfaction, demoralization, and migration by the lecturers of State-Owned University especially professors. The gaps created by wage disparities in the South Eastern Universities are too much and as such creates havoc and industrial dispute among the lecturers of the State-Owned Universities.

VI. Recommendations

Based on the conclusive pieces of evidence revealed in the course of this study, the following recommendations are made.

(i) We recommend that all State-Owned Universities in the country should adopt a benchmark (standard play) to all the lecturers in the Universities in the country and not on absolute ability to pay" since this creates many gaps between one University and the other.

(ii) Also recommended is that "equity theory of wage" should be espoused and applied dispassionately in all State-Owned Universities as this will facilitate to get rid of the discrepancies in salary structures and

consequently create a podium for an appropriate and favorable atmosphere for industrial synchronization to flourish.

(iii) Again, we recommend that all the State Universities in the country should emphasize and adopt sound wage and salary policies and administration comparable to international standard and this will be based on the “principle of comparative norms” to ensure equality pay since all the lecturers provide equal services to the students and make purchases from the same markets, pays the same transportation cost, and even house rent.

(iv) The Salary and Wage Commission or any other body concerned with wages and salaries review whether ad hoc or permanently instituted should be guided appropriately by the government and ASUU or their representatives and that the terms of references clearly stated to enable them to have a focus and achieve a meaningful result that will be acceptable to both the visitors and lecturers in realities of economic prevailing conditions.

(v) We also recommend that the education sector in all echelons should not be politicized by the State Government in the South Eastern States of Nigeria especially in determining lecturers’ benefits.

(vi) Regarding the issue of incessant industrial action (strike) by State-Owned University lecturers, we recommend that it should be made mandatory or a law enacted backing it to ensure complete compliance of the agreement reached between ASUU and the State government. This will eliminate the syndromes of incessant industrial action and its associated pitfall.

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