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A CRITICAL REALIST STUDY OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

By

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DECLARATION

I state that this thesis represents my personal work, excluding where proper acknowledgment are made, and that it has not been earlier submitted to any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.

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ABSTRACT

This critical realist study is an investigation of the experiences of principal officers during the research was necessitated by a general lack of knowledge about how quality management implementation occurs in the Nigerian university context. The thesis main research question was how have Nigerian universities been responding to quality management implementation'. The thesis uses a critical realist paradigm and adopts a qualitative approach to unveil the causes of events.

This study rejects the positivist preoccupations with prediction, quantification and measurement used by earlier researchers to determine quality management in developed countries and to replicate the approach in a country like Nigeria. The study adopts a critical realist approach, since critical realism gives primacy to the social and personal identity of human values of emancipation rather than material concerns, which are subject to measurement. The study uses semi-structured interviews to discover causal and missing mechanisms from twenty-nine principal officers in six universities.

Thematic Analysis was adopted to analyse the themes that emerged from the empirical findings, and used to analyse the causal mismatch between the theory and the reality observed. The approach was used to clarify the blame attributed to the implementation of quality management and government policies rather than philosophical inappropriateness. The approach provides a starting point for querying any unexamined ideology operating in various universities in Nigeria. The findings reveal that many competing voices are operating in different parts of the sector. This has effects on the structure, causing the mechanism to function wrongly, with a lack of a common platform to understand government policies and quality management.

Finally, the thesis's contribution to knowledge includes the using critical realist approach to review relevant literature related to quality management. Its Methodological contribution is through the use of a critical realist approach to produce a social and personal identity of principal officers involved and re-descriptive narrative account of events that have been hitherto unexplored locally and internationally.

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GLOSSARY

AC:	Ashby Commission
ASUU:	Academic Staff of University Union
CBE:	Computer Based Examination
ETF:	Education Trust Fund
JAMB:	Joint Admission Matriculation Board
MoE:	Ministry of Education
NASU:	Non-Academic Staff Union
NPE:	National Policy of Education
NUC:	National University Commission
NYSC:	National Youth Service Corps
PHC:	Power Holding Company
TETFUND:	Tertiary Education Trust Fund
UBE:	Universal Basic Education
UCI:	University College Ibadan
UPE:	Universal Primary Education
UTME:	University and Tertiary Matriculation Examination

1 INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

Contents

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.2 RATIONALE AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

1.2.1 Conceptual context

1.2.2 Conceptual frame

1.3 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.4 CRITICAL REALISM

1.5 RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

1.6 THESIS LAYOUT

1.7 SUMMARY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In a relatively short time span, the number of universities in Nigeria has grown rapidly, from 45 in 2000 to 129 in 2014, the majority of which are privately funded and managed, with fifty-two operating illegally, eight facing prosecution and four having already been closed down by regulators (NUC, 2010; 2014). Likewise, the history of Nigerian universities and the sudden growth in the number of private universities in the last two decades have created serious quality management concerns for stakeholders as the demand for university education increases. These quality management issues relate to academic management and institutional recognition, as highlighted by Utulu, (2001), Ekundayo and Ajayi (2009), Obasi et al. (2010) and Adekola (2012).

These problems in turn are exacerbated by the lack of clarity of policies on university education, institutional ethos and other factors that enable quality management implementation, and the way in which they have been interpreted or misinterpreted by a wide range of higher education providers, shareholders, government regulators and other stakeholders. There is a clear absence of a common quality assurance system governing institutional and programme accreditation throughout Nigeria, and in consequence the management of universities find themselves in conflict between the demands placed on them by shareholders on the one hand and the government regulators on the other.

Given the different expectations of principal officers in public and private universities in Nigeria and the variations in services offered by each university, such as differences in admission criteria, curriculum, standards, teaching and learning (Dauda, 2010; Akinyemi and Abiddin, 2013), it is difficult for students and the external community to

assess which institution best meets their expectations and requirements. In order to improve or correct these problems, the Nigerian government has introduced many policies such as the proliferation of private universities among others. The proliferation of private universities has been made possible through the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) privatisation policy of 1991, which was designed to alleviate demand on public universities. Another strategy adopted in the last few years was an attempt to introduce foreign management techniques to Nigerian universities, an approach that the stakeholders see as a failure, with their strongest expression of dissent manifested through frequent academic strike action. Through its privatization policies, the aim of the Federal Government of Nigeria was to encourage private investors to set up their own finance, structure and academic teams to manage universities effectively. But the problem of strike continues, as several private universities have gone on strike as a result of student dissatisfaction with the level of facilities provided. Students complain about the lack of social amenities such as light, water and security, among others. The problems call for a critical approach to unfold the reality of events that occur within the Nigerian university context. Therefore, this thesis is grounded in the critical realism paradigm and focuses on a study of the extant literature on quality management in the higher education sector.

Critical realists posit that developing a reliable account of social life is undoubtedly complicated but its multi-layered dimension can be uncovered through appropriate research initiatives. To understand the multi-faceted concept of quality management, it is imperative to analyse the quality management ethos of the Nigerian government policies on higher education, this is not to ignore other entities that influence quality management implementation (such as low wages, funding, conflict within the institution, bureaucracy, staff incapacity, the institution's carrying capacity, resources,

poor implementation and many more) but to narrow down the study by focusing on factors that influence quality management, as quality management implementation is the focus of the study. Using critical realism in this context is an emergent process, which involves agency, social and personal knowledge of both the mechanisms in play and the structure where the events are generated, as argued by Edwards et al. (2014). Government policies could be understood as the trigger that sets in motion the quality management "events" in Nigerian Universities. Therefore, close attention was paid to key aspects of quality management that require government policies to uncover what causes an event to happen within the structure, as detailed in Chapter Three.

This paradigm was adopted because critical realists' assumption that reality exists independently from our knowledge of occurrences demands a move from the abstract to the physical in order to identify intransitive association (Armet, 2013). Critical realism posits that developing a reliable account of social life is undoubtedly complicated but its multi-layered dimension can be uncovered through appropriate research activities. Therefore, the application or introduction of government policies was used in this study as one of the mechanisms at play to help discuss the practical and multi-layered components that cause an event to occur within the structure (not as government policy *per se* or as a theory but as a mechanism). 'Structure' in this context means universities in Nigeria. What are events in this study?

Events are phenomena that cause or follow an occurrence of some previous phenomenon. A good example was the stakeholders' continued demands for quality education, the establishment of private university, the introduction of new government policies, change in political office holders and many more. All these occurrences

happen within the university system and led to events such as input, transformation and output. Events such as transforming students had caused occurrences, which led to investigating how principal officers in Nigerian universities have responded to the development and implementation of quality management in the transformation process of teaching and learning, as investigated by this thesis. Likewise Elder-Vass (2010) stressed that events are produced through consideration of a multiplicity of external factors of human value (such as social and natural) that require the use of mechanisms, knowingly or unknowingly. Mechanisms in this context refer to the approach used to guide, sustain or improve the structure for uniformity. This is another reason why the researcher is interested in asking 'how' rather than 'why' the event happens in a certain way and not otherwise if the mechanisms are in place. In order to reveal the reality of how events are constructed in the university context, there is a need to know the agencies involved and how they have used the mechanisms to construct the event through their social and personal identity.

For this reason, that is how principal officers in Nigerian universities have responded to the development and implementation of quality management, the study uses a critical realist paradigm. It is important to explain the elements involved in the study (such as structure, agents and mechanisms) and to outline the relationship between the elements as they relate to this study. The researcher considers the structure to be the University itself, though government policy may function as a structure, since policy is a planned course of action that could influence the decisions of agents rightly or wrongly (Hauwa, 2012). But for the purpose of this study, government policy is classified as a mechanism, since policies are introduced at any point in time when changes are required within the structure. Likewise, agents are key actors - such as principal officers or university management - who formulate and implement policy, as well as the

management of quality and policy to effect changes that help to deliver better services to users.

The approach was used to drive the empirical agendas and help generate a better class of question from Chapters Two and Three (see appendix 4) to which answers were provided in Chapter Five. At the start of Chapter Five, interview questions were developed from the research question for two reasons: first to focus on research objective and second to gain better access to the participants (although it is important to mention that these questions do not replace the original research question). Then the approach was used to narrate the identified generative, missing and causal mechanisms that force the agency to respond in a certain way from the empirical study as discussed in Chapter Five. This was in line with the work of Ackroyd and Karlsson (2014, p. 22), who argued that “research techniques are mainly used to gain access to information that is seen to be particularly important in further developing research understanding”. With this understanding in mind, a practicable model was designed and the final conclusion of the thesis was drawn from conducting the research in realist ways.

To start with, what is policy? The term ‘policy’ refers to a plan or course of action linked with government, politics or business with the intention to influence and determine decisions, actions and other matters (Hauwa, 2012; Ogbogu, 2013), while a university is an institution of higher learning that provides training, teaching and research opportunities and develops the community (Fabunmi, 2005). Further justification for selecting universities rather than other groups of higher education providers is explored in Chapter Three. Likewise, Anya (2013) and Akinyemi and Abiddin (2013) argue that

the development of government policies on university education is historically linked to the development of highly skilled manpower and national economic growth in Nigeria. Jonathan (2010) added that university education has generated a positive and sustainable economic impact that requires maximum government involvement and investment. As a result, it is very important that universities maintain success in order to keep developing, supporting and creating economic advantage, which supports the production of quality manpower that will drive national development (Gupta, 2010). In order for universities to successfully maintain the national development on policy education, the sector has borrowed strategies and techniques such as profit and quality as a response to the need to deliver better services to the community that inject funds into their business (Harvey, 2005).

Nonetheless, several definitions of quality have been used when defining quality in universities. The main ones encompass fitness for purpose, meeting or exceeding customer needs, value for money, or conformance to specifications (Juran, 2003; Oakland, 2003; Harvey and William, 2010; Ndirangu and Udoto, 2011). The importance of quality to universities arises from the importance of students to universities; as Juran (2003) and Schwantz (2012) describe, the definition of quality is basically derived from the meeting or exceeding of customers' requirements and needs, which positively affects their satisfaction with the product or service offered (Juran, 2003; Iacovidou et al., 2009). In this study, customers can be either students or employers; however, since it is difficult to rightly identify students as customers, both students and employers of graduates are referred to as service users in this study.

Likewise, Oghenekohwo et al. (2007) and Odukoya (2009) argued that for universities to sustain competitiveness and profitability, they need to focus on attracting new

students and also retaining old ones. This is why quality has become a significant concern for universities in different countries as they have become interested in improving the quality of their products and services by setting new goals, using mechanisms such as government policies, quality control, quality assurance and its management (Harvey, 2005; Harvey and William, 2010). Meeting these kinds of goal requires several types of planned approach, including quality planning, dedicated towards satisfying the users (Stensaker et al., 2011). As a result, it is important to highlight that quality does not exist in a vacuum (Juran, 2003): it requires effort from university employees, who are the agents who drive the structure, with the help of mechanisms such as quality to make the changes that are required to deliver better services (Telford and Masson, 2005).

One will agree that service users' needs are the major concern for any university's operation or success. Since meeting or exceeding users' needs represents the basic objective for quality, it is important for universities to manage the quality of their products/services. The researcher chose universities to represent higher education institutions in this study due to the fact that universities in Nigeria are experiencing a sudden growth; the universities are faced with a lot of problems, including funding issues, overcrowding or overpopulation of students, uncontrolled strikes by the Academic Staff Union of Universities, examination malpractices, indiscipline among academics and the lack of a common platform to access quality on university education, which has brought the issues of quality to the top of researchers' agenda (Fabunmi, 2005; Andrew, 2011; Dauda, 2010; Akinyemi and Abiddin, 2013).

This means that it would be more challenging for any university management or principal officer to plan and improve the quality of their services in order to

meet/exceed their users' needs. In order to investigate and uncover the causes of the problems identified, the study took a step backward to study how mechanisms (government policy and quality management) are used within the structure to sustain the events (such as intake, transformation and output but in particular to this study transformation) in the Nigerian context. The study uses a critical realist paradigm that adopts a solely qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews with twenty-nine principal officers in six Nigerian universities to investigate how universities have been responding to quality management implementation.

Critical realism was used in this study to investigate the cause of an event using agents' practical knowledge (social and personal identity) to understand how quality management have positioned themselves in the Nigerian context. The study referred to events as a course of action that requires changes or improvement within the social structure through the effort of agency, be it through their knowledge of the event or through their experience of it. However, Fairclough (2005) argued that adherence to a certain position does not mean that 'a search for reality in determining whether some representations represent better knowledge of the world than others' is discarded. Therefore, the research uses events and their causes as a technique to probe into the minds of twenty-nine principal officers involved in the study.

The paradigm was adopted because the researcher believes that the world is real and reality exists but is not independent of what is being observed (Reed, 2005), and that there exists a reality apart from human knowledge or activity (Njihia, 2011). This suggestion requires proponents of critical realist analysis to pay more than lip service to understanding the cause of an event because elements of discourse used to

reference objects behind the cause of an event in the study are not neutral (Al-Amoudi and Willmott, 2011). It means, for example, that it is necessary for the interviewer to be attentive to human values on how principal officers interact and explain their involvement: that is, discussion should be centred on participants' social and personal identity of the events in the Nigerian university context.

Therefore, using a critical realist approach also enunciates modalities that determine and describe how the event or cause of a generative mechanism occurs within the structure (Njihia, 2011; Al-Amoudi and Willmott, 2011). Generative mechanisms in this context mean participants' view and perception of what causes the problems of the events in the Nigerian context. It allows the researcher to discuss who can make what claim, as debated in Chapters Five and Six: for example, who can determine the appropriateness of government policy, who can explain why a service has not been delivered to specification, who can discuss their experiences of how they have been treated by the government or who takes the largest percentage of their after-service delivery benefits for economic growth (Al-Amoudi and Willmott, 2011). Likewise, it allows the use of theoretical explanation to analyse significant themes that emerge, through elimination of alternatives, retrodution to possible causes and identification of the causal structures and generative mechanisms at work (Edward and Willmott, 2008). As a result, the next section starts with a brief descriptive debate on the problems and rationale for the study.

1.2 RATIONALE AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

1.2.1 Conceptual context

Like any other organization, a university relies largely on quality to remain competitive. The main concerns for universities are to keep up with enrolment rates and create

collaborative activities and opportunities for cross-boundary learning (Yeo, 2009). Nonetheless, a review by Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2002) found that quality management is a comparatively new entrant in the field of management science, yet quality has gained attention in managerial practice and forms the foundation for assessing managerial and organization excellence. Many researchers (Wright and O'Neill, 2002; Clewes, 2003; Harvey, 2005; Abdullah, 2006; Yeo, 2009; Hallinger, 2013) in this field have concluded that the most powerful factor presently influencing organisational strategy is service quality. However, in the modern university context, quality management initiatives have made their way into higher education (Sayed, 2011) with universities operating in a highly dynamic and turbulent environment (Baker, 2002; Alashloo et al., 2005). A review by Mok (2005) argues that higher education providers operate in a competitive environment, where they are required to accommodate increasingly competitive demands with scarce resources (Brookes and Becket, 2006).

Available research in this field (such as Welsh and Dey, 2002; Wiklund et al., 2003; Morley, 2003; Harvey, 2009; Stensaker et al., 2011 and many more) suggests that quality management systems in service, industrial and educational settings emphasise a number of factors that facilitate the successful implementation of these systems, such as top management commitment, involvement of employees and the development of a continuous improvement culture (Curry and Kadasah, 2002; Montes et al., 2003; Petrov, 2006). However, it has been agreed (Watty, 2005; Papadimitriou et al., 2008; Cardoso et al., 2012) that quality in higher education also has implications for the entire range of issues, including curriculum development, student numbers, student performance and involvement, teaching and learning, resource management, staff recruitment and retention and faculty productivity through quality assurance. In turn, the issues has increased quality assurance involvement and has created concern among

university management that quality assurance requirements are diverting too much of academics' attention from their primary purposes of teaching, research and community service, particularly at a time when pressure on resources is mounting (Alade, 2006).

In Nigeria, as in many other countries, universities have grown from offering a niche service to one that caters to a mass market, marked by increasing student numbers and diverse providers (Dauda, 2010; Adekola, 2012). This has led to the need for more suitable in-depth enquiry into how principal officers' respond to quality management implementation in order to know how they use the quality mechanisms within the structure. However, it is worth noting here that universities have different key actors, of whom employees (academics and non-academics) form only one part, albeit a primary one (Chua, 2004). The list of major actors in the university can easily be broadened to include the government, employers, society, professional bodies and external agencies such as accreditation agencies. This study is interested in the employees who are in the realm of business: that is, the employees who make decisions on matters that arise on a day-to-day basis in the university transformation.

Complications increase at higher levels of study following a quantitative investigation into the stakeholders' perspective by Telford and Masson (2005), who explained that a better understanding of the quality values of major actors, particularly employees involved in the daily decision activities of university and those involved in the designing and delivery of programs, is very important. They pointed out that employees have an impact on how a business is considered or branded, through principal officers' involvement and interaction with students as teachers and facilitators. An institution's academic community will probably influence students' achievements and experiences within the institution to the greatest extent. The role of university as an important antecedent to career success has been extensively driven by employees' increasing

demand for university education as a necessary prerequisite to employment (Wright and O'Neill, 2002). However, a significant gap in our knowledge is observed with reference to the context and challenges presented when executing quality management systems in higher education in general and Nigerian universities in particular, which is an important aspect of this study.

Senge (2000), in his conclusive quantitative work, suggested that any management model introduced to university settings can only succeed if it is based on the shared values of decision-making bodies like key actors or the university management body. All the same, the management of quality covers a large area and the perception of quality differs from person to person (Madu, 1998; Harvey, 2005; Harvey and Williams, 2010; Veiga, et al., 2012). While Cheng and Tam (1997) and Saarinen (2010) observed that some might consider quality in universities to be associated mainly with the quality of the student intake (input), Chua (2004) suggests that others may consider the quality of teaching and learning (the process), or the knowledge and skills attained by the graduates (output) to be the main criteria for measuring quality. A review by Hallinger (2013) argued that quality depends not only on certain recognised behaviour contexts and patterns but on the functional arrangement of a series of elements defined in a given context.

It is clear from the above that there is no general agreement with respect to the concept of quality, though its importance has been emphasized. Having identified the lack of general consensus on how best to manage or even define quality and how it occurs in the university, coupled with the lack of a definite model to explain quality within the university context, as noted by several researchers (Cheng and Tam, 1997; Clewes, 2003; Becket and Brookes, 2005; Fullan, 2006; Yeo 2009; Elassy, 2013), this study works backward by uncovering how quality occurs, who is involved and what

antecedents lead to quality. In addition, research carried out on educational quality by Abdullah (2006) also indicates disagreement on the dimensions of quality. Although the literature acknowledges that service quality is a multidimensional phenomenon, as supported by Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2007), Yeo (2009) and Hallinger (2013), the literature has paid less attention to quality management and its implementation, particularly in the Nigerian university context, where the demands of stakeholders for greater quality in education increases daily. The difficulty posed by quality in university education is reflected in the recent works of Cheng (2009) and Abukari and Corner (2010), who call for a fresh approach to developing models for managing quality in universities, as present models are narrowly focused and are based on matching industry models to universities' activities. Likewise, these models have been designed from a quantitative paradigm, which has been criticised by critical realists as being inadequate to unveil reality.

Again, in the quest to manage quality effectively, a fundamental first step would be to involve principal officers' human values, beliefs and ideas of what they perceived to be quality management implementation in the Nigerian university context, as without some degree of concurrence on major quality values and approaches, quality management will not be effective in the longer term (Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2007; Abukari and Corner, 2010). It is possible that the idea of quality may differ from one principal officer to another (Vice-chancellor or Registrar) or from one university to another (between public and private universities). If the idea of quality were different, issues on which there are key differences would require further discussion.

Nevertheless, with very few exceptions, the literature has failed to sufficiently establish what principal officers view as fundamental to quality in universities. One surprising characteristic of all the reviews discussed in this study is that they all use a quantitative

approach to gather their findings and draw conclusions based on factors that they could measure, ignoring the causes of what they measure. Likewise, they ignore human values of emancipation and freedom that would be central to any valid conception of development (Njihia, 2011), which is a very important factor for critical realists. However, there is a need to explore this gap from another point of view in order to ascertain the mechanisms at work, what they are, how they are actualised, how they are enabled through agency, and if there are any countervailing mechanisms or entities that impede their operation. These aspects are investigated and discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. The next sub-section discusses the conceptual frame to help narrow down our attention to mechanisms at work, as discussed below.

1.2.2 Conceptual Framework

The research discusses how the conceptual framework was developed to investigate the meaning of quality management from the perspective of Nigerian university principal officers perspective. However, paying attention to literature requires a collection of theory, abstract, conceptual and practical knowledge that can help identify and reflect on the mechanisms at work, which Leshem and Trafford (2007) refer to as a conceptual framework. This study is no exception to the view that research should identify how the mechanisms of interest are interlinked with each other as well as with the entities. The belief of critical realists is that the nature of the object dictates the possible ways to gain knowledge of it because conceptual abstraction is entrenched in the realist premise of prioritizing ontology over epistemology (Armet, 2013).

In addition, Rudestam and Newton (1992) and Leshem and Trafford (2007) argued that a conceptual framework is simply a less developed form of theory, consisting of dialogues that connect abstract ideas to empirical facts. Likewise, the conceptual

framework for this study was established to describe and re-describe abstract mechanisms that occur under similar circumstances. Sewell and Pool (2010) shared the same view as Leshem and Trafford (2007) with their assertion that to develop a conceptual framework is to be forced to be clear about what you think you are undertaking. It also helps to be selective, to decide which important features connection is likely to be of meaning and thus what data the research should gather and evaluate.

From this argument supported by the work of Leshem and Trafford (2007), the conceptual framework as shown in figure 1 below was developed through extensive study on literature relating to quality definition and quality management in higher education where the study identified gaps in past research around the globe, especially in areas where quality is studied with the aim of measuring something: an approach borrowed for higher education through the use of industrial based models. These models were developed from irrational thinking without considering how the mechanisms are enabled through agency's social and personal identity of human value, which was assumed to have caused the application of such models in higher education to fail. More attention has been paid to the activities of Nigerian universities in this thesis in terms of the mechanisms at work such as input, transformation and output as a centre for the study's discussion, having recorded that different quality models have been applied to Nigeria university operation and still recorded failure by the stakeholders (Adelabu and Akinwumi, 2008).

Different events feature in the representation of different policy mandates, which has prompted the introduction and application of quality models by external agencies (such as the Joint Matriculation Board, the National Examination Commission, the West African Examination Council, the Federal Ministry of Education and the National

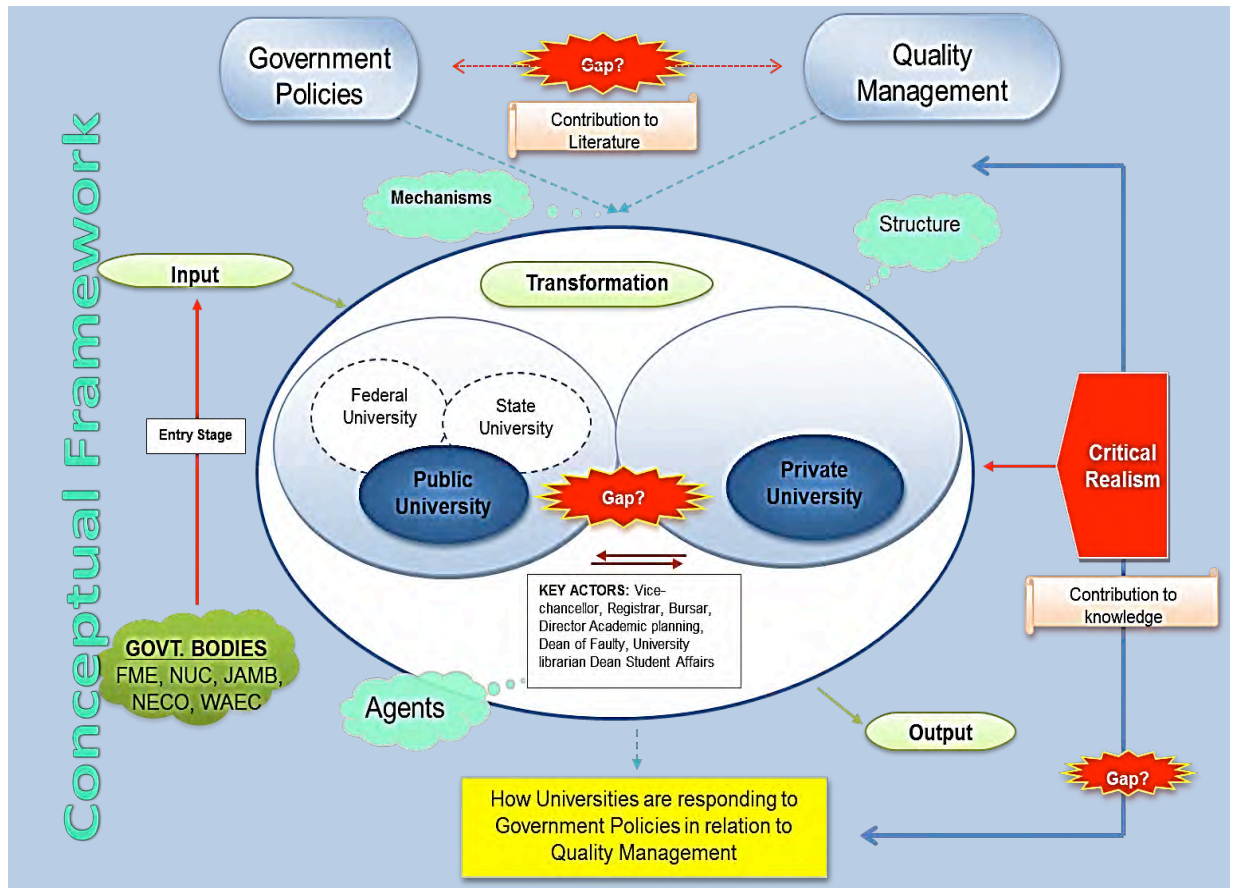
University commission) as shown in the conceptual frame below. Their involvement has triggered the establishment of different government policies concerning university education, which are embedded in the way the structure is designed to transform students into sound graduates. Government policies as mentioned here function as causal mechanisms at work because they facilitate what happens within the university. However, one cannot separate these four mechanisms – i.e. input, transformation, output and government policies. This is because university education as an institution is a multifaceted establishment within which different entities exist.

However, universities do not exist in isolation, as they depend solely on different entities used to transforming the input mechanisms (human being/students, in terms of admission, staff intake, resources and many more) into their structure (university) to produce a sound output (graduates). This is the main reason why structures such as government policies are put in place to sustain good practice (it is important to quickly clarify here that this study refers to government policies as tool for change, not as government policies *per se* or as a theory, while ‘structures’ refers to organisations, not mechanisms for change). This is because the demand for change will require policies, since a policy is a plan or course of action through which the effective implementation of such change will lead to quality (Ogbogu, 2013). In the case of this thesis, universities can either be government-owned or privately owned. Whichever is the case, their operations are similar and the roles played by the principal officers are the same, although some universities may refer to principal officers as university management (Akinyemi and Abiddin, 2013).

The transformation mechanisms entities include teaching and learning, student support, curriculum design, assessment and many more. These entities also require the involvement of agents who, by their level of academic qualification or experience,

become principal officers to utilise all the entities that exist with the university. They are expected to manage the activities of the university to add value to students' learning. These principal officers were selected for this study because of their role and direct involvement in the phenomenon under study. While there is existing research into other stakeholder perspectives, including student satisfaction and employers as users, past studies have typically neglected the principal officer's voice. Having observed that many studies on quality in higher education have been centred on measuring or creating solutions to the problems faced by universities on the surface, thus widening the gaps in the literature with regard to understanding the causes behind objects they measure. This thesis set out to fill this gap by using a critical realist approach: an approach that provides opportunity for retrodution through theoretical explanation of the social world.

Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework



In Nigeria today, government policies interfere with quality issues (Ogbogu, 2013), while the demand for education is centred on quality graduates, to help realise the purpose and policies for establishing university education in the country. This is another reason why this thesis focuses its attention on quality management theories to explain how government policies interplay within the structure for a better understanding of how quality management is implemented rather than discussing policies as a theory. Government policies and quality are both classified as mechanisms that will require the effort of an agency to function and create an event.

Agencies may be external or internal: external agencies are organisations or groups of bodies that have direct influence on the structure but indirect influence on the process

of the structure, while internal agencies have direct influence on the process of the structure. Since this study is interested in what happens within the structure, attention was paid to internal agents whose activities are within the structure. In most cases, these internal agents are referred to as 'principal officers', 'key actors' or 'university management', although they perform similar functions. These principal officers were selected as agents to help uncover how quality management implementation occurs in Nigerian university. With these discussions in mind, the aim and objectives of the study are developed as outlined in the next section

1.3 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The thesis aims at uncovering how quality management implementation occurs in the Nigerian context. To achieve this aim, five specific research objectives were formulated as follows:

- 1) To undertake a critical review of the relevant literature with particular reference to quality and its definition, quality management models in the context of university process and quality value.
- 2) To review relevant literature related to the history of Nigerian universities, university management, quality management debates and the present status of Nigerian universities.
- 3) To undertake empirical research using a qualitative approach within a critical realist paradigm to identify how principal officers in Nigerian universities are responding to the development and implementation of quality management mechanisms.
- 4) To evaluate and discuss quality criteria that influence principal officers decision on how to implement quality management within Nigerian universities with reference to theoretical perspectives.

- 5) To develop a model of quality management implementation that can help to improve university education in the Nigerian context.

This research goal is to uncover the reality of an event and get it right. Even though “the researcher can never fully achieve such goal”, he or she “can make his own meaningful contribution to the phenomenon” (Fox, 2013, p. 297). The researcher decided to use an epistemology of science that studies the reality of an event. Renowned researchers using this methodological approach have explained that the approach is open to practical application through reference to any individual theories, tools and methods that can be combined, in order to reveal contexts and causal factors or mechanisms by which an event occurs (Bhaskar, 1978, 1989, 1998; Fleetwood, 2002; Archer, 2003, 2007; Sayer, 2000; Easton, 2000, 2003, 2010). Therefore, critical realism was identified as a best fit to proceed with this research, because this assumption fits perfectly into the critical realist paradigm, which this research suggested will fill the gap that remains unexplored in the literature and methodology of quality in higher education in past literature. Again, the approach is supported by a claim made by Reed (2001), that problems in Nigerian universities are not insurmountable if one can “search for universal and timeless explanatory truths uncontaminated by the complexity of history, practical knowledge, ideology and discussion with principal officers who take responsibilities on matters that arise in the university” (Wikgren, 2005, p.13). Consequently, the first step was to discuss the available research literature and method in the next two chapters to help develop a meaningful research question in Chapter Four. The next section explores how critical realism fits into the aim of the study.

1.4 CRITICAL REALISM

What does critical realism mean to this study? It is an idea created upon indispensable realities about the nature of the Nigerian universities in a metaphysical idea of human knowledge and how realities are constructed. Likewise, Edward (2006) expressed that critical realism is an approach of science that seeks an alternative position to two dominant approaches in research (positivism and interpretivist). It is a philosophy that suggests that humans are capable of studying the real world, exclusive of intrusion from subjective factors or human thinking that cause an event (Gerrits and Verweij, 2013). In other words, to see the Nigeria universities as they truly are, one must reflect and learn critically on what was studied and on how it was caused by the limits of human perception or knowledge. Critical realists share some common ground with the interpretive approach to interviewing, by identifying the consequence of communication and meaning construction among human beings, both as a subject of study and as an important medium of theorising and research (Smith and Elger, 2014). Nevertheless, critical realists do not believe that this is an unpretentious thing to do, as the approach creates alternative position that involves human knowledge of the event.

Bluhm et al. (2011) are of the opinion that quantitative researchers are mostly connected with a positivist paradigm that is allied with the natural sciences of uniform measures and statistical techniques. This paradigm is grounded on the idea that our presumptions need to be separated from what the researcher observes in order to identify objective facts based on empirical interpretations. The objective of positivistic research is to develop generalizable laws centred on statistical relationships between dependent and independent variables, as noted by Fleetwood and Ackroyd (2004). The researchers in this field use quantitative sampling techniques to generalize samples to a wider population and eliminate potential sources of bias. They also make use of research instruments linked with the positivist paradigm such as questionnaires, structured interviews, randomised controlled trials, systematic reviews, and statistical

analysis of data (Bryman, 2008). The conclusion of such work is to generate a law to be followed, notwithstanding the effect of such law on human value.

In contrast, the qualitative approaches are associated with an interpretivist paradigm connected with non-numerical narratives. The interpretivist paradigm is concerned with the method in which the world is generally built and assumed (Easton, 2010). The research methods linked with interpretivism are usually associated with the interaction between the participants and the researcher in the study, seen as an integral part of the research procedure with small-scale but intense studies (Gerrits and Verweij, 2013). Researchers in the field usually select their participants using theoretical or purposive sampling approaches on the basis of how beneficial they are expected to be for the quest of the investigation and not necessarily whether they are representative of the general sample (Flick, 2009). Likewise, Hartas (2010) expressed that the interpretivist paradigm is associated with methods linked with focus groups, semi-structured interviews, case studies and textual analysis. Researchers in this field use analytical tools such as regression or factor analysis, with the aim being to draw a conclusion based on the respondent's response.

Critical realism, meanwhile, is a comparatively new philosophical idea that offers a fundamental alternative to the established paradigms of interpretivism and positivism (Edward, 2006). Critical realists uphold that development is possible because the intransitive component of reality (processes and tolerating structures) makes available a point of reference, against which theories can be verified (Bhaskar, 1978). However, from a critical realist view, it is difficult to fully capture this reality, as our views are shaped by theoretical resources and investigative interests. As suggested by Sayer (2012), our understanding of the world is always facilitated by the information and discourses available to the researcher, but the empirical view can be viewed from

those facets of the world that are accessible. Bhaskar (1978) differentiates between three different ontological modes or domains of reality, namely the empirical (those facets of reality that is either directly or indirectly be experienced); the actual (those facets of reality that may not necessarily be experienced but happen); and the real or 'deep' mechanisms and structures that create phenomena. These domains match perfectly with what this thesis sets out to achieve. This means that causal mechanisms are not open to observation and cannot be detained directly, but can be investigated through a combination of theory construction and empirical investigation, as shown in the conceptual frame (figure 1.1 above).

For critical realists, the crucial goal of this research is not to pinpoint the existing beliefs or experience of social actors, as in interpretivism, or to identify generalisable laws, as in positivism; it is to foster deeper levels of understanding and explanation of events that happen. From a critical realist viewpoint of positivistic and interpretivist methodologies, there are two key problems. First, they focus solely on observable or measurable events and ignore or fail to take full consideration of the extent to which prior theoretical frameworks might have influenced these observations. This is the key gap that this research intends to fill by studying how quality management implementation occurs in the context of Nigerian universities. Second, the connection between the different features of social systems is dealt with in isolation by interpretivists and positivists. They fail to take account of the interfaces between the circumstances and the mechanisms in which they occur while they observe them from external influences in a closed system (Armet, 2013).

Instead of following a set order, this research argues that the world is real and operates as a multi-dimensional open system and that events arise due to the interaction between human agency, mechanisms and social structures. Again, it is important to re-

explain here that in the context of this study, social structures are universities; mechanisms are government policies on university education and quality management, while human agencies are referred to as university principal officers who are the key actors who determine how the mechanisms are driven within the social structure to achieve the universities' objectives. These interactions can be causal or actualized. When they are actualized, mechanisms depend upon the variable conditions in which the mechanism operates, while when it is causal, mechanisms have the potential to make an impact (Lawson, 1997). Since both are underpinned by causal mechanisms, it is therefore not proper to think of empirical generalisations: rather, we should think in terms of the predispositions that are produced by causal mechanisms (Lawson, 2003; 2012). This is the justification for adopting an interpretivist approach within this study.

Likewise, critical realism accepts that any analysis of causality is fractional at best (Gerrits and Verweij, 2013). Therefore, the study believes that the interpretivist approach can be used to generate temporary explanations of how events follow from previous events, what drives processes, and the mechanisms by which human behaviour transpires. However, in the words of Sayer (2000), to ask for the reason for something is to review "what makes it happen", what "produces", "creates" "determines" or "generates" it, or, more faintly, what "leads to" or "enables" it (Smith and Elger, 2012). Equally, critical realism expresses that causal powers are very sensitive to the importance of higher education but not necessarily triggered by its management (Armet, 2013). This thesis aims to move beyond the discovery of empirical regularities as done by interpretivists, to recognize the mechanisms and not only generate these regularities or irregularities but also determine when and how they occur, using the approach to develop a more practicable model of quality management in the context of Nigerian universities, as outlined in the fifth objective of the thesis.

This approach has an impact on how the interview question was drafted from past literatures available in the fields which was in line with critical realist beliefs. For the critical realists, interviews offer one important basis for gaining contact not only with the emotions and attitudes of principal officers but to crucially textured accounts of events, experiences and processes or underlying conditions, which characterize different features of universities in Nigeria. From this position, the researcher was interested in listening to, probing as well as exploring individual principal officers' experiences and the narrative accounts provided by the interviewees, but this does not mean that critical analytical abilities in the process were suspended. Knowledge about Nigeria universities' processes and events and underlying conditions, let alone causes, is not simply the transparent product of a conversation between researcher and interviewees. So as to improve the texture and complexity of the explanations being created, the semi-structured interviews were guided by an appropriate analytical framework to yield insights into these features by which questions and answers were frame and suggest probes and directions for further discussion. The informants' accounts are exposed to serious scrutiny not only in their social and personal terms but also in relation to other materials, including past literatures and other interviews. They are also contextualised in relation to other sources of data, assessed in terms of quality management to evaluate and develop explanatory theories, though the model developed was not tested and does not claim generalisation. The next section, headed research significance, is focused on the importance of this research now and in Nigerian Universities.

1.5 RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

In this context and given the lack of research on Nigerian universities, the study uses a critical realist paradigm and adopts a qualitative approach to uncover events. It seeks to identify causes of events associated with quality management by examining the

social and personal identity of human values, their experiences and behaviour as principal officers. This approach has been justified fit for purpose, as Nijhia (2011) argues that critical realism is a philosophy underlying the practice of economic development, which is the chief concern of most African policy makers. This thesis is an in-depth exploration that uses a critical realist paradigm to identify generative and missing mechanisms in the context of Nigerian universities. Social and personal identity of human values such as gender, class, position and race determinations have causal powers over such things as privilege, resource allocation and punishing people in ways that they do not allow them control, which are not separated from social structures (Elder-Vass, 2010; Marks and O'Mahoney, 2014). Likewise, in reporting for social structures, a theory of determination is required, and not simply explanations of the operation of the effects of these structures, which past researchers in the field have provided. This is the reason why the study starts with a definition of quality from the 13th century in Chapter 2, which was the determination theory for the study, not government policies on university education. The approach adds to the general knowledge of quality, quality management and their implementation.

The researcher conducted twenty-nine semi-structured interviews in six universities that fit the research criteria, three of which were public institutions while the others were private. The selected universities were accredited to award both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees by the Nigerian government through the NUC. It is believed that these universities benefit from improved quality levels, learning resources and more experienced managerial experts able to deliver both undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Therefore, it was assumed that these universities would have a more in-depth approach to a quality culture than universities awarding only undergraduate degrees or those that have not been producing graduates. Another

reason for choosing these universities to conduct the study was their higher responsibilities and involvement in research, teaching, learning and enterprise, which require competent hands to deliver their services.

On the practical level, this thesis contributes to university operations by developing a cohesive model that enables the implementation of quality management within university operations. This model can guide university principal officers who attempt to implement quality management. Although this model has not been tested, it will enable them to achieve their universities' vision and mission statements, which will in turn increase the institutions' market shares, reputation, financial power, teaching quality, quality of research and quality of graduates. In general, it will also increase revenues, reduce costs and satisfy users and staff. Likewise, it will increase the nation's economic growth, which is a long-term benefit for the government.

Therefore, principal officers of the chosen universities would have certain involvements, contributions, needs and expectations in relation to quality management. Hence, it is more challenging to engage such management teams or principal officers in this study.

1.6 THESIS LAYOUT

This thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapter One focuses on providing an overview of the study and begins with the introduction of problem statements, background to the study, rationale and context of the study, discuss problem inherent in the past literature and develop the conceptual frame of the study. This sets the stage for what follows. Specifically, the first three sections have identified the research problem and raised the key questions through which the main aim and specific research objectives are

developed. The research objectives are used to guide the researcher through the literature and at the end of the literature review research questions are developed in Chapter Four. The section that follows then discusses the research method and significance of the study, the thesis layout, briefly explaining how the thesis is structured, followed by a summary of the chapter.

Chapter Two is concerned with achieving the first specific research objective, which is to undertake a critical review of relevant literature with particular reference to quality, quality definition, quality management models in the context of the university process and quality value. The chapter starts with a short introduction and definition of quality by exploring the opinions of quality gurus. Brief attention is paid to quality control, quality assurance and the cost of quality. Next are an exploration of concept and definitions of quality in higher education and other concept discussed under functional and technical quality. The chapter discusses the key actors in universities and emphasises their importance to this research. The chapter explores existing studies on quality value to draw attention to other debates surrounding quality in higher education. Key points are then summarised and the stage is set for the next chapter.

Chapter Three provides a full overview of the Nigerian university context and as such achieves the second specific objective, which is to review relevant literature related to the history of Nigerian higher education, government policies on university education in Nigeria, university management, the quality management debate and the present state of Nigerian universities.

Chapter Four is centred on the thesis methodology. The chapter begins with a discussion of critical realism, the research approach and data collection procedures, including instruments used to uncover events, data analysis and the trustworthiness

and authenticity of the findings, ethical considerations and major limitations of the study.

Chapter Five presents and discusses critical realist empirical findings of generative and missing mechanisms from principal officers' responses. Attention is paid to probing questions, as suggested in appendix 4 (interview schedule). The chapter is divided into two sections and reveals that seven major themes emerged from the study. The first part centres on probing the minds of respondents to uncover how principal officers have been responding to government policies in terms of intake, transformation and output. It also examines the effects of government policies on principal officers' professional practice and the implementation of these policies in the context of Nigerian universities. Participants were asked to suggest what still needs to be done about government policies. The second part focuses on quality management, paying due attention to what principal officers suggested as criteria for quality management, quality management implementation and factors affecting university quality beyond institutions.

Chapter Six discusses and evaluates the findings from Chapter Five, focusing on the seven major themes identified and relating them to the theoretical perspectives discussed in Chapters Two and Three in order to see how quality has occurred in the Nigerian university context and evaluate the findings with respect to the past literature. The chapter discusses the purpose of establishing Nigerian universities and examines principal officers' experience and positions on government policies, defining quality management in Nigerian universities, identifying university quality criteria and management commitment. It also helps to achieve the fifth research specific objective, which is to develop a model of quality management implementation that can help to improve university education in the Nigerian context. Chapter Seven summarises the

whole thesis by reviewing the research aims and objectives, and outlining the thesis's findings and its contribution to knowledge. It presents an evaluation and discussion of the study's limitations and scope for future research, and finally the researcher's personal reflection on the whole process.

1.7 SUMMARY

This research is aimed towards uncovering quality management implementation within the context of Nigerian universities. This chapter provides an introductory study under the following sub-headings: introduction of the problem statements, background to study, rationale and context of the study, wherein quality has been introduced to higher education as a strategy borrowed from the manufacturing sector as a sign of the desperate need to meet economic and social demands. This is a gap that has been identified in the general literature by many authors (Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2007; Cheng, 2009; Abukari and Corner, 2010), although it is observed that they all pay attention to quality using a quantitative approach with the view to measure quality from either student satisfaction or outcomes, while the difficulty of defining quality in higher education prevails. Another gap identified lies in the approach that these authors use in their presentations: they are all strongly quantitative, with many focusing their attention on discussing events while ignoring the fact that these events do not just happen. The complexity increases, as no-one has attempted to investigate the root cause of these events.

The cause of an event such as quality has not been properly explored in any research work relating to quality in higher education locally or international. Therefore, this research intends to uncover universities' key actors' responses to quality management implementation in the Nigerian university context, making this thesis's contribution to knowledge significant. From the discussion in this chapter, the whole thesis structure is

detailed in a systematic manner using a well-structured and logical approach to address the questions raised and stating clearly its contribution to knowledge, methodology and practice.

Chapter Two will focus on the first specific research objective by reviewing the relevant literature, with particular reference to quality, quality gurus' opinions, definitions of quality in higher education, quality management models in the context of the university process, key actors in universities and existing studies on quality and value in higher education. The critical realist study reported in this thesis comprises a literature review that combines studies that have employed different methods, theories and tools.

2 QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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2.7 SUMMARY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The next two chapters focus on reviewing literature relating to key components of the conceptual framework of the study: that is, Quality Management and the application of Government Policies (mechanisms) that influence changes within the university (structure), with more discussion on the university process/transformation. This is not to ignore the importance of input and output elements of the structure as identified in the conceptual framework but to narrow down the study by focusing on key theories that help to uncover the reality of how quality management has been studied in higher education. This chapter is divided into six sections. The chapter aims to achieve the first research objective by reviewing relevant literature on the definition and concept of quality from 1990 to 2013 using a critical realist approach. The first section introduces the chapter, while the second section begins with quality definitions from gurus and discusses quality control, quality assurance and the cost of quality. Section three focuses on the concept and definition of quality management in higher education. Section four explores other concepts of quality as it relates to universities under functional and technical quality. Section five discusses the literature on the key actors in the university. Section six discusses the existing study on higher education quality and the chapter ends with a summary.

This section starts by exploring the meaning of quality from the thirteenth century and gives more recognition to the quality founders by discussing their works, using standard literature review, an approach that is omitted by positivist, interpretivist and pragmatic paradigms, as evidenced in the work of O'Mahoney and Vincent (2014). A standard literature review attempts to identify a more realistic theory, distinguish more realistic from less realistic theories by drawing on past historical events and identify mechanisms that the researcher expects to be at play in the context in which they have to be studied. Meanwhile, an immanent critique provides a critique which identifies

contradiction, inconsistencies or ambiguities and theoretical position. This theoretical position may be to identify existing theoretical stands and weaknesses that require further studies, as discussed by Bhaskar and Hartwig (2010). This study adopts these two critical realist approaches to the literature review by studying the underlying theory (Quality) from its origin and its involvement in the higher education context in this chapter, while the application or introduction of policies that support the establishment of the Nigerian universities are discussed in Chapter Three.

Quality started gaining ground in the twentieth century. It was first used by the military to avoid compromising safety. But today, quality has been used to effect organizational change, meeting standards and excellence. However, without a doubt, it is necessary to uncover the reality behind the study of quality by reviewing past literature on the phenomenon right from its origins in the manufacturing industries. This will help to clarify how critical realists uncover the reality of an event and identify how quality operates within the structure, and how its mechanisms are located within the study.

2.2 DEFINITION OF QUALITY AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Quality can be traced to the Japanese revolution (Juran, 2003), partly attributed to American quality gurus. Townsend and Gebhardt (1990) pointed out that this was a turning point for America and all other countries that were challenged by Japan's rapid achievement. Equally, Gabor (1992) discussed the work of Townsend and Gebhardt (1990) in his book titled, 'The Man who Discovered Quality', which made a remarkable contribution to the definition of quality by bridging a gap that had been left untouched by many writers who conducted surveys into quality but neglected this aspect. Townsend and Gebhardt defined quality in two parts: quality in fact and quality in perception. To them, quality is to be determined by both the producer (in fact), and the consumer (in perception). This definition was compared to the definitions made by

renowned authors such as Crosby (1996) in his book titled “Quality is Free”. He asserted that quality is “conformance to requirement”. The question is: was he referring to the set of standards of producers or what is acceptable to the consumers? Another good example is the definition given by Joseph Juran, one of the inventors of Total Quality Management (TQM), who defined quality as “fitness for use” (Juran, 1951; 1980; 1988), but what if it does not satisfy the consumers (Beckford, 1998)?

Dauda (2010) holds the view that the world is changing fast and competition is becoming stiffer, so aside from the fact that producers want to maximize profit, it may therefore be wise to see customers as the bridge to their success if the claim made by Juran (1988) stands. No wonder Harvey and Williams's definition of quality simply states that quality is achieved when goods or services meet the expectation of a customer (Harvey and Williams, 2010). Customers' buying patterns or definitions of quality may differ based on exposure, resources or locality. Ishikawak (1985) claims that many companies that provide both goods and services tend to make room for customer feedback, which gives them an opportunity to improve. On this note, Townsend and Gebhardt (1990) debated the claim by Ishikawak (1985) that quality is everybody's business, including the business of the consumer.

Likewise, the American society of quality control perceives quality as being subjective, because people tend to define quality differently. To them, quality is quality when it meets their requirements or is exceptional or if it is faultless. Their definition tends to support the definition by Townsend and Gebhardt (1990), putting into consideration producers and consumers (Day, 1990). On the other hand, Feigenbaum, a well-known author on the subject of quality, defined it as “non-faulty systems”. To him, quality should be looked at from two perspectives, the present and the future needs of the consumers - since they are the end users (Doherty, 1994). This is evidence that even

in manufacturing and service industries where customer are easily identified and products are tangible, it is difficult to reach a single agreement on what quality is, probably because past researchers have neglected to study the cause of the event.

Another definition offered by Feigenbaum (1983), a renowned author on total quality control, touches upon different aspects of customer perception. To him, quality is “a consumer’s determination, which is based on the consumer’s experience of the service or product, measured against his or her standard (conscious or merely sensed, stated or unstated, operational, technically or entirely subjective), and constantly representing a moving target in a demanding market” (p.233). His definition goes a long way towards explaining why quality means different things to different people, having acknowledged that taste and habits do change. This affirms the saying that ‘change is the only constant thing’ (Beckford, 1998, p. 161).

Nevertheless, looking through all the definitions made by several authors, one may be right to say that the customer is a king and should be allowed to make a choice from several options as to what suits him or her. So, many organizations tend to do a test run by seeking the opinions of customers when new or intended products are being considered (Day, 1990). It could be argued that Oakland (1994; 1997), as mentioned above, was thinking from this perspective when he defined quality as what the customers deem it to be. However, these definitions or assertions will be tough ones in the university context, and in the Nigerian university context in particular, as it is difficult to identify customers. However, for the sake of this study, which aims to uncover how quality occurs by studying causal and missing mechanisms, it will be helpful to find out how the word ‘quality’ has been studied by the gurus in the field.

2.2.1 Quality gurus

Quality has transcended into a requirement for survival in the business world. The quality movement is dominated by the ideas and philosophies of early writers, who have developed several approaches that have contributed greatly to the way businesses are run today. Although it has been observed that they all focused their work on the epistemology of science, many believe in numbers in relation to what can be quantified or measured. A huge gap in their work is that great attention is paid to what can be measured while ignoring what cannot be measured. The present research aims to fill the gap in these studies by focusing on what cannot be measured using a critical realist approach to probe into the minds and activities of past researchers. Again, the approach takes a step backward to study literature relating to quality from the manufacturing industry, where quality was first discovered in the 13th century. Credit has been accorded to the following gurus, who have contributed enormously to the creation of tools and tested theories to address specific quality issues (Gabor, 1992).

2.2.1.1 Philip B Crosby

Philip Crosby is a well-known quality expert and consultant. He is famous for his five absolutes of quality management, as noted by Gilbert (1992 cited in Beckford 1998). To him, everything Crosby stands for is centred on his five absolutes. The first is his definition: Crosby's definition of quality is 'conformance to customer requirements'. Also, he believes that these requirements should be known in advance and that measures must be taken continuously to determine conformance (Crosby, 1979; 1996; Flood, 1993). Crosby strongly believes that quality is measurable (quantitative), to achieve 'zero defect' and 'doing it right first time', even if the process involves a combination of quantitative and qualitative variables.

Secondly, to Crosby, quality problems should not be accommodated, which means that there is no such thing as quality problems. Furthermore, he argued that problems do not create themselves, since when a process is put in place, management should be held responsible for any unacceptable outcome - be it as a result of the personnel involved or materials used (Crosby, 1984; Beckford, 1998). Thirdly, Crosby posited that it is cheaper to get it right first time. Although many organizations rely on inspection, to Crosby there is a cost attributed to inspection: instead, quality should be built into the production and no room should be given to error or failure (Day, 1990; Logothetis, 1992). Fourthly, Crosby believed that one of the best ways to measure performance is through the cost of quality, which involves re-work and rejects, to mention a few. In the same vein, Logothetis (1992) describes re-work as the 'price of non-conformance'. Lastly, Crosby's zero defect principle further illustrates his assumption that mistakes and errors can be absolutely avoided through measurable (quantitative) means. Crosby also enumerated fourteen principal methods to ensure continuous improvement in an entire organization (Gabor, 1992; Beckford, 1998).

In general, Crosby's thoughts on quality can be summarized in three perspectives: measurement through quantification, achievement through management leadership and prevention is better than cure. Crosby maintains that by doing it right first time, every time, one will continue to save and improve quality, which will result in increased market share (Gabor, 1992; Doherty, 1994).

Taking a step backward to review past literature using a critical realist approach is an opportunity to probe into the intentions of quality gurus, in order to know what they perceive as quality. Another debate, raised by Feigenbaum, presents a different view, discussing quality as a way of managing a business with appropriate measurements.

2.2.1.2 Armand V Feigenbaum

Armand V. Feigenbaum is the initiator of Total Quality Control (TQC). In his book *Total Quality Control: Principles, Practices, and Administration* (1983), Feigenbaum attempted to shift away from the main concern with technical approaches to quality control to quality business methods. He stressed that he considered human relations and managerial viewpoints, along with their value systems, as a basic issue in quality control activities (Garvin, 1988; Gronroos, 1992a). He advocated for the systematic approach, also known as the total approach to quality, which was debated by Bendell (1989), who acknowledged Feigenbaum's views of quality as a way of managing a business organization.

Feigenbaum's philosophy and approach indicate the need to involve every part of an organization if quality is to be sustained. To him, the issue of inspecting products will not arise if quality is built into a product from the very first process to the last process. His statement is in support of Crosby's (1979) notion about quality (Feigenbaum, 1983). As a result, the following are attributed to him: systems thinking, appropriate measurement and participation. He also introduced four steps to quality, as cited in Beckford (1998).

Another household name in the league of quality gurus is Kaoru Ishikawa, whose contributions to quality have earned him laurels all over the world.

2.2.1.3 Kaoru Ishikawa

Kaoru Ishikawa is known to be the brain behind the establishment of the Japanese quality movement and the 'father of quality circles' (Ishikawa, 1985). Ishikawa argued that quality should not be left in the hands of professionals alone, but that everyone in the organization should be involved. He defines quality as "not only the quality of the

product and service, but also quality of managing, the company itself, the human being and after sales service,” (Ishikawa, 1985). Nevertheless, he is well known for his belief in a systemic approach, joint participation and proper communication, and also his introduction of methodological tools such as the seven tools of quality control, the fishbone diagram and quality circles (Bendell, 1989; Ishikawa, 1990).

Another household name between quality gurus is Joseph Juran, who believes that quality does not happen by accident.

2.2.1.4 Joseph M. Juran

Numerous accolades have been bestowed on the work of Juran, amongst which is the perception of Logothetis, who states that Juran has made more contribution to the management literature than any other quality professional (Logothetis, 1992). Juran argued that breakthrough in quality can only be achieved when management focuses on planning. He established that "quality does not happen by accident: it must be planned". He stressed that organizational issues accept management's responsibility for quality: "at least 85% of failures in any organization are the responsibility of the system controlled by management" (Beckford, 1998, p. 121) and the need to set targets and goals for improvement (Juran, 1980; 1988). Juran maintains that the key elements in implementing company-wide strategic quality programs are seen as identifying customers and their needs, establishing optional quality goals and creating measurements of quality. Juran believes in planning to achieve an objective: to him, quality can be achieved through conscious effort. Juran is mainly noted for company-wide quality control, the quality road maps and the ten steps to quality improvement. Another well recognized name in the history of quality is Oakland.

2.2.1.5 John S. Oakland

John S. Oakland is perceived by many as the “British guru of quality”, because he has made tremendous contributions to quality in the UK and also to quality initiatives within the UK government. Oakland made it clear that quality is the major ingredient for a successful organization (Oakland, 1989; Beckford 1998). His definition of quality is centered on customers, meaning that customers are the determinants of what quality is (Oakland, 1989; 1994). His major contributions are ten points for senior management, EPDCA cycle, the TQM model and quality function deployment.

One advantage of using a critical realist approach in this study is to uncover perceptions of quality gurus as described above. This approach is in line with Wikgren (2005, p.11), who claimed that research of this nature is always a question of making choices; Wikgren argued that a part of the choice of reality is what the researcher wants to focus on as important, and his/her assumption of what reality is. The start point is that from the above study, it is evident that in the review of quality, gurus have been primarily concerned with the manufacturing side of industry (reality), wherein quality is achieved by measuring and controlling tangible objects. However, many of these techniques, if not all, have been transferable to service industries with their new entrance into the higher education sector. Their translation into higher education has ignored the fact that products as tangible objects can be measured but products of higher education are intangible and cannot be measured in the same categories as tangible objects (the researcher's choice of reality). The reason for this assertion is that rational thinkers do not function like robots: they have the sensory ability to feel and see things the way they are rather than as objects. This makes it difficult for the universities to differentiate their offerings until the process is completed or acquired, as mentioned in the introductory chapter.

Our reaction is that at the very least, critical realist exploration should integrate some minimal appreciation of how the event occurs: this is an approach that establishes unmediated access to reality. That is to say that critical realist studies in higher education can be expected to attend to how the pre-existing studies of theoretical resources (Fleetwood, 2004) serve to delimit the otherwise unspecified meaning of the issues analysed and the solutions expressed by researchers and participants. It is important to realise that the social world may be opaque to the social agents upon whom it depends (Almoudi and Willmott, 2011, p.34). It is interesting to note that the critical realist approach adopted has given a clearer understanding that the gurus have something in common - which is ensuring that quality is practiced - even if they hold different philosophies on how it should be practiced. As a result, many researchers in the field (Gabor, 1992; Caplen, 1998; Summers, 2002; Baker, 2002; Newton, 2002; Watty, 2005; Cartwright, 2007; Kong, 2008; Harvey, 2009) have also used quality management mechanisms such as quality control, quality assurance and cost of quality as methods to effect positive change in the implementation of their organizational objectives. While government has use different policy to effect a change, attention is pay on this in Chapter Three. The main reason why this research uses a critical realist approach is to step back to observe the cause of the events, which is the justification for using literature from 1990 to 2013, in order to understand and achieve the research aim and objectives.

2.2.2 Quality control

Bulsuk (2009) established a clear distinction that quality has been and will regenerate to be the criterion for customer attraction and patronage. Its role as a criterion for attracting customers is evident in the way that the Japanese pattern of management was sought after the industrial revolution. Quality control is one of Juran's trilogy and he advocates that quality control is a universal managerial process that seeks to

maintain stability by comparing actual performance with goals, and at the same time taking action based on the difference (Juran and Godfrey, 1998; Juran, 2003).

In a similar vein, quality controls are systems developed to meet customer requirements (Juran, 2003). Juran argued that quality could be gained in the area of products or services. However, Adegbite (2007) ascertained that quality control is beyond quality inspection as posed by the NUC in the Nigerian context: to him, it also has to do with adhering to specifications for customers (students), which serve as standards or requirements. These standards should be closely monitored to ensure conformance, which will in turn translate into a competitive advantage. Adegbite also argued that quality control efforts enhance the use of statistics to avoid variation in the process. No wonder Crosby (1996) advocated zero defects: that is, getting it right the first time. Otherwise there would be a cost attributed to reworking, scrapping or correcting mistakes (Cartwright, 2007; Kong, 2008).

In Beckford's book, "Quality: A Critical Introduction" (2000), Oakland defined quality control as a way of eradicating the causes of quality problems. His philosophy underpins his perception of the importance of quality. To him, the idea behind quality control should not be in identifying where the problems come from and apportioning blame: rather, a conscious effort should be made to improve the institution. Researchers in this field (Gabor, 1992; Gronroos, 1992a; Harvey and Green, 1993; Baker, 2002; Milliken and Colohan 2004; Alashloo et al., 2005; Sayeda et al., 2010; Elassy 2013), who have written robust works on quality control, hold the view that quality should be a conscious effort, a mind-set exercise. Crosby is particular about meeting customers' standards all the time. For him, quality control can be achieved by a continuous effort in case the needs of the customers change (Crosby, 1984; 1996). As discussed earlier, quality could be in the form of products or services, and the

process involved in processing quality is as important as the product itself. Crosby believes that if the product and the process involved are designed and adhered to, quality problems will not exist.

Nevertheless, quality means different things to different people. Conversely, quality control systems differ depending on whether they relate to a product or service to meet a particular standard. If the quality control system is effective and no room is given to cost attributed to non-conformance, it affirms what Crosby mentioned earlier about avoiding quality problems. With Caplen's enormous experience, as discussed in his book, the process of achieving a perfect result is not farfetched, if adequate systems are put in place with the sole aim of getting it right all the time, without giving room for defects, as mentioned by Crosby.

Consequently, Hallinger (2013) elaborated that university organizations must have the right human capital, materials, procedures and most importantly the needs of the customers, as the case may be. Caplen (1998) and Milliken and Colohan (2004) also contested that quality data should be stored and updated to meet the ever-changing turbulent environment. Today, many people have mistaken quality control for quality assurance and vice versa; however, it is good to explain the concept for better understanding, as the critical realist approach elaborates that mechanisms such as quality control or quality assurance do not function on their own. They require a structure and an agent (university management, principal officers or key actors) that will drive the mechanisms to achieve the organisation's objectives. More emphasis is placed on this in Chapters Four and Five.

2.2.3 Quality assurance

Salter and Tapper (2000) argued that universities are facing difficulty in guaranteeing the quality of services provided to both students and the community. These studies have deemed it necessary to strengthen their procedures for monitoring and enhancing the quality of goods and services. As a result, quality assurance as a concept has become a high priority issue within universities, organizations, government agencies and world bodies in general (Morley, 2003). Quality assurance is perceived as capable of producing unintended significances upon organisational and personal behaviour as well as stimulating standardisation, inspection and regulation - more than addressing important concerns for academic staff (Salter and Tapper 2000; Morley, 2003; Newton, 2010; Stensaker et al., 2011). In view of this statement, Cardoso et al. (2012) analyzed that quality assurance should be seen as a distinct process for enforcing quality control standards; it is administered to ensure that what customers get is fit for their consumption. In other words, he admitted that its main focus is to ensure that control is being maintained and evaluated, as elaborated in earlier literature by Crosby (1996) and Juran and Godfrey (1998).

In a similar vein, Harvey (2005) posits that quality assurance is a systematic and planned process that validates the use of a product or service. Veiga et al. (2012) explain that Harvey's claims about the quality assurance definition are strongly linked to Juran and Crosby's "fitness for purpose", "getting it right the first time" and "conformity with external standards". This might be due to the fact that quality is being considered as mainly interrelated with monitoring and control, rather than with excellence, enhancement and even transformation (Watty, 2005; Papadimitriou et al., 2008). No wonder researchers have continued to study the event from a quantitative point of view. Indeed, a few recent reviews (Papadimitriou et al., 2008; Nakpodia, 2011; Cardoso et al., 2012) have argued that quality assurance was developed as an

instrument and is much more closely linked with the formulation of thresholds in higher education than with enabling institutions and academics to go beyond such thresholds. Surprisingly, research reviews tend to accumulate different views in applying quality to higher education, since customers are beginning to look out for quality and reliability. Universities are also adopting quality assurance systems like the ISO 9000 to give them a competitive edge, market share and reputation (Caplen, 1998; Harvey, 2005).

Although Oakland's views about quality assurance are similar to the definitions given above, to him it is centred on prevention and management procedures with adequate audit and review. This will translate into improved quality performance and increased work efficiency. However, other researchers (Oyewole, 2009; Ekundayo and Ajayi, 2009; Modebelu and Joseph, 2012) hold the view that quality assurance is widely accepted by many universities as a method of planning to improve the efficiency of their practice and performance, while the quality assurance process is perceived by academia as a paper exercise that "does not involve academic effort" (Harvey, 2009, p. 1; Akinyemi and Abiddin 2013, p. 227). This can be associated with the fact that academics are not actually integrated into the development of quality assurance procedures (Veiga et al., 2012).

Based on the above works, it is assumed that these studies have failed to draw findings about quality assurance from the management whom they assumed to play a key role in implementing or enforcing quality in their universities. Again, this is evidence that quality assurance has failed to be a part of the everyday activity of university management, while principal officers observe no real link between the performance embodied in quality-assurance processes and the quality of their academic work, such as teaching, learning and research, leading to a loss of quality (Harvey and Williams, 2010, p. 83). Therefore, this study locates a gap in the knowledge of past literature,

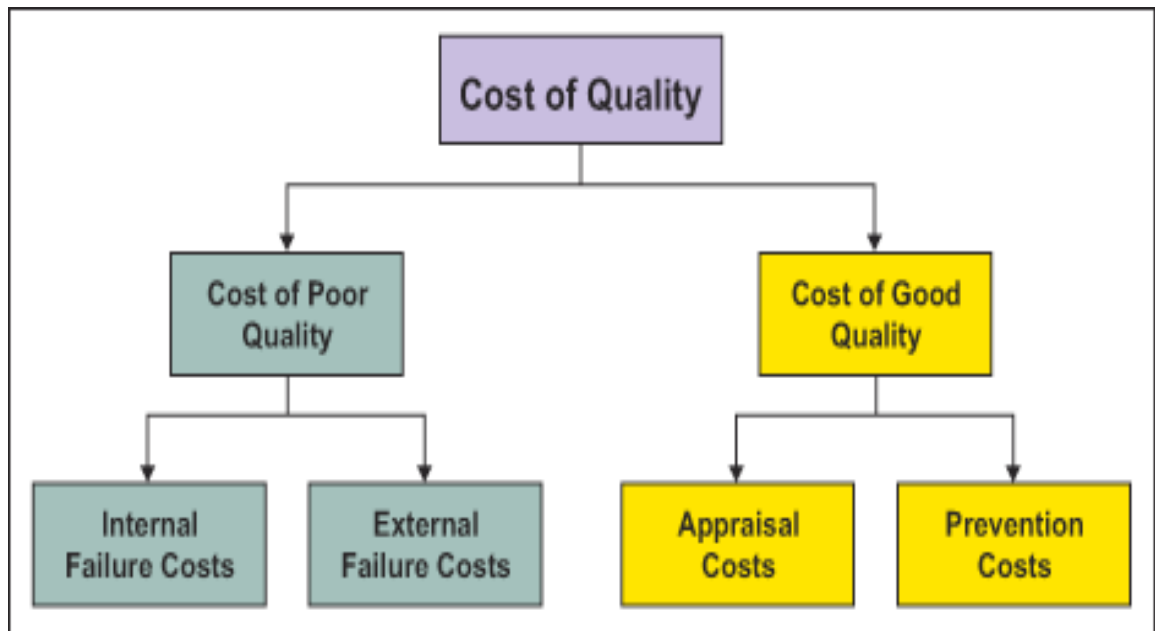
which has failed to study quality from the perspective of day-to-day management activities.

2.2.4 Cost of quality

In today's highly competitive environment (globally), there is the need for higher education to go beyond meeting the present needs of students/customers or users (Harvey, 2005). As a result, several universities seek new ways of upgrading to meet future needs to avoid losing their reputation. Crosby (1996) referred to this approach as the cost of quality as the price of non-conformance, while Juran (1951; 1980) calls it 'the price associated with providing a poor quality service or product'.

Indeed, many writers (Beckford, 1998; Campell and Rozsnyani, 2002; Dauda, 2010; Smart and Paulsen, 2011) have made it clear that the cost attributed to quality in terms of rework, waste and other quality problems is higher than the cost of building quality into the process. Okechukwu and Okechukwu (2011) established the above assertion that the cost of quality could be in two forms: good or poor quality. The cost of good quality is associated with guaranteeing that the quality has developed into inputs as well as processes, such as quality planning and quality improvement and training, while the cost of poor quality is associated with re-work, rejects, complaints and environmental cost, to mention a few. Research by Buthmann (2009) shows that 15% to 40% of costs are attributed to cost of poor quality, as illustrated in Figure 2.1 below

Figure 2.1 – Cost of quality



Source: <http://europe.isixsigma.com/library/content/c070502a.asp>

Beckford (1998) argued that the cost of quality illustrated by Oakland (1989) can be either reduced or increased in the long run. To them (Oakland, 1989; Beckford, 1998), the cost of putting in place the right system for continuous improvement will vary greatly if the reverse is the case. This can be backed by a comment from an anonymous commentator: “if you think the cost of satisfying a customer is high, try the cost of not satisfying the customer” (Beckford, 1998, p.124). However, given the number of authors contributing immensely to the introduction of the theory of quality and its application to different sectors such as services and particularly higher education, it will be useful to review how quality has been defined in relation to higher education.

2.3 CONCEPT AND DEFINITION OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

This section starts by exploring what quality management is and how it has been perceived in the university context by different stakeholders involved in the process of the university system (higher education is used in this context as a university). While quality is recognised as a fundamental issue in management theory and practice, there is considerable variation in how it is perceived by different stakeholders and the ensuing implications for organisational performance (Saad and Siha, 2000; Harvey, 2005). As identified in the previous section, the gurus who have contributed to the study of quality have focused on rationale (objects). Meanwhile, Hill et al. (2003) analyzed that education is a service, and services are described as activities or processes that are differentiated from physical goods by four basic characteristics, namely intangibility, heterogeneity, perishability, and inseparability of consumption and production. Likewise, Hill et al. (2003) claimed that one distinct feature of services is that they are more interactive, rather than substantial entities. This feature is particularly relevant to universities, which have been described by Harvey (2005) and debated by Mattick and Knight (2007) as a process of transformation involving the systematic and critical development of the student to a competent mind.

Furthermore, Iacovidou et al. (2009) and Schwantz (2012) advocated that universities engage in highly subjective and intangible products, which are the aftermath of a complex multifaceted service delivery of post-purchase knowledge and an addition of tangible and intangible offerings (Wright and O'Neill, 2002). This includes students, faculty, employers, university employees and the community, thus constructing an entity that is tremendously hard to assess. Harvey (2005) acknowledged that the quality of a multi-dimensional learning experience such as university education is influenced by numerous factors and variables, at the end of which the student

completes a profile of experience and talents which the world in general will recognise as the quality of the learning provision. Although to some people universities may be defined by the quality of their educational delivery or provision, Harvey argued that the measurement and evaluation of quality is subject to many different understandings and difficulties.

A vital concern in quality management is the absence of agreement in defining quality, although many people seem to believe they can automatically identify quality when they come across it. The doubt arises because people observe quality differently, making it a mysterious perception to express (Sahney et al., 2006; Ardi et al., 2012; Hallinger, 2013). In light of this assertion Wittek and Kvernbekk (2011) express Ball's view in Westerheijden et al. (2007), on what quality is and how it can be obtained. They write:

‘...Politicians, academics, students, employers and other stakeholders may have different views; each of these groups of stakeholders among themselves may have different views. The variety seems boundless and leads back to Ball's exasperated reaction’. (p. 4)

From this point, Harvey and William (2010) and Pratasavitskaya and Stensaker (2010) elaborated that quality is a vigorous idea, which utilises passionate and moral encouragement - which makes it difficult to connect it to any one specific meaning. Furthermore, the emphasis in the literature on quality is mainly product-oriented, while service quality has received considerably less attention (Knight 2006; Cheng, 2009; Abukari, 2010). Likewise, there is absence of agreement on the several aspects of service quality and their interrelationships (Hung et al., 2003; Eagle and Brennan,

2007). Nevertheless, Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2002) support Zeithamal et al. (1990): they hypothesize that the main difference between product and service quality is the fact that unlike products, service users do not evaluate services solely in retrospect, but consider the procedure of presenting the service as an essential part. Users' inability to evaluate services retrospectively has also made it more challenging for service users to assess service quality.

Edvardson (2005) and Knight (2006) made a case that quality management in the services sector was seen as improving internal processes without considering the impact or interrelationships between the processes and the ultimate customers (Lammer et al., 2005; Rodgers 2008). Ultimately, the attention shifted to the consumer, and now, many explanations of service quality are customer focused, as observed by Doherty (2008) and Cheng (2009), so that if consumer expectations are met, service quality is considered acceptable (Amaral, 2007; Abukari, 2010). A similar view from Eagle and Brennan (2007) and Schwantz (2012) identified five proportions or service features for assessing general service quality, namely tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. They pointed out that failure to meet customer expectations on any of these features can result in a satisfaction gap.

In turn, to have a clearly defined system for quality management, it is essential to possess a well-defined assertion of what precisely quality in university means, as mentioned by Chua (2004) and Doherty (2008). Wittek and Kvernbekk (2011) raised a concern that there are various definitions of quality, reflecting different approaches to quality management and taking into account different aspects and perspectives of quality. For example, quality has been connected with offering distinctive or special products or services from a user-oriented perspective. Likewise, a complementary correlated definition of quality also includes fitness for purpose, conforming to

requirements or specifications and achieving excellence, as cited by Sahney et al. (2004) and Watty (2005). This was also evident in the recent work of Wittek and Kvernbekk (2011): citing Westerheijden et al. (2007), they held the view that there is need to answering the question of 'what quality is?' Later approaches by many researchers (Harvey and William, 2010; Newton, 2010; Nakpodia, 2011; Okechukwu and Okechukwu, 2011) report quality to be a concept where whole organisations foster the capacity to continually learn and implement customers/users wants. The emphasis is on quality as a total organisation-wide effort whereby quality should be a way of life, which influences the attitude and behaviour of everyone, an assertion which was also supported by the work of others like Jura (1998), Harvey (2005), Doherty (2008), Cheng (2009) and many more.

Quality is thus observed to be a state of mind and not confined to mere processes or procedures, as claimed by Jackson (2000). Likewise, Cheng (2009) and Ardi et al. (2012) argue that when quality is applied to the university context, industry-centred quality concepts present noteworthy limitations, and as with other services, are inconclusive. Again, there is a long-standing debate about the relevance of re-defining business ideas to make them relevant to university, which is perceived as a public good (Campell and Rozsnyani, 2002; Al-alawi et al., 2009).

Moreover, in recent years, discussions about quality in university have evolved, extending from experience to techniques and styles to process, which has been linked with the following definitions, as discussed by many authors (Campell and Rozsnayi, 2002; Wiklund et al., 2003; Watty, 2005; Morley, 2003; Doherty, 2008; Harvey, 2009; Stensaker et al., 2011; Veiga et al., 2012; Hallinger, 2012): being exceptional or distinctive (excellence), achieving consistency, particularly in process, being fit for purpose (conformity to specified objectives or standards), being accountable, effective

and efficient (providing value for money) and being transformative, wherein education is considered an on-going process of transformation including the empowerment and enhancement of all involved.

On another note, Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2003) defined quality as management relative. They argued that management mapped the different definitions with the differing significances and perspectives of each agency. They elaborated that the consistency, conformity, fitness for purpose and definitions may be associated with employees (such as the vice-chancellor, registrar, bursar, university librarian, directors etc.), while definitions of value for money and excellence would be more relevant to students, sponsors and funding bodies (Sahney et al. 2004; Doherty, 2008; Hallinger, 2013). Nevertheless, Lomas (2002) defined 'fitness for purpose' as 'conformity to predetermined objectives or standards' (p. 73). Eagle and Brennan (2007) pointed out that the definition of quality from this view is used extensively in business and has been quite popular in university as well. Further findings by Watty (2005) and Al-alawi et al. (2009) also revealed that the fitness for purpose definition of quality is a major prevailing view of quality amongst accounting academics in Australia. The fitness for purpose definition has a convincing business-related orientation and stipulates that if the product attains the purpose for which it is intended, it simply means that its quality is assured.

In reality, where the product or service is complex, such as a university, defining its purpose is no simple matter and any assumptions can weaken the product or outcome. This approach to quality is useful if the objectives, standards, specifications and indicators used for judging quality and evaluating whether the proposed objectives have been attained are clear and accepted by all involved constituencies (Cheng and Tam, 1997; Cullen et al., 2003). Another view of fitness for purpose is its flexibility to

adjust to all other views of quality: for example, the purpose may be identified as excellence, value for money or transformation (Watty, 2005; Gibbs and Simpson, 2005). Interestingly, principal officers, who are arguably the main management in universities, receive very little attention in contributing to the definitions.

Another definition focused on students has been put forward by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2004, p.1), which defines academic quality as *“how well the learning opportunities provided to students enable them to achieve their award”*. This involves ensuring the suitability and effectiveness of teaching, overall backing structures, assessments and learning opportunities provided to the students. Again, this definition has been criticized based on the fact that it is too general to be readily implemented (Eagle and Brennan, 2007; Doherty, 2008; Veiga et al., 2012). Similarly, Cheng and Tam’s (1997) definition of educational quality in Lammers and Murphy (2002) is more comprehensive, although it is still generic and covers the whole process of education. It states that the character of set features, such as the education process (input, process and output) of the education scheme that offers services by meeting their explicit and implicit expectations, is quality education that satisfies both internal and external strategies (p.23). Similar to the issue of educational quality is the issue of standards, which is another term that is broadly subjective and can have different understandings (Doherty, 1997; 2008). The most frequently cited primary text by Yorke (1999) made the distinction that whilst quality is the totality of all the features that stimulate the students’ experience, academic standards refer to the set of expectations about the students’ programme of study.

Conversely, Doherty (1997) referred to the nature and levels of student attainment required as assessment or output standards. Likewise, Lomas and Tomlinson (2000) proclaimed that standards are measures of outcome that provide faultless and

unambiguous judgments about whether the outcomes are satisfactory. They also claimed that the standards set for a programme of study are inevitably linked to the outcomes and ensure a definite level of skills and knowledge from graduates of that programme. However, this study agrees that if quality is defined as standard, then using a quantitative approach will be acceptable. Otherwise, there is a gap to fill and a need to uncover what quality means to those who are directly involved in the university system.

A key characteristic of standards is that they are never static, although Morley and Aynsley (2007) and Cartwright (2007) flagged the issue that what constitutes desirable graduate qualifications and characteristics is the standards, which implies standardisation or homogenisation with tacit and explicit understandings. Marsh and Roche (2000), Clayson and Haley (2005) and Ekundayo and Ajayi (2009) added that the increasing focus on student satisfaction and modification of university might increase assertions of falling academic standards and grade inflation. A supporting declaration made by Rolfe (2002) and Stensaker et al. (2011) was that from all indications, students consider university primarily as a route to a career, while they are indifferent to whether high standards are maintained or achieved in the process of their study.

Instead, Gallifa (2009) noted that there are increasing claims that students now tend to shop around for the easiest courses with the highest grades. Conversely, other authors such as Marsh and Roche (2000) and Akinyemi and Abiddin (2013) challenged these assertions, as they found that lecturers who give students lighter workloads are in fact not rated positively. They uncovered that there is a positive relationship between grades obtained by students and their evaluation of teaching because students perceive that they have learned more when they obtain good grades, not because they

have been taught properly. However, similar to the problem of defining quality is the problem of defining the purpose of the creating university, as described by Doherty (2008), who argues that universities' purpose has a closer link with the concepts of quality and standards. Alani (2009) maintained that it is impossible to arrive at a single particular purpose for any system of education, as the needs of the diverse key actors, although overlapping in many respects, are also different.

In a general view, Harvey (2005) and Eagle and Brennan (2007) both elaborated that the objective of university education is to develop the acquisition of knowledge and skills for both intrinsic and instrumental purposes. In support of this, Obasi et al. (2010) also emphasised that the role of private or public universities is to enhance societal cohesion and ensure that their graduates are able to live up to general expectations of the labour market and add value to the community in general. Another claim made by Heyneman (2006) and Modebelu and Joseph (2012) stressed that the more a university demonstrates professional standards and good behaviour, the more likely it is that its students will contribute to social capital: that is, being willing to work towards a common goal and understanding diversity.

Likewise, Dauda (2010) and Elassy (2013) argued that that dependence on a particular meaning for quality can be the cause of conflicting interests and can result in communication problems. Indeed, Modebelu and Joseph (2012) observed that it may be an unsuccessful practice to seek a single best definition of quality, as it is not a 'unitary concept' but must be defined in terms of '*qualities*'. Rodgers (2008) elaborated that quality would always be subject to varying interpretations, although Iacovidou et al. (2009) clarified that there are various points of similarity in many of the definitions. Ultimately, the complex and multi-faceted concept of quality in university may not be best described by a single definition and cannot be easily assessed by only one

indicator. It would be productive to study different quality management models that have been applied to university and to know how such models are relevant. A critical realist approach recognizes the existence of a variety of objects of knowledge, each of which requires different research methods (Njihia, 2011), to uncover the cause of an event in the university context. Therefore, apparently antagonistic research methods have to be used in the same or in different stages, for describing, understanding and explaining quality (Adamides, et al., 2011). The next section considers other quality concept as it relates to university under functional and technical quality.

2.4 FUNCTIONAL QUALITY AND TECHNICAL QUALITY

The service sectors quality literature differentiates between functional quality, that is the method in which the service has been delivered, and technical quality, that is the outcome or the product of the service (Lewis, 1991; Crosby 1996). The technical quality was elaborated to be tangibles, knowledge, solutions, etc. provided during the service (Hill, 1995; Morley, 2005) - while functional quality refers to how the service is provided, including the interpersonal behaviours of the service staff during the process of the service. This section is an important part of the literature, as it provides a detailed explanation of quality as it relates to the conceptual framework of the study by discussing the process of university education: that is, input, process and output

Anderson (1995) and Lomas (2004) maintained that organisational resources should be channelled towards improving functional or process quality, thus improving students' perceptions rather than the outcome or technical quality. All the same, the student may have difficulty in ascertaining the technical quality of the service they obtain as a consequence of their lack of proficiency. Thereby judging service quality based on the way that the service has been delivered to them (Mangold and Babakus, 1991; Harvey and Green, 1993). In the previous section, it was observed that Harvey (2005)

acknowledged that the quality of the multi-dimensional learning experience is influenced by a numerous factors and variables which made it difficult to measure and evaluate quality in higher education context.

Likewise, Tribus (1994) argued that considering the characteristics or features of the education process will offer an indication that will help identify necessary areas for improvement, while Morley (2003) suggested that measuring outcomes will provide at best lagging indicators which are too late to act upon. However, Eriksen (1995) earlier stressed that if compliance with pre-determined standards is important, the closer the output is to the standard, the higher is the operation or process quality. As discussed in the two previous sections, Crosby (1996) believes that if the product and the process involved are designed and adhered to, quality problems will not exist and there will be no such thing as the cost of quality. Therefore, it is evidenced that quality does not just exist in a vacuum; it involves a structure, which is referred to as an organisation, and in this study, university, as shown in the conceptual framework. Again, in the guru definition of quality, Juran stressed that organizations are controlled by management. Management are referred to as the principal officers in the universities; and agency in the critical realist approach; they are agents who drive the organization system and put the mechanisms such as quality control, quality assurance, quality management and government policies to work.

Interestingly, Yorke (1999) debated whether the main issues relating to educational quality are process-related; essentially whether the educational process serves as a satisfactory bridge between entrants and the programme's intended outcomes. This demands commensurate provable evidence as to whether it is the educational process, rather than the inherent ability of the students, that has contributed to achieving outcomes. Nevertheless, Cuthbert (1996b) also argued that the real outcome of a

university is more than just the certificate, although many students only focus on how best to achieve this certificate. This again can be determined easily, while the deeper benefits may be obvious only some years afterwards and therefore cannot be easily measured; nor can we measure the true value of education achieved.

A debate posed by Trow (1996, p.52) rightly pointed out that education is a method professing to be a consequence. That is what has made all measures of educational outcomes spurious and difficult. He maintained that staff effects and impacts can never be fully known or seen in student outcome because it is a gradual process, which reflects over the student's lifetime and takes various forms at different points in their lives. However, the service quality literature elaborated that managing quality in universities should be focussed on three broad areas: the quality of inputs to the educational process, the quality of the process of education and lastly, the quality of the outputs of the process. This approach to reviewing literature is what critical realists such as O'Mahoney and Vincent (2014) referred to as standard literature review. Given these complexities, the time period, the level and extent of interaction involved in the university, the process of education or functional quality could be considered the most detracting aspect of quality management. Concomitantly, Harvey (2005) earlier noted that there are difficulties in evaluating the quality of both the process and outcome in university. In fact Kong's (2008) work is linked with the Trow conclusion, that the transformational nature presently in the university does not give itself to a simple and discernible product or outcome, as the impact of the transformation may be felt years after the experience. Moreover, the intangible educational process and the lack of physical evidence presents more difficulties in analysing and evaluating perceptions of process quality (Mahapatra and Khan, 2007; Carroll et al. 2009), and student perceptions of process quality during the actual process itself may not be valid indicators.

From all indications, quality in education is difficult to nail to particular features, making it difficult to define as evidence in the two previous sections, as noted by Sahney et al. (2006), Ardi et al. (2012), Saiti (2012) and Hallinger (2013). But further research into university quality as elaborated by Sahney et al. (2006) stressed variables that comprise input, process and output dimensions in university as follows:

- The input includes: student intake and characteristics, programme and curriculum, experience and qualifications of teaching staff and support staff, physical infrastructure and resources, including library and teaching and learning facilities. These are mechanisms that drive the input process in the university sector.
- The process includes: The teaching and learning methods and environments, design (class sizes, schedules) research activities, assessment and evaluation activities, extra-curricular activities. These are structures that allow the mechanisms to function effectively.
- The output includes: Academic achievement in terms of marks/degrees awarded, graduation, dropouts, acquisition of transferable skills and employment. These are aspects that can be measured and have seen more attention in the literature by the positivists, yet such results do not justify the true measure of quality of output in the university context.

An important issue in managing quality is first to identify the major balance between the input, process and outcome dimensions.

In the event of trying to strike a balance between these variables (that is input, process and outcomes), many accreditation agencies, especially in the United States, have conducted workshops and forums on how to balance the emphasis on input, process

and outcomes in the accreditation decision, though their implementation has been inconsistent (Schray, 2006; Cheng, 2009). There are further convolutions involved, because it was assumed that the desired outcome should dictate the process to be followed, while in reality Saad and Siha (2000) and Mattick and Knight (2007) advocated that the actual process followed determines the achieved outcome. These statements are given considerable weight in the work of Eriksen (1995) and Pupuis (2001), who further simplified that the basic levels of quality in education will not be reached if courses are not properly designed or if their delivery or assessments of this delivery are inefficient. It was assumed that students' input provides the raw material transformed through the process of university and, therefore, the quality of the process and the output is determined by the quality of the input provided.

In a process-intensive service such as a university, the level of close personal interaction between students and lecturers will make the management functional or process quality even more problematic, as students themselves may have important influences on each other (Owlia and Aspinwal, 1996; Lammers et al., 2005). Hence, managing functional or process quality may be the most important aspect of ensuring technical or outcome quality. It may be difficult to assess and evaluate this process of inputs and achieved outcomes effectively and independently. It is important to realise the interdependent character of input, process and output.

For instance, students may tend to attach more importance to what was provided to them when judging quality, while overlooking irrelevant aspects of the process such as the extent to which they were stimulated to think for themselves or to take responsibility for their own learning - which are of keen interest to academics (Yorke, 1999; Telford and Masson, 2005). Employers of graduates may focus on qualities of graduates (output), and take preference over the totality of the learning experience that is critical

to academics and students. Likewise, the university principal officers may attach a different degree of importance to input, process and output aspects of the institution; even they may focus primary attention on the transformation of the student into a sound graduate.

However, Gibbs and Simpson (2005) have also argued that in terms of what they determine as quality, rather than how they support worthwhile learning, universities and quality assurance agencies are concentrating on assessments. Their belief that assessments improve student learning when standards are improved creates something to measure, which limits learning. Therefore, it must be borne in mind that there are differences in the expectations of principal officers and services offered by universities, as stated in the Introductory Chapter. These include differences in curriculum, standards and the lack of a common platform for assessing government policies and quality, making it difficult for students and the external community to assess which institutions best meets their expectations and requirements.

Thus, using assessment as tools may mean that quality is measured wrongly. It is useful to explore how other researchers in the field have studied the phenomenon in order to justify the appropriateness of the research methods and techniques. This functional quality is one of the debates in the past literature by Chua (2004); Csizmadia (2005); Cartwright (2007); Doherty (2008); Cheng (2009); Galifa and Batalle (2010), who have discussed the quality management model designed from the perspective of technical quality, which left the gap untouched until Telford and Masson (2005) and Harvey and Williams (2010), studied the principal officers' perspectives. They also opened the gap by studying the event with the hope of solving the problem rather than understanding how the agent functions in the structure using the mechanism.

However, an important linkage between this study and the study of quality was that it has arisen as a result of a desperate need to make a change in the operation of organisations. Quality was seen as a tool to drive the organisations' change and attention was paid to many approaches, techniques and theories that can be instrumental to this change. A few of these concepts and theories are discussed in previous section. The key point drawn from this section and the gap that is evident in extant research is that these theories have been developed to address the functionality in the manufacturing industry. Although an attempt has been made to replicate these models in the higher education sector with attention to university processes, as discussed in this section, surprisingly the main key actors that drive the system to function using mechanisms such as quality, quality management and related features have not been considered in the literature.

Hence, a first step would be to determine the key actors in the university who can help to uncover how quality is determined in their respective institutions by discussing their involvement in determining the appropriate balance between input, process and output dimensions. Therefore, using a critical realist approach with the view to study the reality requires studying the identity of agents involved in the process by probing into the mind of agents that drive the structure (university) and create the mechanisms to function properly to achieve the organisation's objectives. The next section pays attention to identifying the key actors or agents that are involved in driving the mechanism in higher education.

2.5 KEY ACTORS IN UNIVERSITIES

Key actors in universities include students as users, teaching and non-teaching staff as employees, employers, government and other actors such as funding agencies, accreditation bodies and the general community, each with their own view of how

quality management occurs in universities (Telford and Masson, 2005). Amongst these agents, the more significant key actors are those who either have an effect on the process or outcome of the service or are directly affected by it. Employers of graduates are external key actors who are ultimately and directly affected by the outcome of university and, therefore, must be considered as key actors (Hewitt and Clayton, 1999). The primary internal key actors, therefore, would invariably be those being educated (students) and the educators (academic and management staff), as they are responsible for what happens in the process of university education. In most cases, principal officers are also academic staff: therefore, the study concentrates on principal officers or management as the case may be, as they have additional roles and responsibilities in decision taking about quality management compared to academic staff.

However, the focus on management staff in this study is not to understate the importance of other external bodies as identified in the conceptual framework, such as Input - the government, families of students and society, who have legitimate interests in university. As Eagle and Brennan (2007, p. 48) argue, even if both students and employers considered that the role of university was to support the economy by preparing graduates for jobs, this would not be the only legitimate purpose of university. They write that the community, which contributes to higher education through general taxation, may reasonably suppose that it is the purpose of university to produce well-rounded citizens who are sensitive to the needs of vulnerable groups and who may be prepared to sacrifice some self-interest for the common good (Akinola, 2013).

In addition, input, as noted in the conceptual framework as government agencies and funding bodies, is also extremely relevant, as they may often have a direct or indirect

effect on funding, licensing and approval (Ocho, 2006). Nevertheless, their main role being more regulatory in nature, they are not in the same category as principal officers. Meanwhile, students are referred to in the quality assurance literature using a range of terms, from customers to consumers, partners to participants and stakeholders to key actors, and it is now widely acknowledged that students as key actors have an increasingly powerful influence in the process and outcomes of university (Johnson and Deem, 2003). Definitions of quality in university consider students using two distinct analogies: as customers who buy a service in expectation of career benefits and as raw materials that will be transformed by the process of university into individuals with added skills (Eriksen, 1995). With this study being interested in the process of transformation of the student within the university structure, it is important to mention that the primary input is the student, who is subjected to a transformation process through the support and involvement of principal officers (the value adding process of university), which in turn produces an output (the student after exposure to a value-added service). A distinctive feature of many universities is that students are also partial employees, as they are intensively involved in the production and delivery aspects of the service (Hill, 1995), as exemplified by students as processors of information (Williams, 1993) and co-producers (Hill, 1995), particularly in the case of post-graduate students.

Al-Atiqi and Alharbi (2009) expressed the fear that in an environment where the key focus is on student expectations, learning, curriculum and programme quality would suffer. As Barnett (2007) argued, university is now a large-scale service industry, increasingly embracing the concept of customer care despite the opposition and on-going debate on the mismatch between the customer-centred approaches and traditional academic values. Eagle and Brennan (2007) also argued that while students may consider gaining an advantage in terms of their career as a key indicator of

quality, they may not really consider high academic standards as representative of high quality or as essential for career advancement. While emphasising that universities must ensure that the unspoken and clear needs of students and other key actors are met, they pointed out that there is some currency in the “notion that students are simply in the university system to acquire a qualification and that any education picked up along the way is incidental to this primary aim” (p.44). The resistance to the student-as-customer concept may result from the concern that it legitimises all student demands, which universities will then have to satisfy.

Oyewole (2009) claimed that education cannot be treated as a mere transaction involving the payment of money for a service rendered, even if one ignores all other complexities and considers only the fact that universities are required to regulate standards for their awards, which involves not rewarding those students who fail to meet these standards. Arguably, as students bear the larger proportion of the costs of university in many countries, this gives them the privilege to be considered as customers (Eagle and Brennan, 2007). This then raises the concern that students as fee-paying customers will take less responsibility for their own learning and will place the responsibility for their failure or poor performance on the universities (Clayson and Haley, 2005) or more precisely their tutors, an expectation which would also have to be managed effectively by universities (Oyewole, 2009).

However, while students as primary customers or users have the right to acquire the best quality education, the fact is that students may not really be in a position to evaluate or comprehend what constitutes a ‘good’ course or learning experience in terms of content and outcomes in the longer term, in relation to their immediate experience of it. No wonder Dickson et al. (1995) suggested that education may have the distinction of being the only service where it is difficult for the customer to assess

the quality and relevance of the service, as students may not fully comprehend the relevance of a course until later years of study. For instance, new students fresh out of secondary school may confine their objective to acquiring a qualification for employment without understanding the significance of developing the skills required for professional and personal development. Therefore, Amaral (2007) stressed that students may be considered only as immature consumers who are not in a position to rationally evaluate data on future benefits accruing from a programme of study.

Obviously, the concept that the customer is always right cannot be taken literally in university, as this can harm the interests of students themselves (Gibbs and Iacovidou, 2004). The value placed on university as a vital antecedent to career success has been largely driven by the increasing demand for university qualifications by employers (Wright and O'Neill, 2002). This again reflects the traditional view that education is intrinsically different from other services, as mentioned by Gibbs and Iacovidou (2004): therefore, metaphors related to the marketplace are harmful to the educational process. On this ground it is clear why this study shifts away from studying students as key actors in the university and focuses instead on principal officers. This is one of the ways that critical realists review literature by identifying gaps concerning the key players that drive the system, as noted by Bhaskar and Hartwig (2010).

Likewise, all quality management models stress the commitment and motivation of staff. The role of university management and academic staff as key actors having a direct influence on the overall input, process and outcome of university cannot be overemphasised, as identified in the conceptual framework. In addition to the appropriate blend of factors such as curriculum and classroom infrastructure, the enthusiasm, expertise and teaching style of instructors are vital to learning, as they determine to a great extent the outcome and the overall experiences of students. It is

well established that the enthusiasm and motivation of principal officers translates to high levels of student motivation and learning (Hill et al., 2003). Anderson (2000; 2006) emphasises the role of principal officers as academics and student interaction and the passion and enthusiasm conveyed by the university management in enhancing students' engagement with the subject. High levels of staff motivation also correlate positively with professional satisfaction and the overall quality of services offered (Konidari and Abernot, 2006). However, Lammers and Murphy (2002), cited in Hill et al. (2003), found that while university management has a role in giving information, they do not necessarily stimulate thought, change attitudes or develop behavioural skills that are necessary for the complex interactions essential in university. Hence, in order to be effective, principal officers must use their judgement, rationality and decision-making abilities rather than rely on routine (Hill et al., 1996).

A shared awareness of common goals allows an organisation to work collectively rather than as multiple separate units, and thus fosters trust among participants (Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2007). Such a collective consciousness emerges when different people share awareness of the same issue from a variety of perspectives and are conscious of others' viewpoints and also allows the organisation to be flexible and dynamic, which is a necessary condition in an increasingly dynamic environment. It is important to mention here that critical realists are interested in reality: this is the main reason why discussion has centred on students as key actors who must be present for a university to operate, although students need to be supported by the main key actors in order to add value to their learning. This justifies the selection of university management as principal officers and key actor for the study. Without doubt, using a critical realist paradigm to review past literature from its origin has uncovered the importance of the key actors that are most appropriate for this study.

2.6 EXISTING QUALITY MANAGEMENT STUDIES ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Most studies on quality in higher education seek to determine the extent of student satisfaction with the quality of teaching and learning, facilities and other related aspects of the university experience (Joseph and Joseph, 1997; Quinn et al., 2009; Veiga et al., 2012). These studies are primarily conducted using either the quantitative or the qualitative approach with the hope of measuring something at the end of the research. Hill et al. (2003); Telford and Masson (2005); Nakpodia, (2011) explored the fact that there is very little empirical research into university principal officers' perceptions of quality in university. In line with studies measuring service quality in other sectors, the majority of the more detailed quantitative studies on university quality seek to explore the differences between students' pre-purchase expectations and their perceptions of actual service performance (Wright and O'Neill, 2002; Lomas, 2004). Models such as SERVQUAL are based on the 'disconfirmation paradigm' (O'Neill, 2003, p.310), as they seek to explore the relationship between students' pre- and post-service experience, based on the premise that satisfaction results will indicate how well the actual service performance matches expectations. The five service dimensions that are included in the SERVQUAL model include tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy (Parasuraman et al., 1994).

An important criticism of the SERVQUAL model is that customer expectations may not actually exist or be clear enough in the respondents' minds to serve as effective benchmarks against which their perception of the actual quality of the service can be measured (Iacobucci et al., 1994). A modification of the SERVQUAL is the SERVPERF (Fogarty, et al., 2000), which measures only customers' actual perceptions of service quality and does not compare it to pre-service expectations. The use of these disconfirmation models in universities has been criticised, particularly as they were constructed to define customer values and expectations in the general service sector

and hence overlook a number of key areas specific to university (Telford and Masson, 2005; Abdullah, 2006). Subsequently, the HEdPERF was developed: this is a more comprehensive, performance-based scale of quality constructs within the university (Harvey and Williams, 2010).

However, while all the service quality measurement models are supposed to be very comprehensive, there is very little evidence that the service elements that are evaluated by these models, including the HEdPERF, measure what universities really consider as relevant. Accordingly, Wright and O'Neill (2002) and Stensaker (2007) remarked that university education providers undertake extensive research in order to identify those factors deemed most important by universities in their evaluations of service experiences, so that they can then be used to target specific improvements. Cuthbert (1996a) and Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2007) observed that numerous studies have also been conducted on student learning using well-validated instruments such as the classroom environment scale (CES: Lomas, 2004), the individualized classroom environment questionnaire (ICEQ: Fogarty, et al., 2000) and the student experiences questionnaire (CSEQ: Harvey and Williams, 2010). However, after evaluating these instruments, they conclude that there is substantial diversity in the collection of constructs used and that none of these instruments would provide an appropriate tool for evaluation as part of a quality assurance system. Nevertheless, such studies can aid university education providers in monitoring student perceptions of the learning process, which is an important step in managing their expectations and needs.

Hill et al. (2003) examined perceptions of quality in university among students in nursing, management and education programmes using focus groups. They found that the majority of the students' comments related to the 'quality of the lecturer' and

‘student engagement with learning’, as influenced by the expertise of lecturers who could facilitate debate and discussion and were supportive. Other areas that were identified included the student support unit and the need for shared experiences with other motivated students. They noted that students felt the need for a positive atmosphere that goes beyond a well-structured lesson and a pleasant learning environment, where the quality of the interaction between student/student and student/faculty determines the quality of the learning experience.

Lagrosen et al. (2004) examined the dimensions that constitute quality in the university from the students’ perspective and compared these approaches with the general service quality dimensions that have been developed by past research. They developed a thirty-two statement questionnaire after carrying out twenty-nine in-depth interviews with business students from Austria, Sweden and the UK, following which the questionnaire was delivered to students at two universities in Austria and Sweden. They found that the interpretation of quality as excellence best matches students’ view of quality, while specific quality dimensions include, among others, library resources, information and responsiveness, corporate collaboration, courses offered, teaching practices and campus facilities. They found reasonable correspondence with the general service dimensions, but also found several differences, as general service elements, such as access, courtesy, security, attitudes and behaviour and service recovery, were not considered relevant by students. They concluded that as a single key actor’s perspective provides only a limited view, such studies must be complemented with other perspectives.

Chua (2004) conducted a survey in order to investigate how different groups of key actors, including students, parents, faculty members and employers, perceive quality. Her categorisation of quality characteristics was based on the IPO framework: that is,

Input, Process and Output criteria. The 'Input' criteria included in the study were entry requirements and student selection; 'Process' considered the overall teaching and learning process and 'Output' included employability and academic standing. However, an adequate rationale for the inclusion of only these particular criteria under the IPO framework was not provided. The questionnaire was based on the SERVQUAL dimensions of Parasuraman et al. (1994), therefore rendering the study more of an extension of other studies that investigate student perceptions of quality.

The main difference offered by Chua's study is that it is one of the few studies to explore quality attributes of universities from various key actors' perspectives. Her findings indicate that both students and employers perceive the process and output to be the most important categories relating to quality, while the faculty's view of quality is broader in interpretation than the others, and indicates that the focus should be on all facets of their actions (i.e. intake, transformation and output). Chua emphasised that her findings support the view that different groups of customers have different perspectives of quality, and therefore recommended an integrated quality model that addresses these different perspectives. Lomas (2004) investigated the views of a sample of senior managers and academics on the most influential factors in effectively embedding quality in university education providers. Using semi-structured in-depth interviews, he found that respondents considered the need for a quality culture, training for newly appointed lecturers and continuing professional development and peer review as the most important factors. Respondents also stressed the importance of transformational leadership in implementing effective change management strategies.

The one study that focused on whether or not academics and students share the same quality values was conducted by Telford and Masson (2005). They noted that it is very important to understand the quality values of students and academics, as they have an

impact on various aspects of student participation in the educational process. These include clarity of the students' role in educational delivery and their motivation and ability to contribute effectively to the educational experience. Considering the specific nature, duration, level of interaction and complexities involved in the university context, the values and expectations of academic staff will undoubtedly play a key role in moulding student participation and motivation.

On this premise, Telford and Masson (2005) investigated the effect of congruence in views on quality values between students and staff on student satisfaction in a single learning programme. They used focus groups in the initial stage to generate data for the construction of the survey questionnaire. They found that, although the lack of congruence in views between staff and students does not necessarily lead to student dissatisfaction, a shared understanding of values is important in order to manage quality. It was also noted that the majority of issues on which staff and students shared the same values and yet students were dissatisfied were those associated with lack of resources or factors external to the actual learning experience, such as how the value of the University's degree awards is perceived by the wider community.

The key values of students and academics were found to be those "associated with what the courses are designed to achieve, the manner in which they are delivered and debated, and the commitment required of the different participants" (Telford and Masson, 2005, p.115). Students were found to be primarily interested in vocational courses that would help their careers, and they considered the commitment of academic staff more important than their actual experience in the classroom. In contrast, academic staff rated commitment of staff as most important, followed by commitment of students, as well as the vocational impact of the course. Hence, the applicability of the findings is generally limited to that particular programme.

Interestingly, students did not consider their own commitment to learning as important, even though it is fundamental to the learning process, as discussed earlier.

The above studies provide some evidence that different key actors may understand the concept of quality with regard to university in different ways. The literature also lends support to the premise that any model for managing quality would be ineffective unless it is based on knowledge of how to address the expectations of key actors. However, in order to gather the requirements of key stakeholder groups, university education providers may have to pay attention to diverse aspects of the education system. This is an approach which may not really be effective unless there is more understanding of what causes the events of quality management to occur, and how quality management has been implemented - using the university management's practical knowledge.

2.7 SUMMARY

This chapter set out to use a standard literature review as used by critical realists to establish the inherent difficulty in unfolding and assessing quality dimensions in universities, notwithstanding the growing concern for greater accountability and increasing management anticipations. The chapter set out to achieve five major discussions, the first being to adopt a critical realist approach to the literature by drawing on historical analysis and identifying more realistic theories of quality. The section unveils that quality originated in the manufacturing sector with the aim of improving product accuracy through measurement of outcomes, and since the success of this approach, other sectors have been borrowing the concept, theory and approach to improve their businesses. The second aim was to discuss the concepts and definition of quality as it relates to the university context. This section reveals that there is an obvious absence of conceptual models of how quality management can be applied effectively to universities.

Thirdly, the chapter aimed to discuss functional and technical quality as it relates to the university. From this section, it was evidenced that external assessments of quality through accreditation and quality audits are considered to be far from satisfactory. They are seen as bureaucratic and averting important time of management in managing human and material resources away from the core activities that are expected of universities. Fourthly, it discussed key actors in the university in order to identify the appropriate agents who could help to uncover the reality of how quality management is perceived in the institutions. This section reveals that there are many key actors who have genuine interest in the university activities, who can easily be classified as internal and external key actors, but that the internal key actors have more roles in determining what happens in the university on a daily basis. They include students as co-participants whose expectations are vital, and principal officers as main contributors in the development of the university, whose involvements are more vital.

The final aim of this chapter was to critique existing literature on quality management in higher education to identify gaps that interplay within an event and that warrant further research. The section established that principal officers' views have not been sufficiently explored in the literature. It was also noted that fundamentally, few studies on quality in universities have been conducted in Africa, and in West African countries such as Nigeria in particular. Therefore, the applicability of the available literature to universities in this region may be downplayed and create limitations in seeing how quality occurs. Again, if universities are to manage the quality of their provisioning effectively in the long term, it is essential that a quality culture is embedded within the institution and quality is acknowledged as a normal academic function. Such an approach to quality is possible only if the key values and expectations of those who are intensively involved in the university process (i.e. university principal officers) are

identified and addressed. Chapter Three will also focus on the second specific research objective, which is to review relevant literature related to higher education in Nigeria, the government policies on university education in Nigeria, management and the present state of Nigeria's universities.

3 OVERVIEW OF NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to achieve the second research objective, which is to review relevant literature related to the history of Nigerian universities, university management, quality management debates and the present status of Nigerian universities. The conceptual framework in introductory chapter (1.2.2) of this study shows that government policies and quality management are classified at the same level, but the researcher's attention will be on the application of government policies, not the theory, as the study needs to focus on practical knowledge. This approach is supported by the work of Ackroyd and Karlsson, who argue in Edwards et al. (2014) that the research techniques used should serve mainly to gain access to information that is particularly important to develop researchers' understanding.

Likewise, this approach is accepted by the critical realist philosophy, which is a combination of standard literature review and observations. It is an approach which O'Mahoney and Vincent (2014) referred to as historical analysis of the phenomena under study and also an approach where the researcher is interested in identifying mechanisms that are at play. This chapter starts with a short introductory section, followed by a second section in which discussion is centred on Nigerian higher education institutions and their formulation and operation. These first two sections prepare the researcher's mind in terms of how the phenomenon has positioned itself within the context of the study, by understanding and interpreting the social environment in which the structure is constructed. It is worth mentioning here that all articles cited in this chapter are constructed from a deductive approach, mainly by researchers with a deep quantitative philosophical approach and background, although some have considered using the ontological approach with the aim of creating solutions to the problem faced by Nigerian higher education.

Section three focuses on uncovering how government policies on university education in Nigeria emerged. The fourth section is centred on the management of Nigerian universities, where major problems are identified from past research findings, although it is worth mentioning here that researchers in this field are predominately from science backgrounds, and they have positioned their research in the domain of quantitative epistemology. The fifth section addresses the debate on quality management in Nigerian universities, where discussion is centred on major reasons why this research is important now. The sixth section focuses discussion around the present state of Nigerian universities: it is worth mentioning here that very limited work has been carried out in this context, while the few studies that have been done have been motivated by providing practical solutions to problems and not expanding the knowledge of academics. The final section summarizes the whole chapter.

3.2 NIGERIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Nigerian higher education can be best described by reflecting on education as a whole. Education is hard to define and extremely difficult to pin down with a definition, because several authorities in different fields have different perceptions of it. This is similar to the discussion of quality in Chapter Two, in that quality is difficult to define or link to a particular meaning. Likewise the term “education” is described in different ways, based on researchers’ background and experience. Ibadin et al. (2005), in their review, related their definition of education to Nigeria and explained that Nigeria is a multi-religious and multi-ethnic African country located in West Africa and is the most populous and largest Black African Country in the world, with a population of approximately 167 million people. They stressed that Higher Education is strategic in the policies and national development of Nigeria, as it is the platform that drives the various sectors of the economy. Fashina (2005) and Lawal (2010) also explained that

education is seen as the bedrock of human development in the Nigerian economy, with a focus on sectors such as agriculture, infrastructure, energy, oil and gas.

However, Mgbekem (2004) and Ekundayo and Ajayi (2009) argued that the Nigerian system of higher education is binary in nature, as mentioned in the previous section, as it constitutes universities and non-universities. Universities are mainly directed by their faculties' academic and non-academic staff, while the non-universities sector is made up of monotechnics, polytechnics and colleges of education, which provide higher technical education (Lawal, 2010). Babalola et al. (2007) argued that Nigeria operates a federalist system of government consisting of three levels, namely federal, state, and local government. Currently, among these three levels, only the state and federal governments own universities. These two types of university are classified as public universities. Babalola et al. expressed that academic sessions run from October to June and a session is normally two semesters. A semester consists of thirteen weeks. Okebukola (2002) stated that the Federal Ministry of Education (FMoE) is responsible for all federal universities. The State Government is responsible for the state-owned universities and the remaining universities are primarily controlled and funded by private investors (such as missionaries, groups of individuals or foreign organisations) according to a communiqué in the Federal Ministry of Education summit of 12 March 2002.

With the need for university creation, Ogbogu (2013) carried out a survey of university education, at the end of which she suggested that university education is anything that assists the student to obtain appropriate appreciation of our legacy and a satisfying life. This includes the acquisition of skills, values for productive living in society and the acquisition of desirable knowledge. Similarly, Adesina (2002) and Akinyemi and Abiddin (2013) argued that education is obviously the basic instrument of technological

advancement and economic growth in any society. It is in acknowledgment of this evidence that the Nigerian government has promised to commit more funds to ensure the delivery of education for their people, and also to tailor their policies towards guaranteeing that it is made available to the general public (Sambo, 2002; Oyewole, 2009). Although Oseni (2012, p148) claimed that “no significant amount of the Nigerian government’s national budget was allocated to education in the past decade”, he stressed that in 2012, 8.43% of the total budget was allocated for education, and this figure rose to 8.67% in 2013. However, other developing countries, such as Ghana, Kenya, South Africa and Morocco, have allocated 31%, 30%, 25.8% and 17.7% of their total budget respectively to education (Abayomi, 2012). No wonder Obasi et al. (2010) and Duze (2011) claim that there is continuous decline in the quality of services provided by universities in Nigeria.

Following this line of thought, many researchers (Ike, 1976; Ekundayo and Ajayi, 2009; Oyewole, 2009; Dauda, 2010; Kaul, 2010; Modebelu and Joseph, 2012; Akinyemi and Abiddin, 2013) have argued that higher education in the Nigerian context involves the education offered after secondary education in other committed institutions, such as colleges of education, monotechnics, polytechnics, universities, and other associated and specialized institutions. Oyewole (2009) and Akinyemi and Abiddin (2013) supported the claim made above that graduates are mostly produced from colleges of education, polytechnics and universities - these institutions are governed and regulated by the National Commission for Colleges of Education, the National Board for Technical Education and the Colleges of Education and National Universities Commission, respectively - although this study pays attention mainly to universities.

In another review, Abayomi (2012) claimed that the Nigerian university education statutory bodies consist of the council as the governing body over finances, human

resources and property and the senate as the supreme academic authority. The congregation elects its representatives to the council and the senate. The faculty boards/ boards of studies consider matters referred to them by the senate, on matters pertaining to a subject or group of subjects of study. Nonetheless, Akinyemi and Abiddin (2013, p. 225) argued that universities are, broadly speaking, educational institutions of higher learning, which typically include undergraduate and graduate schools or colleges in various disciplines. It is worth mentioning here that universities are different from other organizations in terms of composition, structure and purpose. In their review, Modebelu and Joseph (2012) stated that universities are multi-purpose establishments undertaking public services teaching, learning and research - it is really difficult to measure the result in meaningful terms. The structure of their members also provides a difference; for example, many of the employees (academic and administrative staff) enjoy virtual life tenure, whereas the student population is replaced every four to five years.

Another debate was raised in a public lecture delivered by Peter (2009) on population and human resource development in Nigeria: he debated that even though universities in Nigeria are permanent organizations, they are faced with a lot of challenges, at this time when resources are scarce, governments are reducing funding and demand continues to increase while universities are struggling to survive. Mok (2005), Arowolo and Ogunboyede (2013) and Dumond and Johnson (2013) argued that with universities facing a number of problems, as discussed above, there may be differences of opinion about the form in which universities will continue to exist, but the concept of non-survival does not trouble the minds of key actors or principal officers in the Nigerian universities (Adekola, 2012) due to the high demand for university education. Universities in Nigeria are no exception to Harvey's findings, as discussed in the introductory chapter, that universities are now facing increasing levels of

competition, intensified costs and resource constraints. In response, to improve the service provided, university managements are now borrowing strategies from the business sector, which are greatly influenced by factors such as quality and price.

Although the problem of survival does not trouble the minds of principal officers in the Nigerian universities, as evidenced in a review conducted by Okogie (2009), candidates' enrolment and the development of new universities in Nigeria is a colossal achievement by any standard in Europe, Asia, America, and Africa - although the international news coverage of Nigeria does not reflect upon the actual development. Adeogun and Gboyega (2010) debated this statement by revealing their findings that non-university institutions licensed to operate are estimated to number over 139, admitting 109,994 candidates in 2009, while there are 103 licensed universities operating, admitting 977,039 candidates in 2009.

Surprisingly, Akinyemi and Abiddin (2013) hold the opinion that the history of the Nigerian university system is merely that of underdevelopment, rather than considering the amount of growth and diversification in terms of population, size and material resources - as well as its huge, versatile human capital and skills. Therefore, it will be useful for the purpose of this research to focus on universities in order to understand how the Nigerian university education system operates and identify the mechanisms that drive the operation, as well as key actors or agents involved in the process. A good starting point will be to take a step back to study government policies as they relate to University education not as a theory or policy *per se*. This approach reveals another advantage of using the critical realist approach, as claimed by Wikgren (2005): it allows researchers to reflect on descriptive findings from the past literature in order to identify missing links, and to take a step backward to uncover how an event has occurred.

3.3 GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

It must be borne in mind that in the Introductory Chapter, this thesis stated clearly that the researcher is not interested in debating policies in terms of theory, but rather their application to Nigeria universities and how they influence decisions on quality management in the university. Likewise this research supports the definition of the term 'policy' as a plan or course of action linked with government, politics or business with the intention to influence and determine decisions, actions and other matters (Hauwa, 2012). One will agree that this was the case with the establishment of universities in Nigeria, as Fabunmi (2005) indicated that education in Nigeria is seen as a public business that has endorsed active participation, dynamic intervention and complete government ownership. He claimed that it is the interpretation of education policy formulators in Nigeria to gear education as a channel in accomplishing national development. However, he also claimed that the policy orientation was geared towards national unity, national efficiency, individual and self-realization etc., with the aim that it will help achieve economic, cultural, social, political, scientific and technological development. Likewise, in his review, Ojerinde (2010) stated that Nigeria's university education policy is based on the development of individuals into sound and effective citizenry. The policy further stressed the importance of formal education by emphasising the need to provide equal access and opportunities for full integration of individuals into the labour market (Adepoju, 2002; Okebukola, 2006; Jekayinfa and Akanbi, 2011). Jekayinfa and Akanbi (2011) further stressed that the policy applies both inside and outside the formal educational system at three academic levels (primary, secondary and tertiary) and two levels of provision (public and private). Surprisingly, Anya (2013) claimed that these policies have been reviewed from time to time from 1977 until the present day without proper implementation of either the existing policies or the review policies.

It has been observed that university education policy issues have remained a difficulty and concern in developing countries, especially in Africa (Oghenekohwo, et al., 2007; Hansen, 2009), and Nigeria in particular, as university education is seen as a tool for development (Odukoya, 2009). The relationship between national development and university education, as discussed by Odukoya, is that university education has been established and is now universally recognised as an important indicator for development. As a result of the importance attached to university education, governments around the world have been committed to creating access and to the development of their countries' university educational policies for their citizens (Odukoya, 2009).

In view of the above concern, Nigerian university educational policy can be traced to two significant periods, first the colonial and second, the post-independence era. Nwagwu (2011), in his review, stressed that prior to the British invasion of Nigeria, the Colonial Government ran the region. Most of the areas were ruled by empires, kingdoms and some chiefdoms, both in the western and the northern parts of the region, while in the south eastern and central parts there were minor chiefdoms with some semi-independent groups. In the southern parts, every ethnic group had its own traditional form of education policy based on its own tradition and culture, whose goals were related (Gornitzka, et al., 2005). In the northern parts, Qur'anic education policy and religious belief was greatly rooted in the positioning of the people, who wore uniform (Ozigi and Ocho, 1981 cited in Hauwa, 2012).

However, in 1914, the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern protectorates brought people of different religious, faith and ethnic groups together as one country, named Nigeria, thereby creating a pluralistic society that necessitated the adoption of a federal system of government for the groups (Oko, 2011). The main aim in adopting the

federal system was to help organise a common platform for all groups to operate effectively, but the colonial masters suddenly introduced a British policy of indirect rule (Ogundare, 2009). Nwagwu (2011) explained that the British colonial educational policy can be traced to the Post-colonialist and Colonialist era, where the Nigerian university educational policy suggested that government should be responsible for giving people the right type of knowledge, culture and well being and educational material by re-orientating the way people behave and think. However, the policy placed a restriction on the spread of Western education and Christian missionaries' activities and allowed predominately Muslim education in the Northern protectorate (Fabunmi, 2005). This approach led to an educational gap between the northern and the southern parts of Nigeria (Saint, et al., 2003). The approach has been continually modified by new policy to reflect the dynamic process of the nation.

However, every group was still operating on a different policy until 1960, when the regions gained their independence from the British government (Fabunmi, 2005). The regions of Nigeria continued to operate a federal system of government, with unbalanced policies and administration made up of the Western, Eastern and Northern regions, even though the Northern region was the biggest (Nwagwu, 2011). Nwagwu stressed further that the new country of Nigeria was unable to establish her own National Policy on Education (NPE) which included all three levels of education until 1977, when it was first published following the suggestions of the Ashby Commission of 1960 and the National Curriculum Conference of 1961. This means that it took the Nigerian government seventeen years to develop a National Policy on University Education for the country. However, adopting a critical realist paradigm in this study will help to locate missing mechanisms and the cause of events involved in creating a structure for education in policy terms, revealing that there is no policy implementation

procedure in place, explaining why the different regions hold different policies on education.

None of the procedures for implementing government policy identified above was perfectly linked with the problem suggested in the introductory chapter, that there is on-going debate about the environment in which Nigerian universities are operating, as they are faced with difficulties in interpreting government policies. This has created difficulties in adopting a common system for institutional or programme accreditation and quality assurance. Again, the challenge here is that, in the past fifty-two years, the nation has been unable to successfully implement the government policies on university education (Duze, 2011; Adekola, 2012; Arowolo and Ogunboyede, 2013). Therefore, as noted in the introductory chapter and Chapter Two, the literature has failed to sufficiently establish the views of employees such as principal officers, which are fundamental to government policies on university education and quality management. Therefore, the need arises to uncover how the event occurs as well as how it is being implemented in the Nigerian university context.

In another review, Okoroma (2006) made a claim that in the second democratic government, the National Policy on Education of 1983 was reviewed properly and was ready for implementation, but the review did not follow the 1977 National Policy on Education, which caused a number of setbacks in university management's efforts to properly implement the policy. Not surprisingly, a sudden power shift from a civilian government to a military government caused confusion within the sector and the region. However, the revised NPE drawn up by the democratic government was aborted and overthrown by the Military (Duze, 2011). Surprisingly, as soon as the military government came into power, they promulgated several decrees to regulate and guide the university education conducted in the country. Among these decrees are

some that are directly relevant to this study, the first being Decree No. 16 of 1985, which states that all universities should follow a set benchmark, which includes how to establish universities and provides National Minimum Standards to be followed. Another noticeable Decree in this period was Decree No. 26 of 1988, which forbade and prohibited the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) from joining the trade union. A contradicting Decree was Degree No. 36 of 1990, which withdrew the banning of ASUU from getting involved with the trade union (Nwagwu, 2004; 2011).

Another policy that came into existence in 1997 after four years of negotiations at several levels seemed to have solutions to practically all of the main educational problems, but was assumed not to have been implemented (Ochuba, 2001). Oko (2011) reported that additional adjustment to the National Policy on Education was made in 1998: this was reflected in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which accompanied the country's third attempt at democracy. He pointed to Chapter 11, Section 18 of the Constitution, which redressed the objectives of university education in the country as stated in the 1979 Constitution of Nigeria and the National Policy on Education. However, Saint et al. (2003) claimed that when NPE of 1999 was presented, it ignored the review made to the 1979 NPE, causing more confusion for principal officers.

However, Nakpodia (2011) concluded that there are apparent severe problems in the area of implementation, as well as how universities respond to government policies on university education. In another work, Oyewole (2009) argued that these problems of non-implementation of government policy can also be linked with frequent changes in policies, politics and government, which have negatively affected the implementation of the NPE (Nwagwu, 2002; Peters, 2009; Sofowora, 2011).

Surprisingly, after fifteen year of military government, Nigerians elected their first democratic government in 1999. One important agenda in the elected government's plan was to tackle the nation's long-festering difficulties with universities. Certainly, the government instituted more institutional reforms and policy on universities than the collective governments of the preceding two decades from 1960 when the region gained its independence (Oko, 2011). Among her more remarkable activities are establishing audit procedures for all universities, annulment of the vice-chancellors' past freedom to directly choose 10% of each year's student admission, reconstitution of all university governing boards with clearer representation, removal of the ban on establishing private universities, exemption of university staff from public service regulations and salary scales, and increased funding for the university system of up to 180%, which raised student allowances from the equivalent of 360 USD to 970 USD per year (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2001). None of these activities were backed up with any policy or support, and neither the existing policy nor how to implement these activities was stated clearly: rather, word-of-mouth became the method used to announce the government policies on university education.

In another attempt to restructure higher education, the new government initiated a new *Government Policy on Autonomy for Universities*, broadcast on July 21, 2000 (Guardian, 2002, cited in Hauwa, 2012). This policy offers university councils full accountability for institutional governance and management, including restoring block grant funding to universities. The appointment of senior officers grants the university senates the authority to decide on curricula, returns to universities the right to select their own admissions criteria and admit candidates, demarcates the powers of the National Universities Commission and lays the groundwork for new minimum academic standards. Likewise in May 2002, subsequent sets of legislative proposals designed to establish a permanent legal basis and reform existing university laws for these changes

were accepted by the Federal Government Executive and passed on to the National Assembly for ratification and discussion (Okuwa, 2004).

Likewise, in a statutory report, Saint et al. (2003) claimed that the reported proposals for university development established in 2002 would give university councils the autonomy to set their institutional policies, give institutions control over their own student admissions, hiring top management and forwarding institutional budgets; place curbs on the right of employees to strike; legally de-link the universities from the public service and limit the role of the NUC to system coordination and quality assurance, thereby ending their adherence to government regulations concerning employment, benefits and remuneration (Guardian, 2002, cited in Saint, et al., 2003). On the contrary, Fafunwa (2004) and Fabunmi (2005) stated if the said proposals of 2000 had been accepted by all parties involved, then as far as higher education was concerned, Nigeria would finally have been be a country on the move, but that was not the case.

As Amaghionyeodiwe and Osinubi (2012) explained, university education in Nigeria continues to face critical questions and concern about how relevant its service is to the community. As a result, the National Policy on University Education has undergone repeated review from 1960 to the present day to make it relevant and suitable to the developmental needs of the country. Amaghionyeodiwe and Osinubi also claimed that there is an obvious relationship between national development and university education in Africa, and in Nigeria in particular. Likewise, Jonathan (2010) debated that since education is seen as an agent of cultural transmission as well as change, the continuous improvement of the National Policy on Education in Nigeria freely finds support in Woolman's (2001) recommendation that education should also reveal the vigorous process of nation building that is persistently being revised by new conditions.

As a result of these repeated review of policies this study treats government policies as mechanisms rather than structures, as discussed in the introductory chapter.

Likewise a justification for Nigerian government action finds support in the work of Nwagwu (2007), who argued that it was in the bid to launch Nigeria into an industrialized and technological nation that the government has continued to review the national policy on university education to accommodate transformations in the direction of technological development. To this end, Nwagwu (2007) explained that the policy proposed that university admissions should be based on forty per cent humanities and sixty per cent science-based programmes. However, the policy failed to realise its objectives, as universities were unable to meet the prescribed humanities to science ratio in admissions entries, as more candidates were attracted to humanities courses, which continue to attract more students due to economic and social demands. Okoroma (2006); Nwagwu (2007) explained why government policy had not been well implemented, claiming that the Nigerian educational system at all levels is not equipping the beneficiaries with the necessary skill for national development, as a consequence of funding crises and the lack of a proper strategy for implementing the national policy on university education, and that this has resulted in an unsatisfactory situation for to stakeholders and an inability to meet students' needs (Fabunmi, 2005; Amaghionyeodiwe and Osinubi, 2012).

In discussing the importance of national policy on university education, Gillard (2011) argued that policies are not only necessary for active institutional management, but also for safeguarding sustainability of all the institutional transformations and systems. Policy matters in the management of university education in Nigeria as yet have no common platform for access or implementation of policy in Nigeria universities (Jekayinfa and Akanbi, 2011). Jekayinfa and Akanbi further stressed that the policies

should be tailored towards guaranteeing that the purposes of university education are achieved. Furthermore, they added that policies in university education set out the responsibilities and roles of individuals in defining targets for units, departments and faculties' management in order to increase and develop teaching and learning. In addition, Abdulrahman and Ogbaondah (2007) also define transparent criteria and effective processes for the appointment, reward and promotion of staff as very important. But due to the numerous challenges facing many universities in the country, university management has not been able to enunciate such policy strategies (Ivowi, 2012). Ogbogu (2011) stressed that these challenges include gender inequality, poor management, rising student numbers without adequate increase in funds, poor teaching and research facilities, etc. In order to level the country's universal education system with international good practices and respond to the problems highlighted above, the government of Nigeria has initiated certain policies for different situations. This is another reason why this research classifies government policies as a mechanism.

As a result of the numerous different policies formulated by the Nigerian government, the university education system has experienced significant diversification and growth over the years, which has affected its structure. The application of critical realism will help the researcher to study the mechanisms operating within the structure and causes behind events, justifying Reed's (2001) assertion that events do not just occur: they occur within a structure with the effort of an agent. This was also debated by Farjoun (2010, p.204), who argued that structures can be reproduced only through the actions of agents, and agents come into being only within a structured environment. Agents in these contexts are referred to as principal officers, university management or key actors who are involved in day-to-day decision taking in the university. In an earlier debate, Giddens (1984) argued that structure and agency are inter-reliant – they both

create and are created by each other. Therefore, for a structure to be created, there must be sufficient and competent agents to drive the structure: this was a missing link in the formulation and foundation of universities in Nigeria. Likewise, Jarzabkowski (2008, p.622) claimed that, “agents produce and reproduce the institutionalised social structures that persevere over time, space and delivery procedures for actions”. Therefore the involvement and participation of these agents become very important for the proper functioning of any structure. It will thus be helpful to study how universities are managed in the Nigerian context.

3.4 UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

In universities, the main key actors involved are students, non-teaching staff, teaching staff, government agencies, other funding agencies, accreditation bodies, employers, and the general community. These are agents that have direct influence on the university process. They all have their individual understandings of how quality management occurs, as suggested in Chapter Two (Hill, et al., 2003; Ogbogu, 2013). Amongst the aforementioned key actors, the most important groups are those who have an influence on the process, require results from the service or are directly involved in the process. This was evident in Chapter Two. As rightly claimed by Ishikawa (1990), quality is everyone's responsibility, but for the purpose of this study, attention will be paid only to the university management as the primary internal key actors. Therefore, the study will focus on the educators (academic and management staff) who take responsibility for what transpires in the process of the university education system on a day-to-day basis. Again, Chapter Two suggested that quality from these key actors has not been investigated in the literature and there is a need to uncover what quality means to those who are directly involved in the university system and processes.

The concentration on university management as key actors in this study is not to play down the importance of other external bodies, such as families of students, the government and society, who have genuine interests in university output, while quality management models stress their importance, motivation and commitment to the development of the system. But rather, as confirmed in Chapter Two, university management has a greater influence on the overall system of the universities, such as admission criteria, teaching styles, methods and techniques, including an appropriate blend of factors such as classroom infrastructure and curriculum design. This justifies the reasons for their selection. Again, the critical realist approach as it is applicable to this study claims that human values, such as social and personal identity (O'Mahoney and Vincent, 2014), should not be ignored in the investigation of matters that lead to the development of the nation (Njihia, 2011).

Likewise, it was observed that key actors' knowledge, skills, enthusiasm and teaching styles are fundamental to learning, as they control to a great degree the overall experiences and conclusion of university activities, as discussed in Chapter Two and in Hill et al. (2003). These principal officers would have certain practical knowledge, involvements and contributions as well as needs and expectations in relation to quality management and their implementation in the Nigerian context. Again, as suggested in the introductory chapter and Chapter Two, these needs must be represented for the successful implementation of quality in the university context. In addition, this approach finds support in the work of Doherty (1994), whose views on the notion of continuous quality improvement are presented in the introductory chapter. She pointed out that quality improvement is based on the principle that only those involved in carrying out a process are fully competent at measuring its features if the need to measure should arise (Doherty, 1994).

Speaking about university education management in this study involves a deeper reflection upon education operation itself, as it relates to Nigeria in particular. University education is seen as a starting point in the development of the nation, in that it moderates and influences national development (Ojerinde, 2010). In principle, Oko (2011) revealed that the university education management of a country influences development, the life of the country and its economic growth. As a result, in developed countries, greater attention is being paid to how university management is assembled and managed (Kaul, 2010). In light of this, it is agreed that the university education management of a country plays an important role in the overall development and outcome of the nation (Ogbogu, 2013).

From the above, it is evident that efficient management of the university education system is very important and has a vital bearing on how the quality of labour and manpower of the country are developed as well as on national economic growth (Peters, 2009). However, one can easily agree that the overall development of a nation is based on the fact that highly skilled manpower development of any country is ultimately developed and trained through the university principal officers' involvement, efforts and experiences (Ekundayo and Ajayi, 2009). In light of these facts, university education in Nigeria is seen as a means of development, taking into consideration human input as an important aspect of management as well as the uniqueness of the nation structure in general (Akinyemi and Abiddin, 2013). Likewise, in their review, Wheelen and Hunger (2011) hypothesized that management includes the putting into practice of business objectives (such as mission and vision statement), with the purpose of realizing business gains as a result.

The term 'management' as it is related to higher education and university is commercial in nature. That is, when the word 'management' is applied in a setting like higher

education or university, there must be an expectation of 'gains and profit', as management takes place in business for the single aim of profit survival and advancement (Wheelen and Hunger, 2011). Likewise, every business operates mainly for profitability and survival: therefore, a university as a centre of the business of human development strives to be well managed for the purpose of attaining its goals of the development and creation of relevant skills for the society, as well as profitability and survival. In light of this observation, researchers such as Dauda (2010) and Smart and Paulsen (2011) have hypothesized that institutions of higher learning, including universities, are predominantly for the business of moulding people into useful skills and capacities for improvement at individual, organizational and national levels. In theory, the principle and practices of an institution of higher learning or a university are not expected to function for business gain or profit - as a matter of fact, universities are 'not for profit-making' (Oyewole, 2009, p. 324).

Simultaneously, Ekundayo and Ajayi (2009) and Okechukwu and Okechukwu (2011) stressed that university management efforts such as input (admission and recruitment), transformation (teaching, learning and research) and output (graduates, enterprise) are primarily aimed at increasing manpower development, survival, profits and gains, as well as avoiding wastage in terms of students' dropping out. In the context of this study, university management is not about material management to upturn monetary profits and gains, but the administration of available resources towards sustainable quality management to develop socioeconomic benefits for the country (Okechukwu and Okechukwu, 2011). On one hand, administration involves directing the day-to-day activities of the university towards achieving its mission and vision statements, or resetting objectives, goals and the formulation of policies (Akinyemi and Abiddin, 2013, p. 227). On the other hand, from whichever way one looks at the process towards efficiency, the process of control in the university is either from the method of

administration or from the technique of management, which primarily involves the effort of administrators, who are also referred to in this study as principal officers. Administration should be used to ensure quality for the purpose of efficient manpower output and adequate development for the country (Okechukwu and Okechukwu, 2011).

Principal officers are defined in this study as those who are responsible for decisions taken in the management of Nigerian university education. They are university employees and are sometimes called the university management, also referred to as agents in this critical realist study. However, Ojelabi (2004) and Okechukwu and Okechukwu (2011) argued that in Nigeria, university management can be seen from two dimensions: the internal and the external dimension. The external dimension is controlled by the regulatory body, such as the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) and the National Universities Commission (NUC), who are in charge of university management coordination and compliance with government policies. The activities performed by these external agents are evident in Peters' (2009) findings that the NUC's principal objective is to ensure the coordination and development of university education, maintain standards and ensure adequate funding for the management of university education in Nigeria. In line with this, Okojie (2007) stressed that NUC roles include ways to improve the quality of Nigerian university education, which include giving guidelines for setting up new universities, approval of courses and programmes, accreditation of courses, monitoring of universities and maintenance of minimum academic standards.

On the contrary, Mgbekem (2004) argued that internal management in Nigerian universities is made up of principal officers who are primarily involved in the daily decisions of the university. This debate was later supported by the work of Oyewole (2009, p. 320), who claimed that the internal dimension in Nigerian universities is

maintained and controlled through a committee system. He clarified that the committee reports directly to either the Council or the Senate. He pointed out that Nigerian universities are run by principal officers through the line of authority as required by their official positions or job roles. Ojerinde (2010) expressed that in the organogram of the entire university, for example, authority flows directly down the line in a maze of authorities, from the vice-chancellor through his deputies, with him or her as principal officer. These are recognised as the agents that drive the structure of Nigerian university systems through their primary duties as principal officers. Okebukola (2002) highlighted that the Nigerian universities' organogram includes key actors in their setup, such as the vice-chancellor, registrar, bursar, university librarian and others, who vary from one university to another, including heads of departments such as the dean of faculty, dean of student affairs, director of academic planning, university public relations officer, all of whom are also known as principal officers. Under them are several other categories of officers working as committee members, who exercise authority clearly at their respective levels as delegated to them. Among these committees are the finance and general purpose committee, the development committee, the appointments and promotion committee, the admissions committee, the academic planning committee, the committee of deans, the research grants committee and the ceremonies committee. All members of the committee are employees, most of whom are academic officers, with the exemption of the registrar, who must hold at least a Master's degree certificate with not less than ten years' working experience as an administrator, and the bursar, who must hold an accounting degree and be a fellow of the accounting body, depending on the university. These sets of university employees are referred to as university management, key actors, principal officers or agents, as in this study.

In line with Okebukola (2002), Ogundare (2009) explains that in the organogram for

example in a Nigerian university system, the Vice-Chancellor is the chief executive officer of the university: he is the number one academic officer of the institution. However, he claimed that the vice-chancellor cannot take decisions on very important matters, which affect all students and staff, without consultation. For example, in purely academic matters, all universities have a body called the Senate. The Senate includes all the professors of the institution, provosts, deans, institutes directors, and heads of academic departments who are responsible for any academic matters. The senate are also responsible for organizing and controlling admission, teaching and learning activities, graduation and student and staff discipline and determine prioritised areas of research (Arong and Ogbadu, 2010). The senate's responsibility is to organize, control and direct the academic work of the university, to take measures and respond appropriately to the needs of the university as a place of education, teaching, learning and research. Its job is also to formulate and establish academic policies, advise the council on the provision of facilities to carry out the policies and regulate examinations and appoint deans and provosts (Babalola and Okediran, 1997; Okojie, 2007; NUC, 2010).

In addition, Ofoegbu (2002) and Ndirangu and Udoto (2011) emphasized that all members of the senate are principal officers and their roles are to ensure the day-to-day administration of the university. They also stressed that the vice-chancellor presides over the senate, but even as comprehensive and well representative as the senate appears to be, many of its decisions are based on recommendations from the various faculties and committees. In other words, committees are an integral part of Nigerian universities. In another review, Oyewole (2009) pointed out that in Nigerian universities, there are all kinds of committees, some of which are known by different names, such as boards or even panels (whether panels, boards, or committees, they

all perform very similar functions). One of the most important committees of any university in Nigeria is the admission committee; this committee is one of the numerous committees of the senate. It is made up of representatives of all the faculties, colleges, schools and institutes. It is headed by a senior academic, generally of the rank of professor, who is appointed by the vice-chancellor in consultation with the committee of deans and other principal officers of the university. The committee head functions solely on criteria that have been stipulated by the senate. The admission committee collates all the applications and recommends candidates' admission into the university program when they have met the institution and Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) criteria (Okebukola, 2002).

One important committee in any Nigeria university is the governing council. The council is the highest authority of the university and has full responsibility and control for the custody and disposition of all finances and property of the university. The chairman of the committee is the pro-chancellor, while other members are constituted as follows: external members, including visitors, appointees from various interest groups and internal members, mainly principal officers, including representatives of the senate (Adesina, 2002). Thus, there is a strong reflection of a constellation of interests of different key actors in each university, particularly in terms of quality management in relation to government policies on university education. It is also observed that because of the principal officer's interests, power and academic autonomy, it is very difficult to have a common agreement when making decisions relating to matters of university policies, as mentioned in the introductory chapter; hence, tensions are raised about the fact that quality management occurs differently in Nigerian universities. These tensions are discussed more explicitly in Chapter Five, while it is admissible that many key actors are directly involved in decision-making in Nigerian universities.

Nevertheless, the Nigerian government still plays a central role in shaping the structure of the university systems, although other players also have their fingers in the pie. The government therefore demands accountability on the part of all Nigerian universities through the NUC, although it is now repositioning itself and forging new forms of relationships with Nigeria universities, by introducing different policies in order to continue to ensure some degree of harmony between national development goals and the operations of Nigerian universities (Ekundayo and Ajayi 2009; Dauda, 2010; Nakpodia, 2011). However, adopting a critical realist approach has helped to reveal that it will be difficult to identify a particular policy operating universally in the Nigerian university system, which has created a serious debate on how quality is managed in the operation of Nigerian universities. The difficulty of identifying a particular educational policy operating in Nigerian universities is identified as a missing link in the operation of university education in Nigeria. No wonder Abubakar (2005) and Peters (2009) hypothesized that the story of university education in Nigeria and its management today has mostly been a story of mixed fortune. They stated that these institutions initially laid claim to the socio-political and economic advancement of the country. But it was surprising when Obasi et al. (2010) and Duze (2011) argued recently that Nigerian universities are finding it very difficult under their present conditions to lay any claim on the national capacity development, or connection with the new international knowledge system, as they could not adopt or adapt further development of new technologies needed in the wider society. This was first recognized as a problem in the introductory chapter of this thesis, illustrating why this research is important now.

Likewise, Adekola (2012) supported Obasi et al.'s (2010) findings that the Nigerian university system in today's context is nothing but crisis management. He highlighted several noticeable crises in Nigerian universities, which include financial crisis,

deteriorated infrastructure, brain-drain syndrome, graduate unemployment, erosion of university autonomy, volatile and militant student unionism, secret cults and political interference, which have all affected the quality of education. Adekola identified that the majority of these problems can be drawn to a lack of policy implementation. These debates have directed our attention to how quality has been managed in the Nigerian universities. Therefore, it will be useful to venture into the quality management debate in Nigerian universities.

3.5 QUALITY MANAGEMENT DEBATE IN NIGERIA UNIVERSITIES

Obasi et al. (2010) argued that there have been several discussions on the decline in quality of Nigerian public university systems. Likewise, Okechukwu and Okechukwu (2011) stated that the context in which public universities operate has experienced change over the last two decades. There has also been increased demand for quality when the resources in terms of finance and materials are scarce, resulting in low technological advancement. They claimed that there is pressure on universities to respond to the needs and aspirations of students and other users.

In a similar view, Adeogun and Gboyega (2010) stressed that it is good news that a university's business is becoming a global business, as suggested in the introductory chapter and further evidenced in Chapter Two. They mentioned that competitors around the world are now looking to sell their universities overseas, into the market Nigerians have traditionally seen as ours. For these reasons, Sofowora (2011) claimed that the Nigerian government has introduced various policies, models and theories in the last decade in order to accommodate and satisfy increasing anxieties from key stakeholders. This was assumed as a strategy to solve the problems in public universities to some extent, but the strategy creates other quality issues - such as the

decline in quality of intakes, teaching and output in Nigerian universities, as claimed by Adelabu and Akinkunmi (2008) and Adeogun and Gboyega (2010).

In view of these problems, Ogundare (2009) and Dauda (2010) added that the resources required to provide education have been scarce, while students' desires for university education have continued to increase. Likewise, Salmin (2009) and Gupta (2010) supported the debate and claimed that Nigerian universities are actually not relevant or efficient in fulfilling national development objectives. For instance, Aina (2007) and Salmin (2009) hypothesized that Nigerian universities graduate students in civil engineering and electrical engineering annually. Yet there are no good roads, while the country still struggles to provide constant electricity and water. While this argument was sustained, as it was earlier argued in Chapter Two, Tsinidou et al. (2010), Duze (2011) and Narang (2012), a high proportion of distinctions or first class degrees obtained does not necessarily signify a high level of quality. In view of this justification, Hamid-Tohidi and Jabbari (2012) stressed that it is uncertain whether a university can be reduced to a simple measurable end product. Thus, it is argued that the value added by university (if it is effective) should continue long after the formal programme of study has been completed. This is not the case in the Nigerian context, putting the issue of quality at the top of the research agenda.

Likewise, Salmin (2009), Ojerinde (2010) and Akinola (2013) hypothesise that Nigeria is likely to witness the establishment of more private universities as a result of overcrowding in present universities, as mentioned in the introductory chapter. The continuous demand for university education by applicants alongside the trend for protracted strike action by the non-academic and academic staff in Nigeria's public universities has kept over 1.5 million qualified applicants waiting for admission into university yearly since 2005. This figure is estimated to have doubled following the

recent nine-month ASUU strike from April 2013 to January 2014. Convincingly, Blackmore (2009) claimed that universities need to realise that their long-term survival depends on how meritorious their services are and the level to which quality of service sets one university apart from the rest, not on the number of students they can admit. This statement was also evidenced in the literature review in Chapter Two of the present study, when Modebelu and Joseph (2012) expressed that it is very important to understand the complexities involved in managing quality in the university. They added that the presence of such complexity should not obscure the fact that many management concepts and strategies underpin the long-term survival of universities with a mission to accomplish.

A few researchers (Okogie, 2009; Oyewole, 2009; Ojerinde, 2010; Jekayinfa and Akanbi, 2011; Akinola, 2013) also pointed out (as mentioned in the introductory chapter and earlier sections of this chapter) that the NUC's aims are to prevent poor-quality services from being produced or delivered by focusing on the process and emphasising prevention rather than cure. It was evidence in the gurus' opinions, as discussed in Chapter Two by Gabor (1992), Cartwright (2007), Kong (2008) and Harvey (2009), that as a function of desperate needs for positive changes to implement university objectives, principal officers have introduced mechanisms such as quality control and quality assurance. Nigerian universities are not exempt from the need for change, as the government has put in place elaborate measures to improve quality, such as quality assurance initiated through the NUC, as an indication of the desperate need to bring about a fundamental improvement in Nigerian universities (Okogie, 2009; Sofowora, 2011; Jekayinfa and Akanbi, 2011). But in reality, if the government has introduced the NUC to prevent poor service from being delivered, why were they unable to do something to stop public universities from embarking on a nine-month ASUU strike? The effectiveness of such measures introduced by the government is a concern that

requires urgent investigations as to how quality management has been occurring in Nigerian universities in order to uncover the reality of quality and develop a quality management model that will help to improve quality in the Nigerian university context. It is, however, helpful to consider the present status of universities in Nigeria for clarification purposes.

3.6 THE PRESENT STATE OF NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

As mentioned in the introductory chapter and in earlier sections of this chapter, the NUC are in charge of monitoring Nigerian university affairs and the closure of illegal campuses, the approval of courses or programmes and the maintenance of minimum academic standards, amongst others (Igbuzor, 2006; Okechukwu and Okechukwu, 2011). Recently, the NUC has involved itself in many approaches or techniques to help improve Nigerian universities. These efforts cannot be overemphasized, as the NUC's continuous attempts to move Nigerian university education forward involve matching their activities with international standards on a continuous basis, through several strategies such as benchmark setting, accreditations, standards and regulatory frameworks (Akinyemi and Abiddin, 2013, p. 229). Equally, in recent times, the number of licensed universities has grown from twenty-five Federal, seventeen state and three private in 2000 (NUC, 2010) to forty Federal, thirty-nine state and fifty private in 2014 (NUC, 2014), although the time frame of this study will cover the period from 1960 to 2014. In the time window between 2000 and 2014, eighty-one universities have been created, among which fifteen were federal, nineteen state and forty-seven private universities. These universities vary in size, quality with regard to capacity, infrastructure, library facilities, courses and curriculum (Salmin, 2009; Ojerinde, 2010; Duze, 2011). Equally, there are fifty-three unlicensed private universities operating illegally in various parts of the country and eight facing prosecution (NUC, 2010; 2014).

Nigeria owns the largest universities in Africa, as discussed briefly in the introductory chapter: Salmin (2009) and Akinyemi and Abiddin (2013) indicated that Nigerian universities enrolled the highest number of students in any African countries, with 129 universities enrolling over 1.9 million students yearly with approximately 1.5 million candidates awaiting enrolment yearly. With enrolment numbers increasing and the creation of more universities, the issue of quality has come to the top of the research agenda due to the continued repetition of problems without a long-lasting solution. In view of this difficult situation, Nigerian universities have found themselves in a condition where they need to manage the sudden growth of universities all over the country. Nigerians are beginning to comment on the position of Nigeria universities, the environment in which they operate, coupled with the needs and demand for them to provide quality service. Nigerians are concerned that the difficult situation the universities face is making them less and less significant to the needs of the society and increasingly ineffective in accomplishing the mission for which these institutions were created (Adamolekun, 2007).

Materu (2007), in his review, argued that an effective model of quality would be one that allows universities to improve their interactions with the quality of their provision and achieve their longer-term vision and mission statement with experience of university management. However, Abukari and Corner (2010) observed that the current quality control practices by the NUC in Nigeria have been seen largely as a means of control on the part of outside funding bodies and place undue emphasis on management (internal) documentation, which sometime results in disruption of normal activity and threatens the enthusiasm and commitment of principal officers (Ocho, 2006; Alani, 2008; Adekola, 2012). The ineffectiveness of the control and approach is what Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2002) stressed as fundamental principles of quality management: when one relates service quality to processes, it ultimately affects the

morale of the management. Therefore, adequate control is required to made changes in such a multifaceted system.

However, Wikgren (2005) hypothesized that critical realists are thus concerned with identifying causally effective mechanisms through in-depth ontological examination. This approach requires researchers to be cautious about the progress of methodologies that are able to provide valid explanations without compensating for the lack of experimental control (p. 13). This calls for principal officers as co-participants to consider quality management as a continuous function of all events as a normal integral process, rather than at certain times when unnecessary emphasis is placed on documentation, bureaucracy and other requirements. Therefore, using a critical realist approach to understand key actors' involvement in quality management, will help to uncover how quality occurs in the Nigerian university context.

As Okojie (2007) discussed, the pressure placed on a university in terms of demand, limited availability of physical facilities and demand for academic staff to cater to students' needs has taken a high toll on the quality of programmes in the institutions. Okojie asserted that employers, parents and the general public have conveyed concern about the quality of graduates produced from Nigerian universities, as discussed in the previous section. Oyewole (2009) held the view that quality in education deals with issues of functionalism, validity, relevance and efficiency of the educational system in the realisation of national goals and objectives. In Chapter Two of this thesis, it was evidenced that there are general problems confronting higher education, from which Nigeria is not exempt, coupled with the universities' own inefficiency. Such problems include the difficulty of applying quality management models to a university. It was discussed in Chapter Two that the difficulty of recognizing the right management structure, that would not limit the multiplicity, innovation and creativity of academic

institutions, is problematic (Harvey, 1996; Sohail et al. 2003; Srikanthan and Dalrymple 2007; Blackmore, 2009).

An attempt to solve this problem has created the inappropriate strategy of reducing variation in educational processes and outcomes, arising from over-regulation, government policies and control of academic freedom (Adesina, 2002). This approach has been applied by the Nigerian government on many occasions in order to make Nigerian universities' education more relevant (Oyewole, 2009). Conversely, the history of Nigerian university education in the 1990s, as discussed in the previous section, shows that university education in Nigeria has been faced with many crises, especially inadequate resources in terms of input, as identified in Chapter Two and previous sections of this thesis, with the exception of students as input.

In agreement with this, Igbuzor (2006); Igbin-Akenzua (2007) and Ekundayo and Ajayi (2009) argued that Nigerian universities are suffering from overcrowded lecture rooms, meaning that lecturer-to-student interactions are obviously limited. Where laboratories are found, they are usually obsolete and starved of modern equipment. However, it was argued by Kleijnen, et al. (2011), as discussed in Chapter Two, that facilities such as the curriculum, teaching materials, the environment and many more can encourage or discourage the development of core transferable skills, subject and practical knowledge, the choice of teaching and learning methods and the assessment strategies that will expose students to practical knowledge. This statement was challenged by the work of Igbin-Akenzua (2007), and Ekundayo and Ajayi (2009), and Obasi et al. (2010), who found that Nigerian students are not exposed to practical application of skills, while the study by Eagle and Brennan (2007) mentioned in Chapter Two claimed that the universities' focus should be on student intake, teaching and learning, curriculum design, application of practical knowledge to help students

learn for themselves and development of a continuous quality culture has been approved by many academics (Doherty, 1997; Gibbs and Simpson, 2005). But an attempt to replicate this approach in the Nigerian context has revealed that the approach has failed and stakeholders are now calling for a better approach to manage the university education sector, as discussed in the introductory chapter (NUC, 2010).

Again, the work of Adamolekun (2007) and Obasi et al. (2010) provides evidence that this is not the case in Nigerian universities, and Akinyemi and Abiddin (2013) also revealed that there are shortages of learning materials such as textbooks, journals, electronic journals and other educational materials, including shortage of manpower, prolonged strikes by academic staff and a lack of infrastructural facilities and resources. This was compounded by continuous engagement of the union of universities' academic staff in industrial strike action (Akinyemi and Abiddin, 2013). However, as mentioned in Chapter Two, the resources available in form of inputs to learners, as well as the overall supporting systems, are also critical aspects of quality management that are scarce in Nigerian universities. It is also clear in Ekundayo and Ajayi's (2009) work that the above listed problems are major difficulties in Nigerian universities. This raises the argument as to whether or not Nigerian universities are providing quality services to their students.

All the aforementioned problems and concerns raised and discussed in this study have been studied in past literature using a survey and quantitative approach to address the issues. Researcher who have looked into these problems have focused on creating solutions, ignoring the fact that the problems do not create themselves, since a process is put in place (Njihia, 2011). This was what the quality gurus introduced in Chapter Two were talking about, especially Crosby's (1998) contribution, that management should be responsible for any unacceptable outcome, be it as a result of the personnel

involved or materials used. Again, it was observed that many Nigerian researchers had moved from academia to consultancy roles for more money, as mentioned in the introductory chapter, which might be the main reason why their focus was on problem-solving, not theory application.

Having a belief that there is link between the university, its management and how the system operates would make it appropriate to study how the Nigerian university management has perceived quality. Again, from the evidence provided in the introductory chapter and Chapter Two, including the sections discussed above, one could easily agree that university management are agents to make the university structure function effectively through their application of mechanisms (such as government policies, quality and quality management) that can help them to achieve their university vision and mission statement. Therefore, there is a need to uncover how the principal officers in Nigerian universities have been responding to quality management implementation in the Nigerian university context.

3.7 SUMMARY

This chapter was set out to expand the researcher's knowledge about practical issues that relate to the discussion of government policies in Nigerian universities. This was in line with the conceptual frame for this study, as shown in Figure 1.1, in which government policies and quality management are classified at the same level, but the researcher's attention will be on the application of government policies, not the theory, as the study needs to focus on practical rather than theoretical knowledge of government policies. Without doubt, this chapter has been able to demonstrate the application of government policies in Nigerian universities with the use of a standard literature review. The chapter started by describing higher education in Nigeria and justifying why the research is focused on the university context. Attention was later paid

to how government policies locate themselves within the study. The section reveals that the way government policies have positioned themselves in relation to university operations, even within the providers, is a major concern for the stakeholders if the institutions are to continue to achieve the purpose of their creation, as noted above.

The chapter also supported the debate in Chapter Two and provided a linkage between the key actor literature in Chapter Two and university management in Nigerian universities. The section demonstrated that there are many principal officers that are involved in the university system (input, transformation and output), as discussed in Chapter Two. However, this study is focused particularly on the internal key actors, who are the principal officers involved in the day-to-day running of the Nigerian university system. Likewise, the chapter has highlighted the ongoing concern and debate on quality of Nigeria universities' provisions. Attention was paid to literature that has discussed the stakeholders' concern about the position of government policies on national development and universities producing graduates who are not relevant to the needs of the society.

The section that follows discusses the present state of Nigerian universities. It is clear from all the sections in this chapter that prior researchers who have studied higher education and Nigerian universities in particular have done so without making any attempt to use the most appropriate methodological approach for such study, while their concern has been to solve problems that the institutions are facing. Likewise, it is clear from the foregoing chapters that Nigerian universities are facing a number of problems that require adequate exploration. Researchers in the field are not encouraged to carry out meaningful research due to environmental factors (i.e. strikes, power cuts, irregular salaries and many more), as mentioned in the introductory chapter and this chapter. The few research works that are available in the field have

been conducted by Nigerians in diaspora (perhaps on sabbatical leave, or on collaborative activities), while the small number of academics working and conducting research in Nigeria are limited. These may be the reason why it has been difficult to apply any borrowed approach to Nigeria because they will not have complete knowledge of how to apply such models.

Bearing these points in mind, it will be good to step backward to study Nigerian universities from the perspective of their principal officers and suggest a relevant model that could improve the system. Having studied both quality management and government policies on Nigerian universities separately, boiling questions have been raised in the researcher's mind: what do Nigeria principal officers understand as quality, since quality means different things to different people? How have they been responding to government policies on university education and many more? All these questions are explored in detail in Chapter Four of this thesis.

Chapter Four focuses on the methodology and approach adopted to help achieve the third research objective and develop research questions based on the discussion in the first three chapters. The chapter discusses how the researcher will undertake empirical research using a qualitative approach within a critical realist paradigm. The chapter also discusses the relevance of using a qualitative approach and why critical realism is appropriate for this study.

4 METHODOLOGY

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4.9 SUMMARY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The issues identified in the first three chapters of this thesis highlight that many of the studies carried out in this field (Townsend and Gebhardt, 1990; Doherty, 1994; Sambo, 2002; Adegbite, 2007; Babalola et al., 2007; Bulsuk, 2009; Adeogun and Gboyega, 2010; Stensaker et al., 2011; Cardoso et al., 2012) have focused on deductive or quantitative approaches - focusing on events and creating meanings of them. Walliman (2005) and Saunders et al. (2007) claimed that research is something that people carry out in order to discover things in a logical way, thereby raising their understanding. Others (Babalola and Okediran, 1997; Salmin, 2001; Okebukola, 2002; 2006; Ogundare, 2009; Abdullah, 2006; Aina, 2007; Peter, 2009; Obasi et al., 2010; Okechukwu and Okechukwu, 2011; Adekola, 2012; Akinyemi and Abiddin, 2013) have used the approach as a problem-solving technique, which has little or no impact on academic research. Even though they have failed to study the causes of events, they have measured these events and created solutions. The literature has failed to study how the events occur in the university education context. Meanwhile, no study has addressed quality management implementation in the Nigerian context. Again, this was observed as a major gap in the literature to be filled by this research. For this reason, the methodology chapter is designed to contextualize both the research paradigm and the philosophical approach adopted to fill the gaps identified in previous chapters.

Similarly, other studies conducted around the world show that researchers who have worked on quality management research in higher education have used quantitative methods to measure quality, as observed in Chapters Two and Three. Such studies, which include the works of Cheng and Tam (1997), Bogue and Hall (2003) and Abdullah (2006), have focused on applying the models developed from the manufacturing industry into the university sector, which operates in dissimilar ways.

This was confirmed in Obasi et al.'s (2010) opinion, discussed in Chapter Three, that Nigerian universities have failed as a result of applying models borrowed from other sectors. However, this study is not interested in measuring quality; rather, it is interested in the reality of how quality management implementation occurs in the Nigerian university context. Research shows that many studies conducted around university quality management have focused on measuring quality, not minding how the quality they measure occurs or how it is interlinked within the structure. These gaps are evident in the discussion in the previous three chapters of this thesis. Likewise, the final section of Chapter Three suggested the need to carry out further research using an approach that is missing in the literature in order to know how university management or principal officers knowingly or unknowingly use mechanisms (i.e. government policies and quality management) to drive the structure in the Nigerian university context.

The study develops specific five research questions the researcher focused the attention of the thesis on. The main research question is 'How have Nigerian universities been responding to quality management implementation'? To answer these questions, the primary aim is to probe into the activities of principal officers in Nigerian universities, as their experience, involvement and knowledge as agents that drive the structure are factors that contribute to quality in the university sector. To achieve this aim, specific research questions have been formulated as follows:

1. What quality management literature can be developed to address quality issues as it relate to Nigerian universities?
2. How have government policies application been linked or discussed in relation to quality management in Nigerian universities context?
3. How have principal officers in Nigerian universities responded to the development and implementation of quality management mechanisms?

4. What quality criteria influence principal officers' decisions on how to implement quality management within Nigerian universities?
5. What quality management model can be developed to help Nigerian universities to improve their quality?

Having answered the first research question, that is what quality management literature can be developed to address quality issues as it relate to Nigerian universities, the other research questions were re-phrased into key interview questions, as discussed in Chapter Five. The research adopts a critical realist paradigm, within which a qualitative approach, as suggested to be appropriate in Chapter Three, is applied to probe into the minds and activities of key actors in Nigerian universities to discover how they have been responding to quality management implementation. The study selected six structures, within which twenty-nine semi-structured interviews were conducted, the outcome of which was used to develop seven major themes for further discussion in Chapters Five and Six. The other sections of this chapter four were used to discuss data collection, instruments used to uncover the reality and issues relating to research sampling. The thematic data analysis method adopted and the findings are discussed. Attention is paid towards discussing the trustworthiness and authenticity of the findings, as well as ethical considerations, and lastly the major limitations of the study are discussed.

4.2 CRITICAL REALISM PARADIGM

Critical realism, as its name suggests, is a realist philosophy, in that it claims that only some facets of this world are accurately understandable via the researcher's senses of them and that reality exists independent of the researcher's insight or what he knows

(Bhaskar, 1993, 1998). Researchers' knowledge is not always absolutely reliable, of course—for example, researchers can misinterpret logic as facts and be misled by impressions. Nonetheless, when a researcher misperceives an event, the properties and occurrence of that event are independent of his understanding and perception: the cause of the event functions even if he is not aware of its operation because reality is independent of researchers' senses.

Bhaskar (1975) differentiates between intransitive and transitive entities of knowledge in the world. Transitive entities are models, theories, paradigms and methods. These entities are personal and their presence is reliant on human activity (that is, transitive entities would stop if people unexpectedly ceased to exist). Intransitive entities, on the other hand, are quite independent of researchers: they are “structures, mechanisms and real things, events, possibilities and processes of the world” (Bhaskar 1975:22). That is, the reality of an intransitive entity does not depend on researchers' perception or knowledge of it. These differences between what we perceive and what happens between an event and the causal (but feasibly unobservable) mechanism that caused the event are the main qualities of critical realism that researchers explore.

Three opinions on reality are formed in the work of critical realism, as mentioned by Archer (2007): they are the empirical domain, the actual domain and the real domain. The empirical domain is an anthropocentric perception: that is, what people can experience. This is the domain of events: how have universities been responding to quality management implementation via principal officers and so on. The actual domain is the simplest to describe. Things in the actual world occur regardless of whether or not we can sense them, such as events. Such events consent to empirical traces that

cannot be seen: that is, the event is not similar to trace but researchers can observe those traces within an event. Furthermore, limits on our senses imply that we might not recognize all traces (that is, the researcher can only experience a subset of things in the empirical domain that can be experienced), and the perspectival and the subjective nature of intuition means that experiences will vary from one party or one situation to another.

Following events are generative mechanisms and structures that have persistent properties. In layman's terms, the reason for something or the causal power that gives rise to something *is* a generative mechanism. In a similar vein, Bhaskar (1993) explains that *alethic realities* that scientists seek to identify in underlying processes that give rise to both empirical and actual events are referred to as generative mechanisms. This concept is better explained in the work of Groff (2000:411), who says that 'to be alethic reality of quality management is to be the generative mechanism or causal structure that gives rise to quality management'. The pyramid of ontological classifications, then, is that stable universities and generative mechanisms are part of the primary classification of the real. These mechanisms and universities instantiate non and actual events, which leave empirical traces that can be experienced or otherwise observed. Therefore, events, mechanisms and experiences are all real. Experiences and events are instantiations of the generative mechanisms: therefore, they are also actual. Finally, empirical traces of actual things can be obtained via experiences, so experiences are also empirical.

Critical realist understanding of the real domain in quantitative research is to develop theory and to explain *why*, but from a perfect evaluation (Ackroyd and Karlsson, 2014). That is, what that event tells the researcher beyond everyday experience (the empirical

domain) is not usually about enduring the underlying causal relationships (generative mechanisms) that lie on the specific event observed.

In this view, deductive investigation involves manipulating the operation of a generative mechanism in order to manipulate the environment to produce or trigger particular objectified results. For example, to answer the question 'why', a researcher could manipulate the situation surrounding a certain class of decision process: for example, for someone who wants a better education, what makes him select a public or a private university or even select one university in preference to another? Therefore, in critical realist study, generative mechanisms are known as these causal forces. Further, critical realists distinguish between the event, the cause and facts about that event; any narrative account or causal explanation must explain patterns and data about that event independently of any particular event. This approach is adopted in Chapter Five to narrate the account of how principal officers in Nigerian Universities have been responding to quality management implementation as regards government policies.

Having disguised the important characteristics of generative mechanisms (and other real entities), realists hold that causality is a relation between two events. It is important to note that why government policies and quality management are related, though naturally held by things as they happen (a trait shown only when certain circumstances that fulfil or gain a particular property occur). A normal example is that driving in bad weather conditions is dangerous, but this property is not understood normally, only when an enabling circumstance happens, such as when it is raining or snowing. Thus the empiricist's knowledge of a social and personal identity is a bit like a generative mechanism. Since all relationships between events are personality grounded, there is,

however, no theoretical vocabulary offered to a realist to differentiate between properties of that event and a test for an event, leading to an approximately certain conflation of an attribute with the investigation for that attribute—for example, saying that a property of a wet surface is that it causes the car to skid.

With this background, Bhaskar (1975) is of the position that realists attempt to describe and explain the generative mechanism and to identify things accountable for events systematically. Bhaskar debates the application of these approach and principles to the social sciences, in which the units of investigation are socially gathered entities, for example social structures (Durkheim's main work *Suicide* [1897] is cited as a prototype for the social sciences); similarly, the observed structures in the social sciences are transitive in nature (related to the intransitive structures observed in the natural sciences), which generates a number of epistemological and ontological concerns. Beneficiaries can now see how these objects of knowledge in the natural sciences apply to philosophical orientation, in which generative mechanisms can be anticipated and explained by an event and empirical traces of that event. For example, Mingers (2004a) debates that similar to the government policies and quality management studied, epistemology itself is a social practice of social science that pays attention to self-referential of human value of social structure while ontologically, it holds only particular contexts that social structures (universities) do not exist autonomously of their effects, in terms of localised space and time.

In another review, Bhaskar (1975) argued that structures (universities) do not exist independently of the research activity or the researcher, and that it is in these sense that actual, real and empirical domains can still be observed. Likewise, owning the view

that structures (universities) are reliant on humans' (principal officers') value of their social and personal identity, it does not make them unreal or any less worthy of being studied. For example, government policies are obviously transitive, but we also know that they are detached from the people who use them. Even with mechanisms' very existence and their formulation and structures, changes as types of events must have been produced by generative mechanisms. Therefore, to explain the objects, generative mechanisms and structures will require the realist to pay detailed attention to probing questions that can help to unveil informant's mind about the phenomenon under study.

Fleetwood (2002) writes that critical realism is a philosophy of science that highlights ontology (i.e. the study of being or existence) over epistemology (i.e. investigation of the way information is obtained) with the beliefs that, "for critical realists, the way the world is should guide the way knowledge of it can be obtained". Therefore, why measure quality if you don't know how it occurs in the first instance? To investigate the approach requires a critical realist paradigm, a philosophy which is derived mainly from the work of Bhaskar (1998), although it has been developed by philosophers like Archer et al. (1998, 2004), Archer (2003 and 2007), Sayer (2000), Fleetwood (2002; 2005), Iannacci and Hatzaras (2012) and Edwards et al. (2014).

Critical realism is appropriate for this study because it occupies the intellectual 'space' between positivism, with its ontology of observable events, and postmodernism or poststructuralism, often with strong social constructionist ontology (Archer, 2007). The main reason why the study rejects positivism's preoccupations with prediction and the (often inappropriate) quantification and measurement used by earlier research, as discussed in Chapter Three by Modebelu and Joseph (2012), is that it is very difficult to

measure university outputs in meaningful terms. Modebelu and Joseph's view is that the world is real, and the researcher's presence does not have that much effect on it, as clarified by Wikgen (2005) and Wynn and Williams (2008). In other words, this world is complex and multi-causal, which means that there could be hundreds of causes for each effect. The researcher believes that each researcher creates his or her own view of the world based upon his or her perceptions, social and personal identity of it, because not all individuals see the world completely as it surely is: that is, perceptions and observations are fallible in the belief of critical realists (Sousa and Castro, 2010). This criticises the approach that assumes that quality from a developed country can be replicated in a country like Nigeria. For this study, social phenomena can, often with great difficulty, be understood, but not often (meaningfully) measured: hence the preference for qualitative methods is clear.

According to critical realist philosophers such as Bhaskar (1998), Archer (2003) and Kempster and Parry (2014), the very likelihood of social theory is grounded on the presence of real social structures and systems. It means developing an entity which functions independently of our thoughts about it, conditioning – but never decisively – intentional essential activity, and being nevertheless dependent on the principal officers' activity to endure or change (Willmott, 1997; Kempster and Parry, 2011). This way of thinking about science suggests that reality is stratified. Events can be seen, but social devices are not freely observable; they necessitate abstraction and theory, as suggested by O'Mahoney and Vincent (2014). These methods are the instruments that scientists use to analysis how a particular theory – or an associated set of ideas – can justify an observed event.

Likewise, critical realism also postulates that reality is a collection of different levels (an example being the social construct, the psychological, the biological and the cultural level). None of these levels can be reduced to another level or cause of what occurs on these levels. For example, as discussed in Chapter Three, Babalola et al. (2007) argued that Nigerian universities operate under three different levels of authority: that is, federal, state and private providers. They explained that activities at each of these levels cannot be reduced to the other; nor can what causes an event to occur at one level be reduced to another, as universities vary in size and quality with regard to capacity, infrastructure, library facilities, courses and curriculum (Salmin, 2009; Ojerinde, 2010; Duze, 2011).

The idea that the cause of an event cannot be reduced from one level to another is the foundation for the analysis and implies that the quality of the university, such as seeking and using information, cannot be described in terms of processes or mechanisms working at just one level - be it personal, socio-cultural, cognitive or discursive. This is a further reason why this study rejects post-modernism's and post-structuralism's tendency to downplay extra discursive phenomena and their flirtation with the judgmental relativism that follows from this ontological position. If reality is constructed or created entirely via our linguistic or discursive actions, then there is no reality independent of the language or discourse (Al-Amoudi and Willmott, 2011). In this case, there is no reality against which the researcher can compare and evaluate (i.e. judge) competing knowledge claims. The best the researcher can do in this circumstance is to compare knowledge claims to each other, or perhaps deconstruct them to see where they are from (Al-Amoudi and Willmott, 2011). Incidentally, the latter course of action can be compared with this study, as the thesis intends to deconstruct government policies (i.e. the theory) from government policy *per se* (i.e. the practical) and relate it to quality management implementation in Nigerian universities.

For example, as discussed in Chapter Three, Farjoun (2010, p.204) claimed that structures can be reproduced only through the actions of principal officers as agents, and agents come into being only within a structured environment. Likewise, Giddens (1984) argued that structure and agency are inter-reliant – they both create and are created by each other. Structures are constituted and reconstituted by social actors through the ways that they express themselves as actors. Jarzabkowski (2008, p.622) claimed that “agents produce and reproduce the institutionalised social structures that persevere over time, space and deliver procedures for actions”. This is done through their social and personal identity of the event, as mentioned by Mark and O’Mahoney (2014), who state that social identity is concerned with the extent to which individuals feel attached to a specific group in relation to other social categories. The structure of higher education in Nigeria continues to change through various reform agendas. Hence, organisations, forms of interaction and institutions (structure) are neither external to the agents nor brought into being by social agents. Therefore, for discursive parts, the researcher needs discursive methods and techniques; and for extra-discursive parts, the researcher needs extra-discursive methods and techniques (Smith and Elger, 2012).

This study rejects the ‘one size fits all’ ontology and advocates selecting research methods and techniques according to the nature of the phenomena under investigation (Reed, 2001; 2009). Moreover, because critical realism claims that there is only one reality, usually with multiple interpretations of it, there is something against which to compare and evaluate competing knowledge claims (Morais, 2010; O’Mahoney and Vincent 2014). This does not, of course, mean that evaluating such claims is easy, but it does mean that it is not impossible. Therefore principal officers’ claims from one structure can be evaluated against each other or against the past researchers’ findings,

which is what this research is doing. Owing to the description of this study, the research adopted a critical realist approach to help select and focus on agents within the structure, to generate ideas that can help to uncover the reality and answer the research questions raised from past three chapters. Critics of this approach have raised the question of why and how a critical realist study will be used. For the purpose of this study, where the researcher uses a critical realist study as an approach for exploring an empirical investigation, the cause of an event is within its real-life context (Easton, 2002, 2010). Wynn and Williams (2008) mentioned that a qualitative study is both the procedure of learning about the agents, the structure and the mechanisms that drive the structure.

Thus, as a form of research, a critical realist study is defined by interest in individual principal officers and not by the methods of inquiry used (Ryan et al., 2012). The term 'structure' in this study relates to the fact that a controlled number of units of analysis are studied intensively to help reduce the large number of Nigerian universities to study, while others' contributions are not ignored. However, Reed (2009) and Easton (2010) offer novel insights and discuss multiple structure studies on how to bridge the gap between philosophy, epistemology and methods adopted (Ryan et al., 2012, p.300). However, the objective of the critical realist approach adopted in this study was to explore how principal officers in Nigerian universities have perceived the implementation of quality management in line with government policies on university education, through their expectations and antecedent values. The rationale behind the choice of a critical realist paradigm was an examination of strategies available when confronted with the possibility of using a different number of structures. However, this study requires detailed empirical research to uncover what principal officers' definitions of quality and the purpose of the university are and what criteria they identified as

quality determinants. This calls for a face-to-face enquiry, which is a qualitative approach, to help enrich the findings.

4.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

The critical realist paradigm is based on the assumption that to a great extent, knowledge is objective; that there is a 'truth' or one reality that can be established through the use of inductive logic (Blom and Moren, 2010). Collecting data from the social world (through the use of questionnaires, for example) allows researchers to keep their own beliefs and values as far as possible outside of research and analytical processes. Such an approach is said to allow the researcher to collect large amounts of data, and thus is appropriate when the aim is to test and generalise a large population. Meanwhile, qualitative research is commonly associated with the interpretive paradigm or approach, which exemplifies, in the words of Merriam (2001, p.4), "an inductive, theory or hypothesis creating rather than testing mode of inquiry" through which knowledge can be gained in terms of "understanding the meaning of the process or experience".

Likewise, researchers who adopt the interpretive, subjective approach - as exemplified by phenomenologists - are of the conviction that the subjective experience of the individual is of crucial importance, given that individual perception is taken to bestow meaning. Besides, as indicated by Iannacci and Hatzara (2012), it is the meanings that human beings attach to social reality that constitute the only means to understand that reality. This belief suggests that "reality is socially composed rather than accurately determined" (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991, p.78), and that "the world and 'reality' are socially composed and given importance by the people" (p.78). The construction of social reality is rendered possible by means of diverse qualitative approaches, such as semi-structured interviews. It is claimed that research in this approach is based on the

key philosophy, which assumes that “reality is generated by individuals relating with their social worlds” (Smith and Elger, 2012; Gerrit and Verweij, 2013). This approach is consistent with the critical realist paradigm described by the work of Elder-Vass (2010) that the critical realism approach can help to reveal causal and missing mechanisms.

In contrast to quantitative researchers, qualitative researchers take a more exploratory approach, and are said to begin the process without any pre-held conceptions about the nature of the phenomena under investigation. They make no assumptions about 'reality', arguing that this does not exist independently outside of any individual's perception (Trochim, 2006), including the researchers' own work. Attention is again drawn to the comments of Trochim and Donnelly (2008) and Sewell and Pool (2010), who pointed out that these conceptions are not entities which exist in a vacuum. The ways in which individuals describe their beliefs and conceptions may differ. They distinguish between concepts themselves and their categories of description, arguing that such descriptions are derived from the researchers' own particular understanding of phenomena, and as such, are not truly phenomenographical.

We must bear in mind the difficulties experienced and issues raised in Chapter Two - for example by Crosby (1996), who claimed strongly that quality is measurable. Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2007) disagreed, arguing that the delicate process of teaching and learning does not lend itself to significant measurement, and argued against the quantitative approach used by other researchers to measure or determine quality as inappropriate. Likewise, in some past research, questionnaires were constructed using items from pre-existing instruments, yet no clear distinction was found between deep and surface approaches to quality management implementation within universities (Martin, 2009; Gallifa and Batelle, 2010). Whilst some reasons for the study have already been discussed, it is possible that the key actors in Nigerian

universities did not perceive or appreciate quality in the same way as others may have done, as quality management studies on university education had been conducted using the quantitative approach.

In contrast, it was observed by Easterby-Smith et al. (1994) that researchers who adopt a positivist approach are “independent of what is being observed” (p.77) and value-free, as values “may impair their objectivity and undermine the validity of the research” (Morrison, 2002, p.15). They are likely to employ quantitative approaches such as survey research, structured interviews, experiments and the like. At the most extreme, they also seek to “discover” general laws to explain the description of reality which is actuality observed by the researcher. However, there have been challenges to this tradition from those operating from a qualitative perspective (Easton, 2010; Robson, 2011).

Researchers in this field (qualitative) operate under a different set of epistemological assumptions. They have argued against the notion of objectivity, claiming that the best way to uncover and explain social phenomena is to become completely immersed in the research process and view the phenomena in context (Trochim, 2006; Wynn and Williams, 2008). They have also criticised the quantitative approach, in that it fails to elicit richer, more detailed aspects of phenomena that can be lost when exploring sets of statistical data. A chief strategy of the quantitative approach is to 'fit' the data into pre-existing categories rather than to provide a 'thick' descriptive account, which was recognized as a major gap in knowledge of researchers in this field, as discussed in Chapters Two and Three and evidenced in the work of O'Mahoney and Vincent (2014). Again, the use of a quantitative approach would not be compatible with the position of this thesis, which aims to uncover quality management implementation in Nigerian universities. This is because quantitative tools such as questionnaires, surveys etc.

cannot be used to probe into the mind, experience and knowledge of principal officers in order to uncover the reality behind an event that occurs.

However, Easton (2010) and Al-Amoudi and Willimott (2011) claim that critical realism is highly compatible with qualitative research, pointing out that agents such as principal officers would be required in conducting decidedly critical realist studies. Easton proposes that critical realism would require agents to answer questions in the form of “What caused the events associated with the phenomenon to occur?” (Easton, 2010a, p.123). As such, the focus lies on events (defined as “the noticeable conducts of people, structures and things as they happen, or as they have happened”: Easton, 2010a, p. 120) and mechanisms (defined as “ways in which structured entities by means of their liabilities and powers act and cause specific events”, Easton, 2010a, p. 122; Fox, 2013). Therefore, this research fills this gap by using a different approach and methods that have been unexplored both in the quality and higher education literature.

In light of the above discussion and detailed examination of the purpose of the present study, the study uses a qualitative approach with a critical realist paradigm to unveil quality management implementation in the Nigerian university context. An approach which is put forward by Sousa and Castro (2010) called layered ontology. Smith and Elger (2012); O'Mahoney and Vincent (2014) considered this approach ideal for exploring complexities and contrasting values of the different social and personal identity of human values on a multi-dimensional issue such as quality, quality management, government policies on university education and the university system. Cody and Kenney (2006) termed such an approach as the pragmatist position, which calls for using the most appropriate methodological approach for a particular research

problem. Therefore, it may be argued that the appropriateness of the methodology will determine its trustworthiness and authenticity.

Given the fact that this research moves backwards to probe into the minds of interviewees and asks questions that could uncover the cause of an event, rather than just asking an ordinary question about quality or government policies on university education, the approach is different to what a normal qualitative approach will do. Again, this is because of the view that qualitative critical realist researchers assume that “meaning is embedded in people’s experiences, social and personal identity” (Kempster and Parry, 2011, p.107), as the particular experience is ‘felt’ or ‘lived’ or ‘undergone’ (Aastrup and Halldorsson, 2008, p.748). The meaning ‘socially constructed by agents (principal officers)’ is what the researcher is interested in interpreting and understanding. For the reason stated above, the study’s justification for locating itself within the critical realist paradigm and adopting the qualitative approach is clear.

Moreover, concepts such as ‘perceptions’, ‘attributes/skills’ and ‘experiences’ are unquantifiable, and can best be examined from the key actors’ perspectives - sometimes referred to as the insider’s perspective, as discussed in Chapter Three (Dumond and Johnson, 2013). Such agents are key actors who are involved in the daily activities of the university, and not the researcher or outsider’s perspective. This also justifies the use of the qualitative approach within a critical realist paradigm, as captured by Reed (2009) and Kempster and Parry (2011), as there are difficulties in accessing and observing deep events (such as implementing quality, quality management and government policies in university). This was evident in Narang’s (2012) statement, discussed in the introductory chapter, that as a result of the difficulty in describing quality in higher education, researchers in the field have taken a simple approach to measure quality.

Kempster and Parry (2011, p, 110) explained further that ‘deep’ in this context should reflect the structures of the world that do not depend upon cognitive structures of humans, as mentioned above. Sewell and Pool (2010) also expressed that deep causal powers may not be capable of being observed through events. As suggested in the introductory chapter, it is good to know the cause of the events, though many researchers in the field have totally neglected to study the cause behind the event they measure. This study then interprets and explores an understanding of the interplay between agents and mechanisms (principal officers and quality management or government policies) as well as the structure (the university), with particular focus on Nigerian universities, where stakeholders’ demand for quality education mounts daily, as raised in the introductory chapter.

Another reason for choosing the qualitative approach within a critical realist paradigm is that qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and analysis enable researchers to get closer to research participants and capture the real perceptions through their involvement in how the event occurs (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Sousa and Castro, 2010). Further, as pointed out by several researchers, the use of qualitative methods helps to secure “rich descriptions of the social world” (Easton, 2010; Sousa and Castro, 2010), which qualitative researchers consider to be valuable in understanding “the meanings people have constructed. The meanings people construct can include how they create the meaning of the world and their experience of it” (Merriam, 2001, p.6). Hence, its complexity and subjectivity are the reality of human experiences (Fox, 2013). Taking everything into account, the researcher’s choice to carry out this study using a qualitative approach within a critical realism paradigm is clear. This will be achieved by probing into the minds, experience, knowledge, engagement, involvement, human values and thoughts of the selected university principal officers in an attempt to

uncover how these principal officers use mechanisms to drive the structure in the real world.

In view of this, the study uses a qualitative approach that employs in-depth individual semi-structured interviews as the sole research instrument to gather data. The individual semi-structured interviews conducted with twenty-nine principal officers provided a rich insight into the causes of two events (government policies on university education and quality management implementation) based on their role, human values and position in the events under investigation. The use of in-depth semi-structured interviews for this study has the advantage of providing the researcher with an opportunity for in-depth probing, enabling a better understanding of the respondents' actual beliefs, perceptions, views, thoughts, feelings and experiences in relation to the areas covered in the research questions.

4.4 DATA COLLECTION

Ghuari and Gronhaug (2005) and Hartas (2010) support the contention that data collection is fundamental to research, because it gives an in-depth view of how principal officers in Nigerian universities are responding to quality management implementation. The research adopts two methods of data collection, as discussed by Hartas (2010) as being suitable for a study of this nature. Hartas pointed out that there are two main ways of collecting data: through primary and secondary research. The research starts by collecting secondary data from external sources such as journals, electronic journals and articles, newspapers and NUC bulletins, from which research gaps were identified and research questions were developed to fill the gaps. This resulted in a draft literature review, which served as the foundation for developing the interview questions that were used to collect the primary data via twenty-nine semi-structured interviews.

However, Easton (2010) ascertained that each data collection procedure has its advantages and disadvantages. The question is: is there a near perfect method of collecting data that will give meaning to the research question? The response may not be too far from what Saunders et al. (2007) and Hartas (2010) highlighted: that the result will definitely be affected by the procedure adopted. They also suggested that making use of more than one procedure will reduce the disadvantages of a single procedure. Again, having observed that many of the research conducted in this field has applied the quantitative approach, with the view to measure quality. This was one of the gaps that this research aimed to fill.

The researcher criticises the use of a single approach or mixed approach without taking steps back to identify the cause of the causal and missing mechanisms that led to the event of interest, since the researcher's aim is to uncover how universities are responding to quality management implementation via principal officers' human value. Qualitative research, in contrast, involves the interpretation of phenomena without depending on numerical measurements or statistical methods. It is mainly concerned with observing, listening and interpreting phenomena (Punch, 2005; Zikmund et al., 2010). Therefore, the central data collection tool for this research is through in-depth interviews as a medium to answer the research question.

Primary data on the principal officers' perceptions, thoughts and feelings were collected mainly through individual face-to-face in-depth interviews. During the data collection period, the researcher observed that all participants had extremely busy and hectic work schedules. The researcher targeted thirty-six potential participants, but only twenty-nine took part in the interview exercise: seventeen from three public universities and twelve from three private universities in Nigeria. All twenty-nine participants held

management positions in their various universities. The researcher was mindful of the need to obtain relevant data from participants in both public and private universities, who should be occupying positions of authority above level 7.

Owing to the under-representation of findings that the principal officers in private universities had migrated with the culture, norms and behaviour from the public universities with no different set rules to guide the administration of private universities, the research assumed that it would not be necessary to compare the operation of public with private universities, and will thus focus tightly on quality management implementation. All interviews were conducted on-site: that is, at the university premises - basically the offices of the respondents. The interviews were scheduled to last for thirty minutes, though many ended up lasting for sixty to ninety minutes. The primary data collection process started in November/December 2012 upon ethical approval and was completed by February 2013. At the start of each interview, the researcher clarified the purpose and objective of the study, and sought permission from the respondents to record the interviews.

All participants completed a participant information sheet and a voluntary information consent form prior to the beginning of the interview section (see appendices 2 and 3 for copy). Audio recordings served the purpose of enhancing the accuracy of the transcriptions and mitigating possible misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the handwritten field notes taken during each interview. This was also supported by the critical realist philosophy: in order to uncover an event and achieve the objective of the study, critical realism allows researchers to adopt or introduce any approach at any point through the course of the exercise. The researcher was guided by the interview schedule most of the time, but on many occasions allowed the informants to deviate from the interview schedule (see appendix 4), especially when they needed to clarify

issues raised and converse freely or share any information which they believed to be of relevance to the research. The researcher also reassured the respondents that all data gathered would be treated with the strictest confidence, and that their identities would be kept anonymous in the final report.

On the whole, the researcher managed to establish and maintain rapport with the respondents. As Johnson (1994) remarked, "the onus is on the researcher as interviewer... to establish and maintain a socially acceptable interview relationship with the interviewee, while still fulfilling the aims of the interview to acquire individualised information relevant to the research" (p.48-49). As suggested by Patton (2002), "rapport was built on the skill and ability to communicate understanding and empathy without judgment" (p.366), and was established in such a method that the objectivity of the researcher was not undermined. A good rapport was vital, particularly when the respondents had an extremely hectic and busy work schedule and could not afford to spend too much time on the interviews. As a matter of fact, six of the interviews had to be split into two or more sessions, because the respondents were suddenly caught up with other urgent commitments. Their position in the university, in conjunction with a lack of time and an imperative to meet contingent work commitments and demands, had a twofold impact on the nature of the data collected. On one hand, they provided the researcher with sensitive, confidential and otherwise inaccessible data. On the other hand, as the respondents could ill afford to devote more time to the interview, it is assumed that the credibility of the responses may be affected.

The interviews were conducted smoothly, with practical and real life reflections of their practise having minimal disruptions and interruptions. The interviewees tried their best to respond to the questions posed, pausing occasionally to recall and reflect upon areas or issues that related closely to their past experiences, which could be of

significant relevance to the study. Generally speaking, most of the participants who took part in this study were quite thorough and articulate in their responses. They gave real life and practical knowledge of how they dealt with situations in their role. The investigation into the reality of how an event occurs in a real-life scenario is what a critical realist qualitative approach allows a researcher to do, where a normal qualitative or quantitative approach will only focus all their attention on asking questions on the surface.

The researcher reviewed and transcribed the interview recordings. Qualitative researchers who favour quantitative methods rely on statistical techniques, aided by software packages for analysis. This approach did not fit into this research, as an attempt to use Nvivo with the transcribed data did not actually uncover how universities are responding to quality management. However, both methods have their limitations. The qualitative research sample size selected is small, using purposive sampling procedures rather than probability sampling procedures. This made it difficult to generalise the sample of the study to the population.

The geographical location of this research study was Nigeria, as discussed in the introductory chapter. The choice of Nigeria as a study location was emphasised in the introductory chapter and Chapter Three, and was motivated by the challenges that Nigerian universities have faced over the last two decades as a result of an increase in demand for university education and the sudden growth of private universities, with forty-four private universities operating illegally in the various parts of the country and twelve facing prosecution. Consequently, many stakeholders, including governments, employers and parents, have continued to question the universities' activities - whether or not they are producing quality graduates - and worry about the nature of the service delivered to students. To investigate these assumptions, the study targeted the 124

universities established in Nigeria between 1960 and 2010 as a theoretical population. Purposive sampling was used to select twenty-four universities from the total population of 124 as qualified universities for the study. Stratified sampling was later used to select six universities (three public and three private). The semi-structured interview section involved six participants from each university, giving a total of thirty-six participants, but during the exercise only twenty-nine were available for interview.

Principal Officers - also known as employees, key actors and university management - were selected to ensure that their views as the management body in the university are well represented in the investigation of how quality management, in terms of input, transformation and output of the universities system, has occurred and how principal officers in the Nigerian universities have been responding to government policies on university education. Subordinate employees (i.e. Grades I – VII) were excluded from the sample because these grades are mainly made up of unskilled and semi-skilled staff. Part-time employees were also excluded from the sample because they may not have a foundation to form any long-lasting attachment with the universities concerned. The university employees that were selected for the study were considered experts who are involved in the day-to-day running of the universities and have prior knowledge of the phenomena under study, based on their roles and positions. The target participants for this study were principal officers: vice-chancellors, university librarians, deans of faculty, registrars, dean of student affairs, bursars and academic planning directors from selected sites. The selection of the sample involved determining the universities that could participate in the study. Since it was not possible in terms of time and cost to survey all the universities, the researcher adopted the use of a purposive sampling procedure to select appropriate universities. The selection process criteria were divided into two phases: the first phase focused on age, location and size and the

second phase on complexity, disciplinary balance, external consultancy and dependency.

The age of universities is an important factor, because some of the universities had been in existence for less than six years and had no graduates. They were considered unsuitable for the study. A total of forty-eight universities were eliminated from the study at the first stage (leaving the research with twenty-six federal, twenty-six state and twenty-four private universities). The second stage focused on location: in this stage, thirty universities located in crisis areas were eliminated (leaving the research with twelve federal, fifteen state and nineteen private universities). Location became an important factor for selection because the researcher needed to consider his safety as part of the exercise. Thirdly, the size of universities was considered based on their capacities. Universities awarding both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees were considered more suitable for the study. Twenty-two universities were eliminated at this stage (leaving the research with eleven federal, five state and eight private universities). At the end, these twenty-four universities were selected.

At this stage, the research merged the federal and the state universities (as defined in Chapter 3) together as public universities and in order to stratify the sampling from a large number. From the result of the first stage, sixteen public and eight private universities met the research criteria. At this stage, the research could not guarantee access to all these universities. Therefore, a request for authorisation was conveyed to all the twenty-four universities in writing. These universities had been established for more than ten years and all had larger numbers of full-time employees, as compared to the other universities eliminated earlier. They were based in different geographical locations and were 150 to 450 miles apart.

The second phase of selection was based on criteria such as complexity, disciplinary balance, external consultancy and dependency. Population sampling is an important process in this research, because it would be quite impracticable to survey the entire university population, as mentioned by Saunders et al. (2007). Therefore, a purposive method was deployed using complexity and disciplinary balance to select three public universities from the eighteen universities. The three universities selected were Agriculture, Technology and Science based universities. Three private universities were also selected; these were a faith-based university, a Denomination University and an Enterprise University. The six universities were selected as a structure to study, as mentioned earlier. The reason for selecting six universities is inherent in the objective of the study: that is, to uncover quality management implementation in the Nigerian university context and develop a practicable model of how quality occurs in a Nigerian university, which became the pillar for the study. At the end of the study, the complexity of each university involved, in terms of service offered to students and the public, is very important. A representation of the different discipline balances, the external involvement of these universities in societal development and their dependency, among others, were key reasons why they were selected for the study.

In this research, the main instrument used for data collection was semi-structured interviews, as discussed earlier. A simple definition of an interview has been put forward by Morais (2010; 2011) as “a purposeful conversation between two or more people.” Interviews can help researchers to gather reliable and valid data. There are two types of interview: focused interviews and unstructured or semi-structured interviews (Kvale, 1996; Morais, 2010; 2011; Easton, 2010). Again, the thesis's reason for employing a qualitative approach with a critical realist philosophy is to enable the researcher to dig deep in investigating the cause of the event from a realist point of view. Another good reason for using semi-structured interviews here is that the

researcher has close contact and gets first-hand information reflecting on the principal officers' daily activities and their involvement with quality management.

In the context of this study, a semi-structured interview is defined as a conversation between the principal officer and the researcher, focusing on principal officers' roles, duties, activities, beliefs, perception and experience, expressed in their own words. The approach was justified as appropriate, as Minichiello et al. (1990) pointed out that semi-structured interviews provide means through which the researcher can access and understand individual principal officers' perceptions and interpretations of quality management in within their role and involvement. However, this experience may vary from one principal officer to another. Therefore, the researcher used an interview guide, which serves "to ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each interviewee" (Patton, 2002, p.343), and to provide quality-related questions that focus on answering the research question, within which the interviewer is free to "probe, explore and ask questions that will illuminate and elucidate that particular issue" (p.343). An interview guide or schedule - setting out a few probing questions to guide the researcher - was used during the interviews, to ensure that the researcher did not get carried away and deviate from the original objective of the study.

This research, as critical realism, disagrees with testing existing findings not discovered in a specific area of study to measure or generalize in another area without pre-knowledge of quality management implementation in that area. The research suggests that these approaches are of great value and significance in this work. As existing findings are mostly drawn from the literature from Western countries, or data collected in universities operating differently to the country of study, this study uses a fresh approach that has not been explored in relation to the demand for quality in higher education locally or internationally, by requesting principal officers to give examples of

what causes an event to happen. The interview guide was designed as a framework to help stimulate and guide the respondents to reflect upon and think about issues that were of particular concern to them, such as government policies and their formulation, university guidelines for implementing government policies, quality management implementation and its effect on university processes and on principal officers' professional practice, with precise emphasis on the context in which the respondents found themselves (Patton, 2002). Twenty-nine respondents were asked to discuss their roles in the implementation of government policy and quality management. The data gathered was substantial and authentic as the researcher probed into the minds, knowledge and experience of principal officers. The information obtained was highly confidential and would not have been better obtained with another approach.

As a research tool and technique, the interview has a number of benefits. To start with, "it gives room for greater depth conversation", which is not the case with other methods (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p.272). The benefit of using interviews as a research tool was also observed by Best and Kahn (1998), cited in Ribbins (2007), as "getting beneath-the-surface reactions" (p.321) by probing and penetrating into what constitutes quality and how government policies are designed and also elaborating and clarifying terms where necessary. Furthermore, rapport was established between the researcher and the informants, while prompt and well-presented questions gave the interviewees the confidence to respond appropriately. Certain confidential information, which respondents might be reluctant to disclose in writing, was also obtained. Finally, two-way communication in the course of the interviews enabled the researcher to clarify any queries that the respondents might have in regard to the research questions and explain more lucidly the information required, as well as the purpose of research. The use of the qualitative approach (interviews) actually strengthens the authenticity and trustworthiness of the data, as it is a representation of establishment experience.

Lastly, the researcher was able to evaluate the sincerity and insight of the interviewees (Ribbins, 2007).

On the other hand, semi-structured interviewing was employed in the present study because it provided some form of structure or framework for the researcher to follow, especially in addressing broad topics such as quality in higher education and government policies, to guide the interviews and focus on how the research question would achieve the study objective. At the same time, it allowed the researcher more flexibility to respond to the emerging views and thoughts of the principal officers on new concepts and ideas related to quality, and also to explore issues of interest or concern from the respondents. On a few occasions, the researcher omitted some questions with particular respondents, because they had already talked about them, or because a particular topic was not relevant to their office. The reason for this approach is to avoid bias or being given the wrong information. In other words, the flow of questions depends upon the conversation. Additional questions were asked where necessary to explore the research objectives of the study. This flexible approach of collecting data overcomes the disadvantages of the questionnaire approach (Corbetta, 2003; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). However, the interview as a research instrument is not without its limitations. According to Easton (2010), interviews are considered costly in terms of time and effort and involve the risk of travelling from one site to another. This was a major disadvantage of using this approach in this study, as the researcher had to travel up to 450 miles for some interview appointments.

The research interviews will provide access to what principal officers are experiencing, making it possible to understand “what they know (knowledge or information), what they like or dislike (values and preferences), and what they think (attitudes and beliefs)” (Cohen, et al., 2000, p.268). Qualitative interviews thus provide researchers with an

opportunity to obtain “a real understanding and meaning of the events” (Kvale, 1996, p.11). Kvale’s view supports the adoption of interviews to help probe into principal officers’ views about the event and its cause.

4.4.1 Research instrument (Interview)

Interview as a research instrument is a process of human interaction that involves the possibility of the joint construction of knowledge and joint composition of meanings about people’s experience of activities and events (Smith and Elger, 2012). Smith and Elger (2012) further stressed that interview interaction as a form of research inquiry emerges to offer the interviewer direct access to the understanding of the informants, both in terms of their accounts, attitudes and experiences of the events (Smith and Elger, 2012). Elder-Vass (2010) also supports that interviews are required for retrieving human thought, experience and meaning but they are not by themselves adequate causal factors in play in social relations multiplicity or basis for analysing. O’Connell and Davison (1994), who discuss interviews from a positivist approach, argued that the dialogical procedure of interviewing must be strongly controlled, by neutral interviewers posing standardised or uniform structured questions, to elicit replicable and unbiased responses. They regard mutual compositions of meaning, especially within case study or ethnographic research of qualitative interviews, as inferior to such structured interviews and quantitative analyses (Goldthorpe 2000: 84-89).

In contrast, the mutual construction of meanings is celebrated within the interpretive tradition, with interviews as a base on which researchers can gain access to their participants’ personal understandings of events, social relations and contexts. While the thesis’s reason for employing a qualitative approach within a critical realism paradigm is the important role of the interview in that it is used to analyse human reflexivity and pull out individuals’ reasoning and knowledge in the inner conversation

(Archer, 2012). This method enables the researcher to dig deep in investigating the cause of the event from a realist point of view. Another good reason for using interviews in this study is that the researcher will have close contact and obtain first-hand information reflecting the agents' daily activities and their involvement with government policies and quality management.

On a few occasions, the researcher omitted some questions with particular respondents, because they had already talked about the issues concerned or they were not relevant to their office. The reason for this technique is to avoid bias or being given wrong information. In other words, the flow of questions depends upon the conversation. Additional questions were asked where necessary to explore the research question and objectives of the study. This flexible method of collecting data overcomes the disadvantages of the questionnaire method (Corbetta, 2003; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

Furthermore, rapport was established between the interviewer and the agents, while promptness and well-presented questions gave the interviewees the confidence to respond appropriately. Certain confidential information, which respondents might be reluctant to disclose in writing, was also obtained. Finally, two-way communication in the course of the interview enables the interviewer to clarify any queries that the respondents have in regard to the research questions and explain more lucidly the information required, as well as the purpose of research. This is what actually strengthens the authenticity and trustworthiness of the data, as it is the representation of establishment experience. Lastly, the interviewer was able to evaluate the sincerity and insight of the interviewees (Ribbins, 2007).

However, the interview as a research instrument is not without its limitations. According to Easton (2010), interviews are considered costly in terms of time and effort and involve risk in travelling from one site to another. This was a major disadvantage of using this method. On a few occasions the researcher had to travel more than 200 miles, and even up to 450 miles, for the next interview appointment.

4.4.2 Interview Guide

On occasion, the theoretical agenda pursued in critical realist interviewing may prompt a largely non-evaluative conversational approach, sometimes referred to as bounded spaces that generate their own local narratives. Therefore, to make the interview section more focused, it was borne in mind that the study's attention is on reality and not reporting external events but drawing upon cultural resources and producing positioned accounts in order to generate morally acceptable accounts (Alvesson, 2011). An interview guide or schedule was developed from the theory and debate discussed in the previous Chapters. The schedule, as shown in Appendix 4, served as a guide to the questions to be asked during the interviews. The guide was developed for the purpose of setting a preliminary idea for the interview process. It is worth clarifying that the interview guide was developed as an agenda to help stimulate and guide the respondents to reflect upon and think about matters that were of certain concern to them, such as government policies and their formulation, as well as university guidelines for implementing government policies on quality management and its implementation, university guidelines for implementing quality, government policies and their effect on university processes, their impacts on agents' professional practice, with precise emphasis on the context in which the respondents found themselves.

Under each section, questions were designed with a view to obtaining information from

the agents involved in the day-to-day running of the university system. Twenty-nine respondents were asked to discuss their roles in the implementation of government policy and quality management. The data gathered was substantial and authentic, as the interviewer probed into the minds, knowledge and experience of agents. The information obtained was highly confidential and would not have been better obtained with another method.

4.5 DATA ANALYSIS

In this study, data was collected primarily through detailed semi-structured interviews, with the aim to narrate generative and missing mechanisms to uncover quality management implementation. The reason for this procedure is to allow the researcher some flexibility to probe deeply into principal officers' experience and practical knowledge without presenting the picture as if the research is confronting the principal officers or exposing their weaknesses, but rather learning meaningfully stage by stage. The data analysis for this research relies on the research questions and the purpose of the study, and in fact, the findings are framed accordingly to answer the research question presented (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Bluhm et al., 2011). The researcher believes that there is a need to explain whether there are any disagreements in finding information from different principal officers (Speziale and Carpenter, 2007). In situations where conflict was found to exist, supporting evidence was provided to explain the argument (Russell and Ryan, 2009; Blom and Moren, 2011). This research defines the term 'data analysis' as "the process of presenting and systematically arranging the information from informants in a narrative approach that identify generative and missing mechanisms to discuss human value on quality management on university education" (Armet, 2013, p. 310), aiming "to find meaning in the practical

knowledge and experience of the phenomena under study through data collected” in contrast to the normal interpretive approach, which is just interested in ideas.

The interview process was taped for subsequent detailed analysis. Specified notes were taken during the interviews for cross-checking and verifying data against the audio tapes. At a later period, the recorded interviews were transcribed for data analysis purposes. This process of transcribing the conversation from a verbal to a scripted mode “helps structure the conversation into a form which is amenable for closer analysis” (Kvale, 1996, p.168). The audio recording was transcribed *ad verbatim* to reflect and portray the conversation as realistically and accurately as possible. As recommended by Easton (2000, p. 208), the transcription should, in the first place, “represent the whole contribution from the interview, be verbatim as far as possible, including hesitations, phases, laughs, sighs, coughs and so on.” Secondly, the conversation was replayed whilst entering emphasis, annotations and comments.

The researcher read through the transcribed interviews carefully and meticulously, line by line. It is permissible to reflect on interviews’ overall meaning and obtain a general sense of the information (Creswell, 2003, p.191) and ascertain the clues to be extracted from them for data interpretation and construction of meaning. In order to achieve the fourth specific research objective, which is to evaluate and discuss quality management implementation within Nigerian universities with reference to theoretical perspectives. The researcher noted key reflections in the margins, and also started to write down and record ideas or general thoughts about the data as they emerged during the transcription. This approach was supported by Ketokivi and Mantere (2010) that a successful realist study will involve the reconceptualization of theory and practical, subject and process in which they are connected in order to offer a new and often unanticipated view.

To organise the large volumes of data collected and conduct the detailed data analysis, the researcher made use of coding to match principal officers using their position of authority, and the role they have to play in the implementation of quality management. This process was in line with the work of Rossman and Rallis (1998), who explained that coding is the procedure of organising the material into 'chunks' before bringing meaning to those 'chunks' (p.171). According to Basit (2003), coding or categorising the data plays an vital role in data analysis; this research was no exception, as coding helps in protecting the identity of the respondents besides helping "to organise and make sense of textual data" (p.143). Coding was also viewed by Basit (2003) as assuming the crucial role of noticing relevant phenomena as they occurred in the study, gathering instances of quality management and analysing these phenomena in order to uncover patterns, missing mechanisms, structures, commonalities and differences (p.144). Likewise, as claimed by Dey (2003, p.144), coding "involves sub-dividing the data as well as assigning categories", through using codes or categories, which are allocating units of meaning in the form of labels or tags for inferential or explanatory information to help compiling in the study". Likewise, Gough and Scott (2000) identified two distinct yet linked phases to coding: one emphasises "meanings inside the research context", while the other focuses on "what may be meaningful to outside audiences" (p.144), but for critical realists, such correlation need critique to give more detail descriptive explanation compare to what a constructionist will do.

In the present study, as and when appropriate, coding categories were developed and affixed to different sections of the interview transcripts to classify and categorise diverse groupings of words relating to the specific answers generated in themes. Alternatively, qualitative data analysis converts the qualitative data into some form of explanation and interpretation of the participants and the investigated situations

(Cooper and Schindler, 2008; Buchanan and Bryman, 2009). These two approaches are commonly used in the literature, but are critiqued by this research, which is not interested in measuring quality or government policies. Rather, it wants to unveil the reason why principal officers behave, act or react in a certain way in order to know the cause of events. The process involved classification of data and identification of the themes. Then, themes were combined to identify categories and patterns that required further investigation. Then theories and guidelines were drawn from the data, as supported by the work of Buchanan and Bryman (2009) and Bluhm et al. (2011).

Brown (2005) argued that there are computer programmes available for analysing qualitative data, but these can be awkward to use. This was the researcher's experience in an attempt to use a computer-based approach, which is not sensitive to perspectives and details expressed in the interviews. For this study, with a small sample of twenty-nine participants, the interviews were easier to analyse by reading the responses and categorising them under meaningful themes, checking and re-categorising where necessary for better results (Buchanan and Bryman, 2009). However, this process was in line with Brown's suggestion that checking the categories or themes provides an estimate of the validity of the categories and the reliability of the categorization.

One of the computer programmes that Brown (2005) was referring to is Nvivo. Nvivo was considered during the transcription, but due to the nature of the language mixture, coupled with the ways each respondent structured their sentences, Nvivo did not work properly for the analysis. The results Nvivo produced made it difficult to identify useful themes that could uncover the causal and missing mechanisms that reflect the reality the study wished to uncover. Therefore, an alternative approach was adopted to give a thin re-descriptive explanation of empirical evidence provided by the interviewees.

Manual identification of themes was considered appropriate to unveil how the principal officers have been responding to quality management in the Nigeria universities. Therefore this study involved putting the data into themes, each of which was identified based on the following criteria: the position of the respondents, the number of times particular phrases were discussed by respondents, the emphasis laid on the claim and the importance attached to it by informants. Analysing the finding using numbers of respondent involved or that share the same view was not done to give quantitative approach any weight in this study but rather for readers to know how important each themes were based on principal officers view.

Thematic analysis was used because it is able to uncover the causes of events which require more interpretation and involvement from the researcher. The approach also focuses on identifying and describing the objects behind both quality management and government policy implementations via principal officers' practical ideas, beliefs and experience, which were used to generate the data that was later grouped into themes. However, the use of thematic analysis also moves beyond counting or calculating particular words using coding representations or phrases, such as students' outcomes, grades or number intake against the number of students graduated, to determine the quality of the institution. Many past researchers have used students' outcomes, grades or number intake to determine quality in the university, an approach that has failed to uncover quality management. Since the present research is not interested in comparing or measuring the outcomes against each other, but rather intends to generate a recognizably use of explanation and logic that move from empirical to real through the use of retroduction and abduction. O'Mahoney and Vincent (2014) claim that this approach will re-describe everyday observable objects of social science in a more general sense or an abstracted sense to describe observable irregularities in the pattern of events.

For this reason, trustworthiness becomes a greater concern with using thematic analysis than with word-based analyses because more interpretation goes into defining the data items (i.e., codes) and applying these codes to chunks of text. Concerns about interpretation and issues of trustworthiness are even more pronounced when working with multiple structures. To maintain rigour, strategies for monitoring and improving inter-coder agreement, and therefore reliability, became important in the analytic process. Despite these few issues related to reliability, the researcher feels that a thematic analysis is still the most useful in capturing the complexities of meaning within a textual data set (Bluhm et al., 2011).

One important dimension of qualitative analysis is that the text might be as simple as a single-word response to an open-ended question on a survey (e.g., “Can you please tell me your position in this university and what does this position require you to do?”), or as complex as a corpus of text thousands of pages in length. Along this continuum, analytic strategies will likely vary; therefore, the length of items for analysis was taken into account when planning the analysis. That being said, this thesis has a philosophy of critical realism, duly informed by qualitative research. In regard to this study, the thematic technique as described by Bernard and Ryan (2010) is useful. Though it involved rigorous reading of line after line of the transcription, it produced a better result at the end and the outcome was successful.

4.6 AUTHENTICITY/TRUSTWORTHINESS

As the structure in this study utilises research techniques commonly associated with qualitative studies, such as coding and thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews, certain aspects of Guba’s Model of Trustworthiness (1981) were used to justify the authenticity and trustworthiness of the findings (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Lincoln et

al., 2011). However, a qualitative inquiry of this nature, “because the human being for data collection, requires that the investigator carefully reflect on, deal with, and report potential sources of bias and error” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.11).

Unlike quantitative research, which embarks at the outset on producing objective truth, qualitative research yields subjective information observed and analysed through the lenses of the researcher. Due to the subjective nature of critical realism (Morais, 2010), well informed by a qualitative inquiry process, issues of authenticity arose and were tackled when reporting the research findings (Potter, 2007). Flick (2009) argued that procedures that minimise investigator bias should be emphasised. This then made it necessary for this research to strive to produce high quality qualitative data backed by a critical realist paradigm that is of high authenticity and trustworthiness through systematic data collection procedures and the use of multiple data sources (Fleetwood, 2002; Potter, 2007).

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) posit that, for research results to be deemed trustworthy, their validity and reliability have to be accounted for. Therefore the researcher took care to guarantee the authenticity and the trustworthiness of the present study. The authenticity of this study refers to how well the data collected address the research questions presented (Miles and Huberman, 1994), while trustworthiness refers to how well the data collected reflect principal officers’ social and personal identity, actual experience, practical knowledge, behaviour and involvement in quality management (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Three steps were taken to enhance trustworthiness in this study.

First, institutions were contacted by email for authorization (as shown in appendix 1). In this mail, the purpose of the research was stated clearly and the researcher explained that the exercise forms the biggest part of his doctoral research, as well as part of his professional practice as an academic. Second, individual participants were approached upon approval by the university management; appointments were scheduled according to participants' availabilities. This action diminished the possibility of seeing the researcher as a stranger who has come to probe the system, rather building a good rapport between the participants and the researcher. No discussion occurred in relation to the topic of investigation in the first meeting with the participants. Otherwise, they might have had a tendency to create information in an effort to give the researcher a prepared answer - which would jeopardize the uncovering of the reality of how the participants were involved in quality management implementation on university education, thus creating untrustworthy data.

Thirdly, during the interview process, all participants were first asked 'Can you please tell me your position in this university and what does this position require you to do?' They were asked to explain what role they had in decision making and to give examples of their recent activities focusing on quality management. Allowing the participants to reflect on their past activities and experiences is how a critical realist probes into the minds of the informants in order to verify whether the tasks performed are actual job requirements that match the research focus, not tasks unrelated to the research position. For example, they may have spent time doing their work outside activities related to quality or government policies. Data on tasks not related to quality management and government policies on university education were not sought in this

study. Verifying the data in this manner enhanced the trustworthiness of the data because it helped to ascertain whether the tasks engaged in by the participants were actual decision making or not.

In this present study, a number of methods were used to help reduce bias in the conduct of the study and increase the credibility, authenticity and trustworthiness of the results. Such methods included using a systematically devised process in the course of data processing and collection and ensuring reflective reporting through provisions of self-reflexivity and the reflexivity of those studied (Patton, 2002). It is anticipated that others who read this thesis would have confidence in the data and have good grounds for respecting its integrity. In this sense, sound research was produced from good quality data. One of the ways this research has ensured the quality of data is to check with research participants that what the researcher has as data is what the research participants meant to say and not otherwise.

In this study, the quality of data was subjected to participant checking. The checking involved repeating what the participants had said to re-emphasize or confirm whether they had properly answered the question or asking participants to verify whether what had been recorded was what they meant. Where participants rejected the data, the clarification that they gave was instead added to replace the misconception from the gathered information. Importantly, participants were generally happy that the data the researcher had captured reflected their views and experiences at the end of each section. All attempts were made to reduce the amount of variation in asking questions, so that reliable and valid data were obtained. The researcher would like to highlight that the consistency of the tools used helped to validate that the trustworthiness of data was

acceptable for use in qualitative inquiry within the critical realism paradigm.

4.7 ETHICAL ISSUES

The ethics of this research concern the appropriateness of the researcher's behaviour in connection to the rights of agents who became the subjects of the work or are affected by it (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999; Saunders et al., 2007). The purpose of the research was clarified in the introductory letter (see appendix 1), and Cardiff Metropolitan University issued an authorisation letter upon receipt of an ethical approval form by the university ethical committees (see appendix 5). Failure to do so might have resulted in the participants' not revealing information they would otherwise have revealed had they known the status of the researcher's confidant (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999; Bryman and Bell, 2003). In some cases, even if an organisation or individual is not mentioned directly, it is possible for them to be identified indirectly - which also has to be considered by complying with a strict code of confidentiality and anonymity of all participants.

Nonetheless, this study is ethically responsible to ensure that research methods and tools used are of the highest quality and as unobtrusive and inoffensive as possible (Fogelman, 2002). The research has the ethical responsibility to report the findings of the study as accurately and truthfully as possible and satisfy that the techniques proposed are appropriate. The research is also morally obliged to safeguard the interests of the subjects of the study or those who may be affected by the work. Fogelman (2002) also highlights the concept of informed consent of the respondents, which is tied in with anonymity and confidentiality. He observes that many surveys,

which do not require respondents to state their names, are termed as anonymous when in actual fact the researcher may have devised a means for identifying respondents using some sort of coding as discussed previously. In the present study, two major important ethical principles pertaining to the research participants, namely informed consent and confidentiality/anonymity, were observed.

4.7.1 Informed consent

In the present study, the initial informed consent (as shown in appendix 2) of the cohort of public and private university principal officers chosen to participate in the research was obtained via email. A formal invitation letter (as shown in appendix 1) was subsequently mailed to each potential participant, explaining the nature and purpose of the study and seeking the consent of each one of them to take part in the research interview. This was done by the registrar and was passed on to potential participants in the form of internal memos. This approach was in line with Kvale (1996, p.112), who explained that informed consent means informing the participants on the subjects of research, the overall purpose of the study and the key characters of the design.

Prior to the actual conducting of the interviews, the potential interviewees were informed and given a voluntary informed consent form to complete (as shown in appendix 3), which explained that they could withdraw from the interview exercise at any time and had the right to choose whether or not they wished to be interviewed. This was supported by the work of Anderson and Arsenault (1998), who remarked that "The involved informants must be informed of the purpose of the research, as well as the nature, and must consent to participate without coercion" (p.18). Berger and

Patchner (1994), on the other hand, pointed out that individuals must be explicitly provided with the option as regards whether or not they wish to participate voluntarily in the research. This was adhered to in this research; participants were given the option to refrain from providing answers to any questions that they felt uneasy and uncomfortable about answering. They were assured of the safety of any information provided (see appendix 3).

4.7.2 Confidentiality/Anonymity

According to Kvale (1996), “confidentiality in research implies that private data identifying the subject will not be reported” (p.114). Anderson and Arsenault (1998) took this further and explained that “confidential information indicates that the identity of participants involved will remain anonymous” (p.20). In the official invitation letters, the participants were guaranteed that anonymity and confidentiality would be maintained. Before the start of their interviews, interviewees were reassured of their safeguarding, confidentiality and privacy. The respondents were guaranteed once again that their identities would not be disclosed, and that reference codes would be used in reporting the findings. To ensure anonymity, all relevant information that might lead to easy identification - such as the names of the institutions, position in which they were currently working, or any related persons - was not disclosed and was deleted, changed or known under reference codes.

Researchers have the moral obligation to ensure that what is indicated as the objective and process of the study is indeed what actually happens. The names of all interviewees, respondents and institutions that took part in this study have therefore been kept completely confidential. Anonymity was important in encouraging

respondents to be truthful about their opinions, thus reducing the potential bias that might result when respondents try to conform to what is professionally or socially desirable or expected. Informants were informed that the objective of the interviews was to obtain their practical knowledge on how universities are responding to quality management implementation, rather than their views on whether or not a particular institution is best - in fact, this was clear from the nature of the questions.

Several authors have advised researchers to take ethics into careful consideration when writing a report of any kind, especially reports that are meant to be published publicly. It is not surprising that institutions have placed great importance on ethical conduct to avoid any legal implications. For this research, informed consent was gotten from each respondent and they were given pre-knowledge of the study. Steps were taken to clarify the nature of research to respondents to assure them of strict confidentiality. The researcher did not violate accepted moral research practice in conducting, analysing and making conclusions throughout the entire research. The researcher also made sure that the whole process did not hurt even those not involved in the research.

4.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research design, data collection and analysis are limited in certain aspects, which are summarized as follows:

4.8.1 Access

The major problem confronting the researcher in conducting this study was how to access potential and suitable institutions for the research. Therefore, a letter was drafted and sent to twenty-four universities that were first selected for the study via

email in order to access their principal officers. Only one of the universities replied by email: others claimed that their servers were faulty or they could not access their mail. Though the same information was sent via post as well, the institutions still did not reply. On arrival at each site, the researcher was able to overcome this problem by going straight to the vice-chancellor or requesting them to give their approval in writing prior to the exercise.

Even though the researcher found it extremely difficult to communicate properly from a relatively restricted and small population, the researcher made several attempts to gain access, particularly to private universities. They were first contacted by phone to sound out their interest in participating in the research, followed by the vice-chancellor's authorization via the registrar in writing, and a schedule of the plan was then presented to selected participants, who all allocated at least thirty minutes of their time for the exercise. This exercise prepared their minds to provide the necessary information, but a few of the selected principal officers still could not give their time when the researcher commenced interviews following his first visitation. Some principal officers, particularly a few from private universities, refused to take part, generally on the pretext of preoccupation with work and shortage of time, which meant that they could not fit into the researcher's schedule.

4.8.2 *Sample size*

In view of the difficulties in gaining access spelt out above, the present study was able to uncover quality management implementation by analysing and interpreting the perceptions, views, experiences, social and personal identity of a relatively small cohort of twenty-nine principal officers in six universities who agreed to participate in the

research. However, the information they provided in the interviews, in terms of their social and personal identity, could not be regarded as representative of all principal officers in Nigeria, but only as a representation of the universities involved.

4.8.3 Generalisability

The thesis does not claim that its findings can be generalised, as critical realist research of this nature is always interested in studying the reality of events rather than claiming universality of the findings. Likewise, the small sample size inevitably limits the likelihood and level to which the research outcomes can be transferred or generalised to all Nigerian universities or further afield. Nevertheless, this limitation cannot be taken to undermine the significance and value of quality management implementation on university education in the Nigerian university context, since the main aim of the study, as indicated above, was to move backward to unveil the cause of an event - to examine, analyse and interpret the perceptions, social and personal identity of the informants in the context of the study. Despite the possibility that a certain degree of generalization to similar settings and contexts may be contemplated, any attempt in actual practice to generalize the findings to other contexts should be made with extreme caution and prudence.

4.8.4 Data collection

In the first instance, as Fox (2013) suggested, the validity of the data could be greatly enhanced if the views, perceptions and feelings of all principal officers working in public and private universities could be sought and obtained. However, in view of the constant personnel changes within the units or departments for which the respondents were responsible, the study was confined to collecting and investigating only the social and

personal identity of the principal officers in three public and three private universities in Nigeria. The collection of data through interviewing all principal officers could be a salient feature and an important focus for future research undertaken in the same area of interest. Insufficient time to conduct the interviews also posed a problem and restriction to this study. Most of the participants had very busy work schedules, and kept scrupulous watch over the time expended on their interviews. Some even had to interrupt their interviews to attend to other matters before returning. As a matter of fact, most of them explicitly requested and insisted that the duration of the individual interviews could not exceed thirty minutes. For some key actors, the researcher even had to split the interviews into two parts, and had to conduct the second part after a short interval. Consequently, this shortage of time might have restricted the respondents from undertaking thorough and extensive self-reflections and recollections.

Furthermore, there might be a discrepancy between what was revealed to the researcher during the interview by the respondents and their real opinions and perceptions. The usual problem with interviewees was that they might be inclined to give responses that they thought would meet the expectation of the researcher, and might therefore tell the researcher what they thought or believed he wanted to hear. Likewise, in the present study, since the researcher did not know the majority of the respondents, they might not be fully objective in providing answers to the questions posed during the interviews. However, the university authorities knew and trusted the researcher, and the vice-chancellor helped to introduce the researcher – this technique improved the validity of the research data collected. In general, in spite of the difficulties and limitations indicated above, it is hoped that the primary research instrument chosen and used in this study, in-depth interviewing, has proven

appropriate for the purpose of this study. It could be seen to be useful and effective in generating relevant findings in spite of apparent limits on generalizations. The interpretations of the perceptions and experiences of the principal officers participating in the research are the source of the researcher's interest in the study and can be said to represent his contribution to knowledge.

4.9 SUMMARY

This chapter has considered and presented aspects of the research methodology embraced in this research as follows: justifications for adopting the critical realist paradigm and the relevance of a qualitative approach in the study. Due attention was paid to data collection, where sampling procedures and the use of the qualitative approach as a research instrument (semi-structured interviews) were discussed in detail in order to gain helpful insights into the perceptions, views and experiences of the respondents and address the research questions. The chapter has also provided detailed discussions of the reasons for adopting thematic analysis, the trustworthiness and authenticity of the research, ethical issues and major limitations of the methodology.

In Chapter Five, the researcher presents the generative and missing mechanisms from the empirical findings for further discussion and evaluation in Chapter Six. The chapter is concerned with achieving the third objective of the study, which is to undertake empirical research using a qualitative approach within a critical realist paradigm to identify how principal officers in Nigerian universities are responding to the development and implementation of quality management.

5 CRITICAL REALIST EMPIRICAL FINDINGS ON PRINCIPAL OFFICERS' RESPONSE TO QUALITY MANAGEMENT IMPLEMENTATION IN THE NIGERIAN CONTEXT.

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5.9 SUMMARY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins the narrative account of the fieldwork with some sort of idea of potential mechanisms active in the empirical domain that is quality management in higher education as illustrated in table 5.1 bellow. This is an approach that O'Mahoney and Vincent, in Edwards et al. (2014), regard as suitable for a critical realist study of this nature. O'Mahoney and Vincent believe that knowledge from extant theories should not determine what the researcher should focus on, as such theory may not be applicable or may be fallible: that is, it may be wrong or in need of correction. They also noted that the research environment may not permit the study of events associated with the actual mechanisms (such as quality management). Likewise, specific theories may not be actualised, which may make the exploration more difficult. This was the case with this thesis. This chapter presents and discusses the narrative account of the interview transcripts from the empirical findings, showing what was at work in the figure 5.1 bellow which are based on qualitative data collected from six Nigerian universities with twenty-nine principal officers, as discussed in Chapter Four. In the previous chapter, the phrases 'respondents' and 'agents' were used when referring to principal officers or university management, though they all mean the same and perform the same roles. In a qualitative discussion, they are referred to as interviewees, whilst critical realists refer them to as agents (Archer, 2012). Therefore, the term 'agent' has been used when referring to principal officers in some instances throughout the thesis. Likewise, it was clearly stated in Chapter Four of this thesis that 'university' represents the structure as defined by the critical realist perspective, while government policies, principal officer's respond, ethos, quality, quality management and implementation are mechanisms that are used by the agents to drive the structure (Aastrup and Halldorsson, 2008): see Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1: Illustration of Mechanisms, Processes and Variable

Theme	Mechanism	Generative Mechanism/Processes	Missing Mechanism/Variable
1	Government Policies	Intake Transformation Output	Criteria's for the process
2	Principal officer's response	Environmental factors	Attitude Behaviour Beliefs Culture
3	Government Policies' effect on Principal Officers	Conflicting Staff Union Creating access to education	Low wages Funding
4	Government Policies' Implementation	Problems in implementing Government Policies	What still need to be done
5	Quality Management	Admission and staff recruitment Teaching and learning Curriculum and Institutional factor	Implementation and approach
6	Quality Management Implementation	Quality mechanism identified	Factor affecting Principal officer's ability to produce quality services Environmental factors
7	Factor affecting university beyond intuition	Quality of primary and secondary school	Power supply Quality of the family in the community

In this chapter, attention is paid to probing questions (as suggested in Appendix 4, the interview schedule) in order to achieve the third research objective, which is to undertake empirical research on what is at work by using a qualitative approach within a critical realist paradigm to identify how principal officers in Nigerian universities are responding to quality management see figure 5.1

The chapter is divided into two parts to discuss the generative mechanisms under themes, as shown in Table 5.1. In the first part, four main themes were discussed as follows: principal officers' responses to government policies, government policies, their effect on principal officers and how these policies are implemented. Informants were asked to suggest what still needs to be done about government policies; this helps to identify missing mechanisms. The second part was also used to develop three main themes (theme 5 to 7), namely quality management (within which due attention is paid to what participants suggest as criteria for quality), quality management implementation and factors affecting university quality beyond the institution. The findings identify seven main themes, each of which sets out to address specific research questions of the study, as set out in Chapter Four. The following key interview questions, linked with the research objective, were asked to address the research question. It is worth mentioning that these four interview questions below were drawn from, but do not replace the research question, serving rather as a guide to probe into the activities of the principal officers involved to narrate generative and missing mechanisms, an approach that is adopted over the positivist, interpretivist or pragmatic paradigm (Smith and Elger, 2012). The interview questions are:

1. What are the perceptions of the principal officers about government policies on university education and its implementation?
2. What do principal officers perceive as major problems of implementing government policies on university education and what still needs to be done about government policies?
3. How have Nigerian university principal officers perceived quality in their universities and what are the key criteria for their perceptions?

4. What are principal officers' perceptions of quality, and what are the important tools to improve quality in Nigerian universities?

The interviews focused primarily on the perceptions and views of principal officers in Nigerian universities on how they have been responding to quality management implementation. They also aimed to investigate how government policies influence their professional practices and to explore important tools to help improve quality management in Nigerian Universities. This chapter outlines the results of investigations and identifies major themes that emerged, based on data collated from twenty-nine participants in Nigerian universities who were involved in the formulation and implementation of government policies and quality management implementation in their respective universities. The chapter starts by explaining what the questions aim to achieve, and then presents principal officers' profiles, their responses and the major themes as they arise from the interview section.

5.1.1 Aim of interview questions:

It is important to clarify again that the use of interview questions in this thesis does not replace the research question. The research question was used to develop the whole thesis while the interview questions were generated from the research question to focus on reality by probing into the social and personal identity of the principal officers. The approach was used to ask principal officers the right questions to understand their involvement in the real-life situation of how government policies and quality management occur in their universities. The primary aim of the semi-structured interviews, as discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis, is to study the cause of an event by having face-to-face conversations with the informants who are involved and responsible for what triggers the event (that is, the formulation and implementation of

government policies as well as quality management in their various universities). They also aim to identify and narrate generative and missing mechanisms in themes as they emerge from the interaction on how Nigerian universities have been responding to government policies and quality management implementation. Semi-structured interview was selected as the instrument to explore principal officers' social and personal identity in relation to quality management in order to uncover the cause of the events, rather than suggesting themes arising from past research to the respondents.

5.1.2 *Principal officers' profiles:*

All of the principal officers selected for this study had been working in universities for at least twenty-five years, apart from two registrars who had eleven years of experience in higher education, while the other two registrars had more than twenty years of experience as registrars. All the other principal officers selected were academics that had been promoted to the position of directorship, heads of department, deans of faculty or served in various capacities in different committees at their institutions. Academically, six of these principal officers had doctorate degrees, while nineteen were professors. The positions and roles that the principal officers occupied in the university had given them good knowledge and experience over time. Principal officers' reflection on their social and personal identity in this study became more important and realistic in nature, as they had strong involvement in the operation of the university. Therefore, engaging these principal officers in the study was not a mistake.

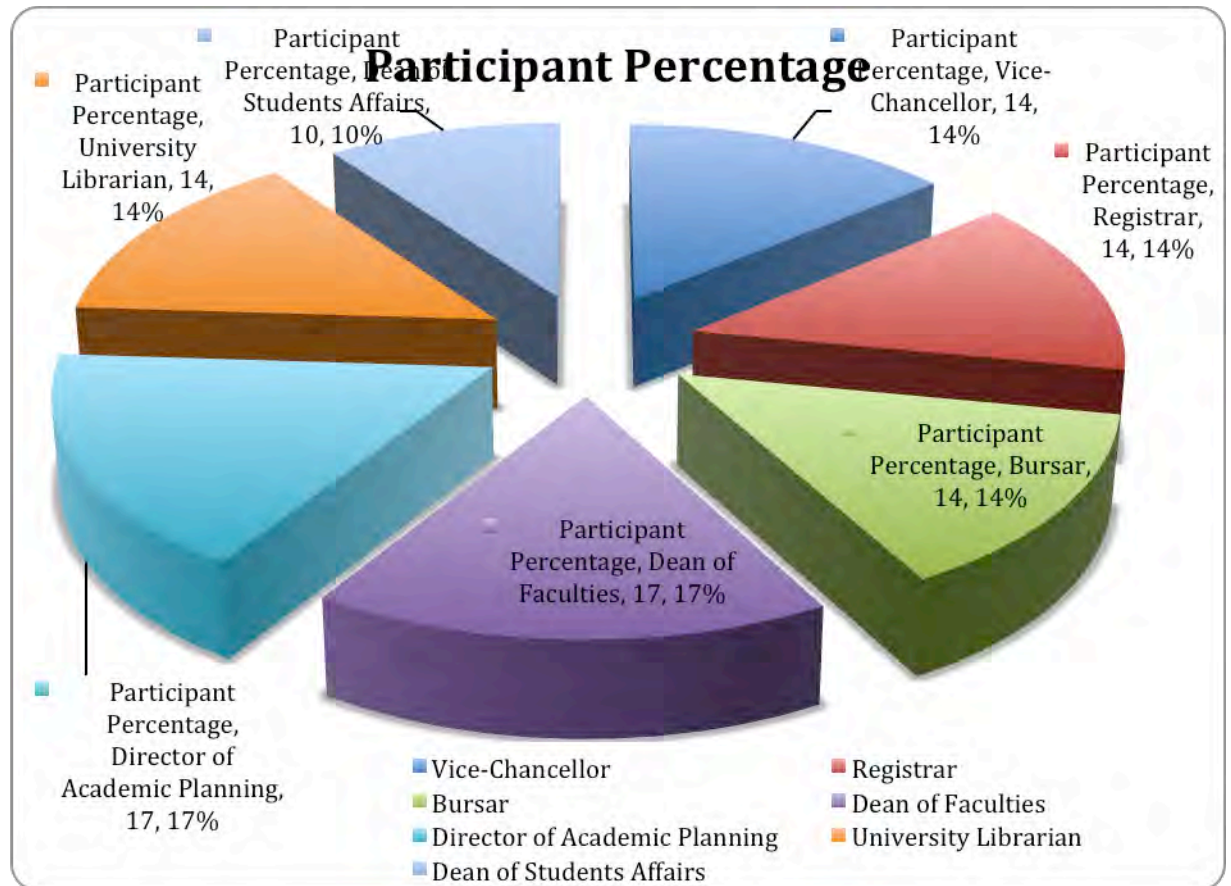
The findings are based on responses from twenty-nine interviewees in six structures located in different parts of Nigeria (three public and three private), as shown in table 5.1 and figure 5.1 below. Four of the respondents (14%) were Vice-chancellors, four (14%) were Registrars, four (14%) were Bursars, three (10%) were Deans of Student

Affairs, five (17%) were Directors of Academic Planning, five (17%) were Deans of Faculty and four (14%) were university librarians. The reasons for selecting these six structures and these informants were previously explored in Chapter Four. All the participants were involved in the day-to-day activities of their universities, playing a key role in the management of their institutions. The interview was based on four major questions, as discussed above. Surprisingly, most of the informants gave similar views on many of the questions asked. However, for the purpose of identification, participants were coded by position as Vice-chancellor: A1 - A4, Registrar: B1 - B4, Bursar: C1 - C4, Dean: D1 - D4, Director of Academic Planning: E1 - E4, University librarian: F1 - F4 and Dean Student Affairs: G1 - G3, around fifteen of the respondents were from public universities and fourteen were from private universities (see table below).

Table 5.1: Principal officers and their codes

DESIGNATIONS	NO. OF PRINCIPAL OFFICERS	CODES	Public University	Private University
Vice-Chancellor	4	A1 – A4	A1, A2	A3, A4
Registrar	4	B1 – B4	B1, B2	B3, B4
Bursar	4	C1 – C4	C1, C2	C3, C4
Dean of Faculties	5	D1 – D5	D1, D2, D3	D4, D5
Director of Academic Planning	5	E1 – E5	E1, E2	E3, E4, E5
University Librarian	4	F1 – F4	F1, F2, F3	F4
Dean of Students Affairs	3	G1 – G3	G1	G2, G3

Figure 5.1: Principal officers by position and percentage



5.1.3 Principal Officers' responses:

Interviews lasted thirty to ninety minutes, following a schedule that had been communicated to the interviewees prior to the period of interview, as discussed in Chapter Four. The interview schedule was used flexibly, in that questions were asked depending solely on the informant's cooperation and readiness to answer questions. The focus of the first research question was to identify whether the right person was being interviewed. In a situation where participants who had no role in government policies or quality management implementation were put forward for interview, the interviewer intended to cut the interviews short, but this situation did not arise. The interview was divided into four sections to investigate how principal officers in Nigerian

universities have been responding to quality management implementation. This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the interviews with Nigerian university principal officers. During the fieldwork, the following main themes or dimensions were identified, with various sub-themes, which are discussed individually in this chapter.

5.1.4 Theme identification

From the study of twenty-nine principal officers in six Nigeria universities, interview questions were posed to the informants and they all responded well to these questions. After the process of data collection, the interview answers were translated into a transcription which reflects the reality of issue discussed with the respondents in their own words. The researcher at this point was in search of reality to unveil the events and the causes of the events that happen in the Nigerian university context. The researcher's attention was focused primarily on the events identified prior to the beginning of the study which the researcher wanted to research further (how universities have been responding to quality management implementation). The researcher then read through the transcriptions line by line to identify both missing and generative mechanisms that cause the event to occur. The research at this time was able to identify seven major themes as follows: principal officers response to government policies, government policies, the effects of these government policies on principal officers, government policies and implementation, quality management, quality management implementation and factors affecting university beyond the institution. These themes are discussed in detail below.

The aim of this study, as discussed in previous chapters, is to find out the cause of an event rather than having a predisposed opinion of it (Wilkgren, 2005). Therefore, selection of themes became a crucial issue for the research, but following a rigorous approach, the researcher selected themes based on the following: The research takes

into consideration the position and responsibility attached to participants and whether they are in roles of authority at the university in assessing the importance of the points they raise. If an issue that arose during one interview was then raised in another interview section prior to asking such question, this was considered important as well. Some of the participants placed more emphasis on certain issues, and therefore the interviewer asked such questions in the subsequent interview section to see whether these issues were important. A few interviewees re-emphasised certain issues several times: therefore, such issues were also identified as themes for discussion.

PART ONE:

5.2 THEME 1: PRINCIPAL OFFICERS' RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT POLICIES

The present study uncovers principal officers' responses to government policies in the Nigerian university context. Most of the participants provided rich and substantial data when reflecting upon their roles and duties as principal officers. The interviewer probed into the activities of selected principal officers by requesting a narrative account of activities they performed in relation to government policies implementation. This approach is supported by other researchers in the field of critical realism (Elger, 2010; Alvesson, 2011; Smith and Elger, 2012, Archer, 2012). All interviews started with the question, "Can you please tell me your position in this university and what does this position require you to do?" In answering this question, many respondents shared similar views that principal officers play a key role in decision-making about the universities' day-to-day activities. They also clarified that principal officers are also called university management. The Vice-Chancellor is said to be the chief executive of the university. The following comment from a university Librarian reflects this view:

“...the key decision-making body in the university are the council who passed information down to the management body, the management, which is made up of the principal officers such as the vice-chancellor, deputy-vice-chancellor (academic or admin), bursar, university librarian, registrar” (F1).

Both a university librarian and a dean of faculty also supported the view by saying that they render account of their position to the vice chancellor. They reported their daily activities, formulation of policies at departmental level, supervision and other things that are necessary for the running of their departments (F3 and D3). The dean of faculty stated further that,

“My duty is to report the activities of the various departments in the faculty and also to initiate ideas and policies that would help to move the department forward” (D3).

In addition, one of the registrars emphasised that the management position is an administrative role of the university in terms of regulations, policies that affect students' enrolment into the university and policies guiding the conduct of both academic and non-teaching staff of the university (B2). He expressed that, “we are supposed to be the custodians of rules and regulations, as it affects students, staff - both academic and non-teaching staff - and other areas of the university”. This statement was further clarified by one of the vice-chancellors, who asserted that the vice-chancellor has the overall responsibility for everything that takes place in this university, the responsibility for the management of staff, resources and funding for the product management of human and financial resources (A2). This was further supported by another vice-chancellor, who pointed out that as the executive head of an institution, the vice-chancellor is responsible for the counsel/governance on finance and academic administration of the institution. These areas cover all activities on campus, including

student life, staff welfare and student training, as well as student health and the spiritual life of a 'Christian university' (A3).

Importantly, all respondents agreed that the Nigerian university system is structured to be run by a committee system chaired by the vice-chancellor. The committee consists of seven major officers: the registrar, the bursar, the university librarian, the director of academics, the deputy vice-chancellor of academics/administration and the chairman of the dean's committee, and many more as the duties may require. In another response, the registrar (B2), bursar (C4) and university librarian (F4) confirmed that the vice-chancellor is the chief executive to whom all other principal officers report on every matter, even though they all have a stake in taking decisions on matters arising in the university. Principal officers who have roles in quality management and government policies as they relate to their institutions were first identified as the right people to interview in order to get the information required. The other part of the interview section was divided into two major discussions, focusing on government policies on university education and quality management and its implementation.

5.3 THEME 2: GOVERNMENT POLICIES

In this section, the first question asked was "What are government policies on university education?" Many participants were asked this question and they all answered in different ways according to their fields and how policies relate to their roles in the university. Five respondents were of the opinion that government policies on university education are designed to ensure that every Nigerian is given the opportunity for education (A4, D3, D1, F1 and G1). They mentioned that the policies make a provision for students to be well taken care of during the transformation process in terms of welfare and social needs. A university librarian and a bursar opined that

Nigerian government policies on university education are endorsed programmes of action for all universities to implement in line with their university vision and mission statement (F1 and C3). Ten informants believed that government policies on university education are a set of guidelines and basis for the university to build on.

Other participants, such as the vice-chancellor from a private university, a dean of student affairs and a university librarian, personalised their comments, saying that Nigerian universities are not building on these policies, but rather they are cutting corners (A3, G1 and F1). A vice-chancellor and a director of academic planning from a public university expressed the notion that cutting corners is as a result of government not implementing and funding the education policies and process properly. They pointed out that the major concern of the Nigerian government on university education is 'manpower development' (A2 and E1). The vice-chancellor stressed that:

"Nigerian government policy on university education focused more on creating access to universal education, not minding the need to facilitate the education process by making available necessary resources for a university to operate" (A2).

From the participants' discussion here, they are concerned with how the missing mechanism has had negative impacts on the administration of the university system. This is one of the advantages of using a critical realist approach in a study of this nature, in order to unveil the reality or what causes the structure to function in a particular way. This approach is, as Adamides et al. (2011) claimed, a clear approach to understand the dynamics of human nature involved in the reality of an event.

Similarly, a few participants explained that government policies show the government's intentions toward the university education system, while one of the informants, a university librarian from a public university, clarified that:

“Government policies connote government intentions of what it wants to do, what it wants done and how best to do it and its expectation” (F1).

A director of academics added that government policies on university education are abiding guidelines established to be followed by all Nigerian universities (E2). Surprisingly, one dean of faculty added that government policies are to ensure that everybody has a good education (D1), while a bursar from a public university was of the opinion that government policies believe that with the right type of education, graduates would be able to apply what they have learnt to the development of the country and that once they have that right type of education, graduates would be able to overcome social barriers.

“Government policies on university education are useful only if the purposes for which they are designed are met” (C1).

Conversely, some informants established that “government policies” are a minimum set of standards set by the NUC in conjunction with the Ministry of Education on how to establish, finance and run a Nigerian university (D2, E3 and G1). One of the university librarians explained that although the university has been granted autonomy from the Federal Government, as a result of this autonomy any government policies that are not in line with the university mandate might not be duly followed (F2). However, some informants believe that government policies on university education are relevant in moving university education forward, as without them there would be no uniformity. A vice-chancellor mentioned that:

“I think standards are set by government policies and the production level of graduate allows the product of one university to move easily to another university for further education or fit into the global market” (A4).

One dean of faculty maintained the view that government policies must be generalised. He explained that generalising government policies for all parastatals and ministries may be very useful, but education sectors are a bit different and therefore generalising government policies on university education may not be relevant at times to university operation (D2).

One dean of student affairs explained that government policies on university education are how the government wants to go about implementing long-term and short-term goals for education (G1). One of the vice-chancellors explained that government's intention for establishing policies is very important if the government promotes understanding between the policies and the people who implement them (A1). Two other participants (B1; B4) were indifferent, but explained further that government policies provide a general directive for what the education sector can achieve for the country: for instance, if the government wants to emphasise science education or technology, they would give general policy directives. On that note, two university librarians and one bursar shared a similar view, pointing out that government policies are a decision (F1, F3, F4 and C3), or various decisions, backed up by laws, guiding people to know when to do the right thing at the right time, or they could be various decisions on the operation of the institution, such as guides or actions that drive the mechanisms for the easy running of the institution. A dean of faculty from a private university added that government policies are rigid, in that they tell universities what courses to teach, sometimes determining the sequence of courses and at other times

their intensity, or whether a course should be a core course or an elective, so the concept varies and covers a very wide spectrum (D5).

On the contrary, one of the deans of faculty highlighted that government policies are like a quality control mechanism for the right type of education in different disciplines, with respect to admission requirements, curriculum development, providing a benchmark, and also areas of students' expectations (D3). For the second time, it was mentioned that the applications of government policies are different from one university to the other; for example, government policies on intakes (admission quota system) for government-funded universities will not be applicable to the private universities (C4). As a result, a university librarian (F3) and a registrar (B1) from a public university put it clearly that not all government policies are communicated in black and white: they explained that government policies for the universities come from different external agencies such as National University Commission (NUC), Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), Education Trust Funds (ETF) and many more (F1 and B1). According to one university librarian, the NUC can make policies for the smooth running of the university. JAMB can make policies on how to improve the quality of intake. ETF can make policies on how to support the university (F1). Another university librarian mentioned that the government does not have the right to force policies on any university; rather, the NUC advises on minimum standards that all Nigerian universities must follow (F2).

One registrar from a public university disagreed, stating that government policies provide a general directive for what the education sector can achieve for the country. For instance, if the government wants to emphasise agricultural science, they would give general policy directives on how to establish an agricultural institution (B1).

Meanwhile, a vice-chancellor (A2) from a public university and a bursar (B3) from a private university advised that government policies should be developed in the form of a workbook by different professionals to provide guidance on the government's intended implementation procedure to avoid manipulation of the policies for political issues. A director of academic planning from a private university also pointed out that government policies could be on anything. He mentioned that, for example, the government wants the minimum academic qualification for teachers in the university to be Doctor of Philosophy. Therefore, the government has developed policies to communicate their intentions in admitting academic staff. Overall, however, it was agreed that government policies are good for Nigerian universities. A director of academic planning from a private university expressed further that:

"I know these policies are good for the development of Nigerian university education; if not, principal officers and academic staff would do things in their own way and may not get good results" (E5).

Further probing questions were asked on other related issues such as government policies in terms of intake, transformation and output, the effect of government policies on principal officers' professional practice, problems in implementing government policies, the arrangements needed for implementing government policies and what still needs to be done about these government policies. The following themes and sub-themes emerged from the discussions.

5.3.1 Government policies in terms of intake:

When asked to explain further, several respondents mentioned that JAMB is the body established by the Nigerian government to screen all candidates entering into university. However, a vice-chancellor explicated that many Nigerian universities today have observed that many of their candidates who perform well in the JAMB do not

perform well in their first year (A3). A director of academic planning from a public university explained that in order to address intake issues, the university has put in place a lot of facilities and has introduced a post-JAMB examination (E2). Three participants mentioned that, even with a post-JAMB examination, their universities cannot fully determine who they will admit because they use a quota system (A1, B2, and C1). Two registrars (B1; B3) supported the vice-chancellor (A1), and continued by saying that admission varies with different universities. For example, the NUC would assess each university first and give them a quota that they can admit for each programme. It is not just one figure per programme: for example, for chemistry, they would assess the programme (B1). For example, there is a student intake quota of 3500 every year; originally it was 2800, but after building some lecture theatres, the NUC team then increased it to 3500 (B2). Another bursar also re-emphasised that when NUC gives an admission quota on particular courses, it should not be exceeded, otherwise the university licence may be withdrawn (C3).

A vice-chancellor from a private university supported this view and expressed that some universities have a quota system, which is influenced by catchment areas (A4). She stressed further that it is believed widely in Nigeria that the Northern people are lacking in education. Therefore, government policies on admission procedures are slightly more relaxed than those found in the Southern or Western part of the country. In the Northern part, students' applications for admission are given preference, unlike in the Southern and Western part of the country, where regular procedures are deployed. One of the vice-chancellors explained that,

"I think government policies in terms of intake may be difficult to regulate when it comes to catchment areas and non-catchment areas, indigenous and non-indigenous. Again, in some cases, the government wants to give preference to

people in science and technology courses and then arts and social sciences (A4)."

One of the bursars revealed that in terms of admission, universities give privileges to their indigenous candidates first before considering even the best candidates in the Post-JAMB exam (B2). Though many respondents supported this, a vice-chancellor of a private university pointed out that universities always consider meritorious candidates on their first list. She talked about a second list for indigenous candidates, a supplementary list for other candidates and in most cases a final list from the back door (A4). In addition, one informant pointed out that for instance, when a university gives the opportunity to admit five hundred indigenous candidates for the academic session, if they have not reached that limit, on many occasions political office holders ask interviewees to consider their children for admission, whether or not they have followed a due admission process into the university.

Further, a vice-chancellor of a private university and a registrar from a public university talked about government policies in terms of intake of staff (recruitment), claiming that many people have been brought into the system without following due process in terms of proper recruitment processes, interviews and screening – instead being politically influenced by politicians both in and out of government (A4 and B2). The registrar mentioned that recruiting from the back door has created a lot of problems in the system (B2). When asked about the intake of staff, many revealed that government policy on staff is that all teaching staff must hold PhDs. Two vice-chancellors stressed that government policy-making sometimes ignores the fact that staff need to undergo training and development before they are awarded a PhD (A2 and A3). They stressed that the university, as a result of not meeting government policies on intake of teaching staff, now recruits graduate assistants who hold Masters' degrees to teach. Another

vice-chancellor expressed that graduate assistants employed by their institutions are expected to produce a PhD within six years as part of their job requirements. Failure to do so within the period leads to termination of employment (A3).

5.3.2 Government policies in terms of transformation:

According to two registrars, if the government requirement for admission is met, it is believed that universities can get good raw materials that can be re-processed (B2 and B3). Many participants talked about resources and the need for proper transformations, such as classrooms built to suit the development in the community, learning resources, teaching staff, learning aids and other resources. They pointed out that if the government provides these facilities, it would be easy to implement university education policies. The director of academic planning from a public university explained that even when a university has put in place facilities, such as lecture theatres, the ratio of lecturers to students is still a major problem that needs to be addressed (E2). Another missing mechanism was identified here when a private university registrar highlighted the situation:

“When a lecturer teaches one thousand students in a lecture theatre without a microphone or communication aids, which means the facilities are still not in place even when you have spacious classroom and lecture halls, such a lecturer will be frustrated” (B3).

One director of academic planning from a private university further supported this statement, saying that the government should not just be making policies but should also put measures in place to implement the policies they make.

“If we have quality candidates at intake level and did not have relevant materials to work with these candidates, it would be difficult to produce quality service to the community” (E3).

On this note, probing questions were raised about government policies with regard to teaching and learning. Some participants mentioned that, on many occasions, government policies are in conflict with the academic staff's practices, while the vice-chancellor, bursar and dean of faculty were of the opinion that each university has its own unique characteristic way in which they run their training, do their research, conduct their teaching and carry out all the functions relating to student life on campus - which is the process of transformation (A1, B3 and D5). The dean of faculty further stressed that,

"I guess the way they do their research, teaching, carry out all activities relating to student life on campus is one of the areas where government policies are always conflicting with university organisational characteristics. On many occasions, the government interferes, such as enforcing syllabus on qualified staff and having to complete lots of documentation for accreditation procedures are frustrating, while the so-called accreditation exercise we go through every five years has no provision for academic staff welfare in transforming students' learning" (D5).

One registrar from a public university claimed that the issue of workload is affecting the morale of the academic staff, their social life and their families. The registrar lamented:

"You cannot talk about policies of transformation without considering those who are involved in the process: how comfortable it is for them to run the system, what their needs are and many more which will have effects on their efficiency" (B1).

A dean of student affairs from a private university was of the opinion that for the academic staff to actually engage in research that will promote professional practice and student learning, they need to continually carry out research and this research has to be supported by the government to allow the creativity and innovation expected in universal education, which could promote the Nigerian economy and achieve the purpose for which universities are created (G3). Similarly, one dean of faculty and a registrar from a public university emphasised that the government sets policies for universities to run technology and science courses, but these policies have not made any provision for teaching material (D1 and B1). The dean of faculty was concerned that teaching materials are essential in transforming students, but if the basic teaching materials, like laboratories and laboratory equipment that will enhance teaching, learning and research, are not available, then it will be hard for teaching staff to invest their time in teaching students properly. He also claimed that where materials are provided, they are obsolete, while laboratories are too small to meet the demands of students in terms of teaching, learning and research.

However, one university librarian mentioned that one of the best policies of the Nigerian government has been on teaching and learning – it is that all Nigerian university libraries should be fully conducive and automated in order to facilitate learning (F1). Another university librarian argued that the policies may be good, but the government has not released the funds to implement these policies to promote teaching and learning (F2).

“In addition, a director of academic planning expressed that our society is developing with or without the government contributing to it, which is affecting the education sector. I think it is high time the government focused its educational policies’ attention on society rather than the ministry (E2).”

The intention of government in establishing university education in Nigeria was to produce manpower that will fill the ministries. A vice-chancellor from a public university lamented that the ministries are now filled up, and it is high time that the Nigerian government started looking for ways to make university graduates more relevant in society by redefining the purpose of creating university education in the country (A2).

5.3.3 Government policies in term of output:

A few respondents explained that university is not the end of student life, as students are also given the opportunity to develop themselves through the National Youth Service Corps scheme. According to two principal officers from public universities (B1 and C1) who emphasised the National Youth Service Corps, only successful candidates who have satisfied the university requirements for graduation are admitted into the scheme. The vice-chancellor and director of academic planning from a private university mentioned that government policies on graduates are not pronounced but it is the obligation of every university to organise an award program and ceremony for graduates, before or after the National Youth Service Corps (A4 and E4). A vice-chancellor of a private university emphasised that only successful students were awarded degrees at the end of the programme. She mentioned for example...

“Our own university have been graduating only students with good grades (A4).”

On the contrary, one of the registrars from a public university expressed that few years ago, government policies were communicated to the university:

“Students who have spent more than eight years in the university doing the same course should be managed out of the system with a pass” (B1).

The registrar was asked to give a narrative of the incident, because, as suggested by Elger (2010), Alvesson (2011) and Smith and Elger (2012), the difference in a critical realist approach is that it can ask further questions in order to uncover an incident. Therefore, the interviewer requested further clarification from the registrar about what graduates would mean to the community and in terms of the university's reputation? His response was, "*we have to follow government policies and procedure.*" The informant mentioned further that such students are very close to politicians and politicians rule the school with their power of finance (B1). He expressed his opinion using the phrase 'he that plays the piper dictates the tune': in other words, universities have no choice than to follow their instructions. These were assumed to have effects on how principal officers discharge their duties in Nigerian universities. However, the next sub-section reports the investigation of the effects of government policies on university principal officers' professional practice.

5.4 THEME 3: GOVERNMENT POLICIES' EFFECT ON PRINCIPAL OFFICERS:

A university librarian from a public university explained that government policies have both negative and positive effects on the principal officers' professional practice. He maintained that government policies are a mandate that needs to be followed in order to enhance promotion. However, some informants mentioned that government policies do not have anything to do with their professional practice (F1). One director of academic planning pointed out that governments do not create room for academics to develop themselves, even though the belief of the education protectorate was that education will create room for economic development. But the traditional system of the working environment has not encouraged academics to develop them to that level (E3). It was on this note that a vice-chancellor stated clearly that the professional practice of Nigerian academics has been affected due to the high demand of students enrolling for

university education (A2). He cited that the pool of staff available could not cater for the demands of students. He held that the university management cannot do anything about these issues; rather, they have admitted more students to meet other demands that the government have failed to cater for. While three principal officers, two registrars and one dean of faculty (B2, B4 and D3) expressed their concern by putting forward a similar example, revealing that in some cases;

“I have to teach and mark 2500 students’ scripts for a course and I teach four or more other courses, tell me how I can think about my professional practice? (D3)”.

The dean of faculty concluded by saying, amongst other things, that the lack of available staff to cater for the students’ demands is a major problem that affects the implementation of government policies (D3). Others identified sub-themes as discussed below:

5.4.1 Low wages and late payment:

Some principal officers identified low wages as a negative factor that affects best practice in the university. A dean of faculty identified staff not being paid enough or on time as a major problem that has emerged in the destroying of the Nigerian university education system over the last two decades (D3). He stressed this point further by giving an example:

“I am in need of money, and the government has not paid my salary; then one of my students heard me complaining about my financial need, and the student managed to help me out. When the student writes an exam and fails my course, do you think it would be possible for me to fail the student who helped me out of my financial problem?” (D3).

Similarly, a vice-chancellor also indicated that when academic staff are paid low wages, or not paid on time, the hard-working ones will look for additional job to support themselves (A2). He pointed out that the time they will invest in another job is time they should have invested in their teaching or research work. This will affect their morale when they get back to class. On a similar note, a dean of the faculty of a public university stated that when the government does not pay staff salaries on time, less attention is paid to staff welfare. This will definitely affect how effectively a principal officer will discharge his/her duties (D1). One director of academic planning advocated that there is no written document on how to implement government policies, nor support for the end-users. He mentioned that on many occasions, funds are not provided to maintain or increase staffing levels, materials are not available to aid staff effectiveness, nor are other logistics that can promote learning in the classroom (E3). He gave an example thus:

“If I am not adequately funded, and if I don’t have good transportation and the university expect me to engage in networking for the institution, which involves travelling in and out of the institution, it will be difficult for me to contribute positively in my role because our road is not good and I have spent all the working hours travelling. When will I have time to rest? Not to talk of contributing to the institution. ...all these little facilities are what can influence principal officers positively, because principal officers cannot work in isolation” (E3).

Another participant expressed that, apart from being paid low wages, some universities have no equipment to work with. The lecturers are frustrated because they cannot do their work and some of them have dropped out to other sectors, like business, government services or politics. Again, for example, they have spent several years acquiring knowledge and imparting it to students, and yet their salary is not good

enough to survive on (E2 and E5). A director of academic planning from a private university lamented that in the Nigerian universities there are still many things that need a total clean-up. He also emphasised that late payment of salaries would always affect principal officers' effectiveness (E5).

5.4.2 Funding:

According to the dean of faculty from a private university, universities do not have enough funding to really put in place what they would have wanted to do, especially when it comes to teaching and learning (D4). His statement was enlarged upon by the director of academic planning for a public university, who identified that low funding leads to excessive stress on the teaching staff, which has a negative effect on principal officers' professional practice (E2). He elaborated further that if the government provided more funding for institutions, then they would probably do more to improve the quality of service they render to the students, as well as the community. A vice-chancellor of a public university also mentioned that, if the institution is well funded, then university staff could be exposed to international conferences and research (A2).

In contrast, a director of academic planning acknowledged that government policies also affect principal officers' practice positively; for instance through TETFUND, a government body where junior lecturers from public higher institutions can get fully sponsored for further studies anywhere in the world. The director of academic planning claimed that TETFUND support has really helped:

"I attend conferences where latest research outcomes are being discussed and this affects the way I teach students, as I have to update my notes very often rather than rely on old notes" (E2).

Likewise, a dean of faculty is in accord with a director of academic planning from a public university, that government policies have both positive and negative influence (D4 and E2). The dean of faculty clarified that, for instance, the government had requested that every university should prepare a budget on capital projects and the running expenses for the session, and make sure that their budgets match their income, in order not to jeopardise student teaching and learning. She expressed this further, by saying:

“Government policies guide me to match the cost, the minimal cost that we need, because if costs are not matched, it will affect the level of affairs in the university. So we do this to match our cost to the minimal that can give us the best that we want. By this, we find that we can bring our cost very low such that students learning will not be jeopardised by lack of funds to pay the fees” (D4).

5.4.3 Conflict with staff unions:

A dean of faculty from a public university indicated that on many occasions government policies conflict with the purpose for which university education was established through the influence of various groups such as labour unions, namely the ASUU for lecturers, the SANU for Administrators and the NASU for Students (D1). As a result, these various groups' contributions and influences are very powerful in the transformation process of education. He stated further that conflict could be in any form, such as policies of academic retirement; he expressed that it was only last year that the Federal Government had changed academic staff policies, raising the retirement age from 65 to 70 years. He states:

“I am a Professor; I am 65 years old and my head is still correct, I can help my colleagues now and mentor them to be good successors” (D1).

Surprisingly, a vice-chancellor for a public university claimed that government policies are very important if they promote understanding between government and staff unions to avoid strikes and other workplace disputes that harm the nation's education (A2). A registrar from a public university claimed that there should be continuous understanding between all unions to foster peace in developing education (B1). A vice-chancellor from a private university also supported the claim made by the vice-chancellor in the public university that government policies need to promote peace within institutions if they are to be relevant to the end-users (A3).

5.4.4 Creating access to education:

According to a university librarian from a public university, government policies are to ensure that everybody has a good education. But in reality, due to the large population of students who intend to undertake further training at university, coupled with the limited number of universities that are available to cater for the demands of these candidates, it is difficult to achieve this objective (F1). Two respondents also lamented that if politicians' priority is to increase access to university education, they should not be campaigning to restore free education to students, but rather to create more universities, more lecturers and more facilities that will enhance learning, (A2 and A4). Another informant also added that;

"I think government policies should be precise and focused on university sustainability rather than access. If access is created and there is no facility to training those who gain access into the university then creating access is of no use" (D1).

Subsequently, a director of academics disagreed with the dean of faculty's (D1) explanation that the government had established policies which stated that every candidate admitted to university must be sure of receiving quality training (E2). He

rationalized that the NUC was established for this purpose and also to monitor the activities of the universities. Similarly, a vice-chancellor of a private university suggested that government policies should ensure that there is quality education in Nigeria (A4). They say that every Nigerian should be given a chance to attend institutions regardless of creed, race, colour, religion and beliefs. So they believe that everybody should be given a chance to gain an education.

Definitely nobody is denied access to education in Nigeria. A vice-chancellor mentioned that institutions must be open to everybody at all times (A3). A university librarian cited that there is a need for more universities, but not at the expense of quality, because for some people it's a matter of whom you know, although this is changing (F3). A vice-chancellor from a public university commented on the fact that the government is concerned about access: "what we now have to do is to ensure we do not take more than what our capacity can cater for" (A2).

5.5 THEME 4: GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION

5.5.1 Problems in implementing government policies:

Under this heading due attention was pay to missing mechanisms that has effects on how the university operates. One dean of faculty postulated that Nigerian universities do implement government policies based on the documents (structure) sent to them by the government (D2). A vice-chancellor of a private university stated that government policies are developed from the grassroots, from parents to academics, from academics to the NUC and so on and so forth. She was of the view that there is no problem in implementing government policies, because these policies are reasonable (A4). Another respondent, a dean of faculty in the same university, stressed that government policies are not difficult to implement. He explained that eventually, once

you get into the system, it becomes almost a routine and what you have to do is update your information, update your techniques and adapt (D5).

However, in contrast to this, six informants concurred that policies are made in theory but that it is at the point of implementation when limitations are discovered. A vice-chancellor of a public university stated that the government sets many policies, such as free education, that are unrealistic - because universities are not funded properly to provide free education, thus creating a conflict with the resources available to implement government policies (A2). Four principal officers postulated that government policies are problematic in many cases and need re-visiting if they are to achieve their purpose. A bursar (C4) confirmed that government policies are good and they are meant to advance education in Nigeria. On the same note, a vice-chancellor (A2) explicated that the government funds universities; therefore principal officers in each university are supposed to fulfil the government policies. Four respondents disagreed with this explication. Among these four, two were questioned further; they were asked why, if the government funds, regulates, maintains and monitors universities, it is difficult for universities to fulfil government intentions? The two registrars (B3 and B4) shared a similar view, although one share a strong view that:

"I think when you talk about the government-owned universities you are right"
(B4).

One of the registrars stated that:

"I can clearly say that the government have never injected any money into our own institution (private) even though we are also working towards the national development and creating more access for people to study" (B3).

The second registrar from a private university also asserted that:

“I know the government did not take any financial responsibility for our existence, making it difficult to implement all government policies” (B4).

Two principal officers, both from a private university, raised another supporting statement; one of them was a vice-chancellor and the other a bursar. The vice-chancellor supported the statement by clarifying that:

‘We follow government policies as it relates to our own operation and finances. Again, we have our own mission and vision statement that we follow as well as a budget based on student tuition fees (A4).

Meanwhile, the bursar argued that:

“I believe our interest is in our university mandate rather than the government policies because of the need to stand out with the kind of services being offered to the public with the little money we can generate from the students, since the government do not support our operation financially” (C4).

A further question asked in this section was, “What arrangements should be put in place for implementing government policies?” Three principal officers elucidated that government policies on university education should not be mere documents kept in the library. They explained that stakeholders in the education system and their processes should have the policy documents in order to be aware of expectations. Informants also pointed out the following major problems as hindrances to implementing policies.

5.5.1.1 Bureaucracy:

On the other hand, a few principal officers identified bureaucracy as a major problem in implementing government policies in the Nigerian university system. An informant

complained that, 'for example, if you want to procure smaller materials, government policies state that the job needs to be given to a contractor.' He said that procuring materials is subject to a lot of abuse, as this process often slows down the work and causes delays (F1). Two bursars from public universities claimed that bureaucracy is a good aspect of administration (C1 and C3). A bursar (C3) from a private university stressed that bureaucracy should not cause delay. He pointed that when there is a delay in the process, it is as a result of the abuses that people introduce into bureaucracy:

"I think it is not because bureaucracy is stressful but because somebody wants you to grease his or her palm (C1).

He concluded by saying bureaucracy is good only if you allow to it function and do not aggravate your personal interest" (C1).

A vice-chancellor from a private university declared that; "in my own administration for the last ten years, anyone could walk in my office and ask questions." He lamented;

"I hate bureaucracy, I have been through it all my life; I can't stand it. Now I can walk into any of my staff's offices at any time, they know I can, and it keeps them alert at all times" (A3).

Similarly, two registrars also revealed that there is a lot of bureaucracy going on when it comes to the admission process and recruitment of staff, which slows down the activities of the university as a whole (B1 and B4). A registrar from a public university explained that on many occasions, some students were admitted after other students had already started their coursework. He identified admitting students after classed had started as one of the major problems that affect the implementation of policies.

"I know we do take incompetent hands to help the students, I am more worried when they are recruited through the back door" (B1).

Furthermore, a registrar from a private university made similar complaints as to how bureaucracy affects the university system's operation (B4). He explained that when staff are recruited through the back door; it may take a year for them to go onto the payroll, but government policy dictates that they cannot be inducted until they appear on the payroll. In such situations, it will be difficult for such staff to understand how the system works; rather, they carry over the culture and norms from their previous position into their new position. By the time they are confirmed in the system, it is difficult to call them back for proper induction; rather, they will be sent a form stating that they have been inducted. Another registrar from private university mentioned that on many occasions, students become demoralised when they have to wait for a long time to get their course forms signed as a result of bureaucracy (B3).

5.5.1.2 Poor Funding:

Many of the participants identified poor funding as a major problem in implementing government policies. A director of academic planning indicated that poor funding in Nigerian Universities is part of the government's responsibility (E2). He explained that the government had created and funded most of the universities in Nigeria until 1991, when it could no longer continue to meet demand and made room for private investors to create more universities in the country. One vice-chancellor complained that the government contributions to the government-owned universities are not enough to maintain the university system (A2). He also pointed out that although the government pays the staff salaries, other activities, such as teaching aids, exam maintained fees, water, power, telephone supply and many more, are not catered for. The universities need to generate funds to meet all these demands. Likewise, a vice-chancellor of a private university and a dean of faculty from a public university explained that due to lack of funding, universities now admit large numbers of students to cater for their

administrative needs, which has led to overcrowding in all Nigerian universities (A3 and D2).

On another note, a director of academic planning agreed that the Nigerian government has good intentions in developing the university education policies. But the implementation of good policies requires adequate funding to achieve the purpose for which the policies are designed (E3). A bursar from a public university conveyed that:

"I think the mistake the government is making is using the education system as a political campaign tool, to canvas for election by promising the electorate a free education. I think the government has gotten their priority wrong and this needs to be redefined. Take for instance, universities are government agency bodies, power-holding, water and many more are government agencies - then tell me why one government agency should be paying back to another government agency if we are all working towards the national development" (C1).

Similarly, a dean of faculty and a director of academic planning for a public university lamented that, even within the education system, the government is not providing enough capital to maintain staff and other administrative purposes, just as the vice-chancellor (A3) mentioned earlier. A director of academic planning claimed that a lack of basic resources to work and the results of reduced funding may result in the university not following government policies to the letter (E2). He pointed out, for instance, that a university may admit more students than its carrying capacity in order to generate more income to meet its operation costs. He added that the carrying capacity issue is a major problem created by government policies, which will not encourage proper implementation of these policies.

5.5.1.3 Staff capacity:

As noted by the dean of faculty (D2) and vice-chancellor (A2) from a public university, staff ability and capacity is another factor that affects government policy implementation. A registrar from a public university supported this view, pointing out that staff capacity has a huge influence on the government policy implementation. He articulated that;

“If I am truthful to you, we have had some problems in the past where people recruited did not go through the normal procedure and as a result their contributions were minimal in influencing decisions that should be implemented” (B1).

A university librarian added that implementation of government policies depends on principal officers' integrity and ability to do what is right and carry other staff along with them in the process (F3). Three informants from public universities are of the view that to implement government policies in Nigerian universities requires somebody who is emotionally strong and determined to get it right. Someone who is not ready to bend the rules, because in implementing government policies, you may have to step on some toes, especially people on the ladder of authority, and they may not find it tasteful (B1, F1, and A2). In addition, a dean of faculty and a vice-chancellor expressed that there have been several attempts to make government policies relevant; the extent to which we succeed is another thing. They pointed out that very often it depends on the experience of the person who is delivering the service (D5 and A2).

In another view, a university librarian indicated that the qualification of staff, inadequate working tools, attitudinal factors and time management, amongst others, are factors affecting the implementation of government policies (F1), while a dean of faculty

pointed out that a major problem in some cases is that government delegates, who know nothing or have no experience of managing a university, are recruited as consultants (D1). He explained that these consultants give advice and recommendations to a university, as they do in other sectors, that makes it difficult to operate down the line. He latter cited an instance in terms of the revenue generated in the university. A vice-chancellor of a private university (A4) also mentioned that the consultants expect income generated from the university to be turned into government revenue, whereas most of this income they talk about is third party income or funds student services. A director of academic planning mentioned that advice in how to effectively implement these policies is not stated in terms of provided funds, staffing and other logistics (E3).

5.5.1.4 Government policies:

One of the major problems identified by the principal officers in implementing government policies is the policies themselves. A university librarian mentioned that government policies are not formulated to benefit the end users. He went further to state that in most cases, the government policies are not relevant to the development of education (F3). Likewise, a bursar from a private university (C4) indicated that government policies are very good, because they gives the entire university a minimum standard, which helps to keep all the institutions on their toes. Notwithstanding, a dean of the faculty of a public university added that the administrative calendars of the university guidelines are not in accordance with how the general government wants the universities to operate (D2). He explained that government policies run from January to December and want the university to report on their activities from January to December; whereas the university academic session runs from July to June. Two participants, D2 and D3, mentioned that the confusion between the calendar year and

the administrative year is as a result of the information government consultants give back to the government.

In furtherance, a vice-chancellor of a public university suggested that there would not have been any conflicts if the right body were to handle the government policies and guidelines for the university (A2). An informant raised an argument on government policies, as they state that universities should be in operation and funding will be given later to achieve the universities' objectives, but in reality, the government has failed to provide basic amenities to facilitate learning. Two vice-chancellors stated that nevertheless, if the government wants university education in Nigerian to return to its former glory, they should allow universities to run independently, by allowing them to charge students fees which they think are reasonable (A1 and A2). Subsequently, governments can subsidise the payment for however many students they could afford to each year:

"I think if government adopts this strategy, universities will stop crying to government for inadequate funding. Honestly, I don't think that there is any country in the whole world that does not pay for what they enjoy in terms of education" (A2).

On the contrary, one director of academic planning is of the view that even if NUC communicates to all universities on what is to be done, at the end of the day, nothing is achieved, as people may not follow any of the instructions given (E2). She is of the opinion that principal officers can easily misinterpret policies set for the universities by the NUC. Therefore, she suggested that close monitoring should be put in place and advised breaking the NUC office into regional offices. A dean of faculty (D1) lamented

that Nigerian universities are faced with major problems with what he called 'policy somersaulting'. He alluded to the fact that changing education policies because of a particular government interest is another problem that is destabilising and confusing principal officers' activities:

"I am sure it can be difficult to buy into such ideas; to a large extent it's a major problem because of discontinuity in government policies" (B3).

Three informants (B1, C4 and C1) claimed that government policies will be difficult to implement because they are sometimes made in theory but that it is not until the point of implementation that their limitations are discovered. The bursar and the dean of faculty advocated that if universities insist on maintaining the standard set by the NUC or the Ministry of Education, then it would be difficult to deliver quality service to the students (C1 and D5). The dean of faculty (D5) pointed out, for example, that government policies stated that the minimum qualification for teaching in the university should be a PhD, which would mean that graduate assistants could not teach, but that most of the universities are using graduate assistants for teaching to enable them to admit more students;

"I remember some lecturers who are teaching here, who are willing to further their study up to PhD level. They are faced with a lot of problems, which make it difficult for them to further their studies. I can tell you that if you ask any of these graduate assistants, what they will tell you is that they have a huge workload that they cannot combine with doing further research work to talk of a postgraduate degree (D3)."

One vice-chancellor from a public university opined that universities need to accommodate graduate assistants, either by tolerating them without a PhD for a longer period of time or by “making a sacrifice within the system for a lower level of workload to allow them develop academically to a PhD level” (A2). He also mentioned that government policies should not be designed just for their own sake but only if they are relevant in developing the nation.

5.5.1.5 Institution carrying capacity:

A director of academic planning from a public university was of the opinion that a major problem that affects the implementation of government policies in Nigerian universities is whether or not their institutions’ carrying capacity can cater for the demand of the students they admit (E2). Another director of academic planning (E3) continued by saying that while it is stated that universities are reducing student intake and recruiting more staff yearly, the truth is that:

“I think service delivery has changed over time, which has put government policies and how quality is managed in question. I can give you an example of what I am saying. How can I compare Nigerian education 30 years ago with what is done now? It was not like this before: the problem is that the facilities that were in existence in 1980 are still the ones that are in existence in these universities today” (E3).

Likewise, a director of academic planning (E2) and a dean of faculty (D2) also explained, in line with this assertion, that the carrying capacity developed in the 1980s for one hundred students in a department is still the same in existence even now that the student number has multiplied by ten.

Furthermore, a registrar (B2) and a university librarian (F2) from a public university stressed that the student population in the 1980s was not like it is now and the university environment was very conducive for learning. They pointed out that students could lay their hands on so many learning tools and support systems were available at all times. In contrast, today, staff do not even know their students, and cannot tell who is in their class, let alone having a 1:1 discussion with them. A director of academic planning from a private university also clarified that it is not that Nigerian university academics do not have the intelligence to train students; the truth is that there is no technical equipment available to do the job with, not to mention updating their skills as lecturers (E5). Meanwhile, a university librarian (F1) was concerned that the buildings need to be upgraded to meet the contemporary standards, pointing out that university principal officers are trying their best to build better structures, but further improvement is needed because the lecture rooms are overcrowded compared to what is obtained abroad. Likewise, two deans of faculty (D3 and D4) both share a common opinion - that building more structures is relevant to them as lecturers, but making the system more conducive to work is more important. One dean of faculty expressed that:

"I believe in the majority of our universities today you will find this problem, a lecture hall of 2500 capacity built for lecturing without a projector, without a microphone, without teaching assistants to support a lecturer teaching" (D4).

The second dean of faculty claimed that:

"I think what you will get in most cases is students at the back of the classroom who cannot hear what you saying in the front. What is our gain as lecturers? I am frustrated as I talk to you because I have too many students in my department" (D3).

On similar lines, a bursar from a public university and a dean of faculty from a public university complained that many departments need more facilities to enhance safety and the fast delivery of their services (C4 and D1). The dean of faculty (D1) mentioned in his conversation that a major problem of government policies is that they do not create working space for the effective management of the whole education process. The next section identifies how government policies can be improved.

5.5.2 What still needs to be done about government policies?

In this sub-section several interviewees elaborated both missing and generative mechanisms through their narration that government policies should be made relevant to the end users. Two of the informants explained that government policies should serve as support for running an institution, not a yardstick for managing or measuring institutions (A4 and G2). Another participant advocated that government policies should have an effect on everyone in that institution. He was of the opinion that everyone must be involved in implementing government policies. He also stressed that opportunity should be created for the continuous improvement of the policies in all areas of academia (A2). Several participants (including A1, A2, A3, C2, C3, C4, B3, E3, F1, F2 and F4) emphasised that if government policies are to be relevant for the purpose for which they are created, the following factors must be considered.

5.5.2.1 Consistency:

Two vice-chancellors and one director of academic planning highlighted that the major challenge to government policies, including the formulation of the policies, is surviving inconsistency (A2, A3 and E4). They further opined that, if consistency is not maintained, it would serve as a hindrance to quality education. Two respondents from public universities were of the opinion that to maintain consistency in Nigerian

education, the position of Minister of Education should not be a political office (F1 and B2), while a vice-chancellor of a private university pointed out that one of the problems faced in the Nigerian education sector is as a result of self-centeredness, politics, and misuse of power, as well as lack of social responsibility for the development of future generations (A4). On one hand, a dean of faculty (D4) established that the consistency of government policies should be taken very seriously and policies should be focused on developing university education, even if it means reconstructing new policies or reviewing the existing ones from time to time. On this note, a dean of student affairs from a private university mentioned that what is required to be done incidentally would be what people are not ready to do. But if the leadership is consistent with what is in the policies, then people will be left with no option than to do what the policies state (G3).

On the other hand, a director of academia expressed that reducing the student intake on an annual basis and increasing staff numbers and laboratories is not only the solution to the Nigerian education problem, but also to developing a culture of sustaining good practices that will also improve quality, as well as reputation (E2). A vice-chancellor was of a similar view, claiming that the attitude of principal officers is a key problem (A4). He mentioned, for example, the succession of principal officers, especially the vice-chancellor, who is the chief executive of the university. He stated that different people with different techniques and approaches are one of the things that are affecting consistency in Nigerian universities. A vice-chancellor from a public university also condemned universities operating without clear guidelines to follow, though in the interview section he mentioned that:

"I am not surprised that many universities do not have written guidelines to follow and even when they have, they don't follow them. I think principal officers

need to pronounce guidelines to be followed, if Nigerian universities will achieve the purpose of universal education” (A2).

His opinion was supported by a registrar and a director of academic planning. They indicated that when you have well defined guidelines, you don't have to know anyone to achieve a set goal for the institution. This will in turn increase the reputation of the institution (B1 and E5). Many participants believed that changes in government had led to changes in policies over the years, which they assumed would have negative impacts on how government policies are implemented and at the same time affect quality. A university librarian (F3) claimed that the mixture of politics with education is leading to the degradation that university education in Nigerian is experiencing at the moment, while a dean of student affairs (G3) and a director of academic planning (E2) pointed out that the policy-makers are supposed to be the first to implement their policies, if they have been formulated by the right set of people. One director of academic planning advocated that policies should have impacts on the policies' formulators, to encourage them to lead by example (E2). In another view, a registrar established that government policies should be made from deep consultation with all relevant departments in university education; he assumed that doing so would allow the well-articulated policies to last several years (B1). A dean of faculty from a private university maintained that principal officers in each education sector should be part of the policy formulation. He stressed that they should be involved because they see what happens in the field and they can help the government to put the right policies in place and to implement them (D4).

5.5.2.2 Non-interference of politicians:

According to two vice-chancellors, university education should be separated from other government establishments because the operations are not the same (A2 and A3).

Although it was acknowledged that the government has invested a lot in the university education system, universities will be more fulfilling if they operate in isolation from political interference (A3). In fact, many respondents acknowledged that the total eradication of politics from the university sector would be very difficult, but still they believed that public office-holders should not play party politics when discussing issues related to the education system as a whole. Participants also agreed that playing party politics in education would jeopardise the quality and the future of education in Nigeria. Equally, a university librarian and a director of academic planning believed that university education should be fully autonomous (F2 and E4). An elite should be allowed full autonomy in managing the operations of a university, not politicians, who have not invested their time in the process of teaching, learning and research. A dean of faculty from a public university explicated further that:

“I think those who are actually constructing education policies still need to take in more from the universities’ principal officers with less interference from politicians in these policy statements. Let me tell you this: most of the time, policies of a political party on education can never be the same as national policies on education. Again, in a situation where this happens, politicians want their own policies to supersede the national policies, which affects their implementation” (D1).

A dean of faculty referred to the policies handed over to the university via the vice-chancellor, suggesting that there should be an interactive session where academia can criticize whatever is in the policy statements, and at the same time familiarise themselves with such policies before they are adopted for implementation. He stressed further that:

“I think we have so many policies in the university itself that I don’t know which is which. Yet we don’t have any sanctions for failure to implement any part of the policies. I think we need to improve on this aspect in Nigeria” (D2).

However, three vice-chancellors complained about the process of selection of the minister of education in particular (A2, A3 and A4). A registrar and a university librarian also commented on how the pro-chancellor was selected: they strongly argued that this position is the apex in education (B2 and F1). The government should ensure that those they choose are not politicians or can be politically influenced; rather, the selection should be based on merit, such as their contribution to educational development in the past. A vice-chancellor (A2) suggested that once such a merit-based appointment is made, the minister can serve a term of five years, with a maximum of two terms, before being succeeded by another meritorious individual. A vice-chancellor from a private university condemned the practice of rotating education ministerial positions: he stressed that it should not be from the east, north or west, with the hope of balancing the position (A3). He claimed that in the past, when the position had been rotated, policies that were not relevant to education had been formulated. The government had wasted a lot of good resources on carrying out such exercises and ultimately the policies had been swept under the carpet without any meaningful impact on society.

5.5.2.3 Publicity of what government policies are:

Three participants suggested that government policies should be publicised as much as possible, in order for people to know what they entail (A1, D4 and C1). A dean of faculty also emphasised that it is important that the government makes their intention known to the principal officers, as well as all other academic stakeholders, such as students, lecturers, parents, employers and the community, in order to help sustain

government policies (D3). Three respondents agreed that publicising government policies on university education would give room for proper checks and balances in the future (B2, A4 and D3). A vice-chancellor (A2) also held the opinion that if government policies are to be implemented properly, everyone who is involved in the use of the policies, especially the end users, must have access to them and understand what they say.

In another view, two vice-chancellors put forward that publicising government policies will be easy only if the culture of transparency can be embedded into how government policies on university education are developed (A2 and A4). A vice-chancellor from a public university (A2) added that the transparency of how policies are formulated would definitely improve their implementation, as well as increasing the knowledge of end users. A dean of faculty (D1) also proclaimed that publicising what the government policies are is an important process to orientate end-users of the policies, as well as the academic community. He also stressed that at the moment, if you ask an average lecturer about what government policies are, they don't know. In addition, it is necessary, whether in a private, state or federal government university, to know what the government policies are about (D1). Similarly, a vice-chancellor pointed out:

“I believe that there is a need for more publicity on what the government wants from the lowest level even up to the primary and secondary school level” (A2).

PART TWO:**5.6 THEME 5: QUALITY MANAGEMENT**

All interviewees were asked this question: “What do you think quality education or quality university education is?” Nine participants held that quality in the Nigerian university education system will mean attaining excellence in whatever you do. A registrar from a public university started by explaining that quality education would mean different things to different people, depending on who they are and what they want to achieve from the education system. He stated:

“.... to me, impacting on the student the right kind of knowledge: that is education that would affect positively the society” (B1).

In support of registrar B1’s definition of quality education, a bursar from a private university opined that quality education is a balanced education: that is, when you are able to maintain a balance between what is learnt and the learner’s character. He pointed out:

“I believe many Nigerian universities should be planning to produce graduates that will be good in the office and of good character. I mean quality education only when learners are exposed to good academic as well as good character and they grow to be people of integrity that will add value to the society” (C4).

On the same note, a vice-chancellor claimed:

“I will imagine there will be quality in university education only if there is sustainability in all parts of the educational system. That is, an education system that can withstand the test of time, not only today but for tomorrow and the future (A3).”

However, one vice-chancellor (A1) was of a different view: he pointed out that quality in education means that graduates are fit for purpose. He explained, for example, that if a graduate of chemistry from a Nigerian university can fit perfectly into another Nigerian university, and also into any part of the World, then there is quality in the education provided. He articulated that quality education must be universal, in that the teaching curriculum must be designed in accordance with what is applicable and acceptable globally. Meanwhile, an academic director described quality as the enjoyment or attributes of a product when assessed by an end-user, pointing out that such assessment depends on what you input and how it is processed (E2). He also indicated that such assessment might be quantified in order to test its validity. In essence, he believed that quality education is when graduates get into the labour market and fit perfectly into the system. A vice-chancellor from a public university summarised the definition by saying that quality can be referred to as fitness for purpose (A2). Another respondent saw quality from another point of view, saying that, “When you talk about quality, you talk about a virtue. It is a virtue that is correct and something that has a determination or focus to get it right, which means there’s a standard: either it is clearly said or not.” He further defined quality in higher education as, “the process and ability to ensure that our graduates have the competence and the skills to move development forward in the country or around the World” (D4). On a similar note, a university librarian illuminated that quality connotes the extent to which something can be measured in terms of good quality or bad (F1). He assumed, for example, that opening hours can be used to determine quality. He mentioned that during the exam period, the university operates for 24 hours, while the normal period is from 7am to 6pm; he sees this as a quality service.

In another view, the informants defined quality as ‘value for money’. They were questioned further and the reasons why they defined quality in this way differed. One

vice-chancellor (A2) explained that the assertion of defining quality as value for money could be critic when defining quality education. He stressed that it has an environmental implication: that is, what you use one dollar for to achieve in Nigeria; one dollar cannot achieve it in United Kingdom. Therefore, he established an argument that in the Nigerian context, it will be difficult to define quality as value for money (A2). Similarly, one registrar's view was not far away from what the vice-chancellor stated. She mentioned that if quality is value for money, then the highest fee paying students should be guaranteed high quality education, irrespective of their contribution to the class activities (B3). A dean of faculty did not support the argument, but established that he defined education as value for money in the context that he was ignoring the environmental factors, and concentrating on the core academic work itself (D4). He mentioned that money is not all that education can achieve, but the value placed on the money is what matters - that the value of education itself is the value for money, not the money invested in the education process.

A few respondents suggested that quality is all about maintaining a standard. According to a director of academia from a private university (E5), university education operates within a standard laid down by the NUC, which is referred to as a minimum benchmark. He explained that a minimum benchmark is what every Nigerian university builds on. He asserted that if universities are in line with the benchmark set for them, then they are rendering a quality service. In support of this notion, a university librarian elucidated that before you can talk about quality, there must be standardized roles of activity that are fulfilled (F3). He stressed further that before you say something has quality, there must be a measurement. His point is that quality must be quantified. A supportive statement was raised by a dean of faculty from a private university that quality education is about a standard that is 'achieving the best' (D4). He further defined a fit to standard education as a process where the recipient has been turned

around, to reason, to think, to change situations and then to manage. He pointed out that this standard is something that could go all the way at whatever point to achieve good results. Meanwhile, a dean of faculty from a private university said:

“I think quality is anything beyond what is technically required to pass on to the students. I know there is a syllabus and you go to class as a lecturer with the aim of covering the syllabus, but beyond that, what does the student take out of the class? That is not saying that your manner of preparing for the class, your technique in teaching the student, all of those will not be part of quality, that’s not what I am saying. I think that is standard, you’ll accept that standard is a subset of quality” (D5).

When people talk of quality education, it is beyond what we know a university will provide. There is a threshold, and when you go beyond the threshold, then that is quality education.

Other principal officers’ responses focused particularly on the following: the academic standards of programmes (A4, C1 and C3), the relevancy of the curriculum towards workplace related skills (F2, A3 and D5), the content of the curriculum (E4, A1, D2 and D5), the delivery and implementation of the curriculum (D5, G1 and B2). The enthusiasm and commitment of teaching staff and students towards the learning process and the value added to the student in terms of knowledge, skills and personal development (A2, A3, G1, D2). Furthermore, four respondents placed more emphasis upon the academic standard of programmes, the content of the curriculum and the process of delivery (A4, C1, C3 and F1), while two of these participants also acknowledged the role of faculty and student commitment and the extent of the value added to the student in terms of knowledge and skills as synonymous with the quality of university education (A4 and C3). The main focus for the principal officers was that

the university process should be challenging enough to enable students to acquire relevant skills and knowledge. During this discussion, participants suggested some key criteria to be considered for quality management in the Nigerian university. The discussion was developed into four sub- themes as discussed below:

5.6.1 Admission and staff recruitment

Some respondents advocated the quality of student and staff intake to be considered as a key determinant of quality transformation and output (A2, E4, B3, D2 and F2). They agreed that Nigerian universities source their staff and students from the same market: that is, through the JAMB, with all academic staff coming from the existing public universities. Two registrars (B2 and B4) pointed out that to be admitted to university, students must have a pass in O-levels, with at least five minimum credits in relevant courses including English and Mathematics.

“My office always makes sure we consider good students with good grades in order to maintain quality. Not only that, they go through the JAMB examination after their O-Level. We also conduct internal examinations for them: this exam is called the Post-JAMB. Student who pass this stage will be invited for interview or screening before they are given admission” (B2).

A vice-chancellor from a private university exclaimed:

“I don’t believe in admitting only the good student for transformation, I think it should be a mixture so that university can change their lives and produce the best graduates” (A3).

He is of the opinion that if universities do their job and fulfil the purpose of education, which is to transform students to think critically and solve problems in society, then the pressure for students to pass exams during the admission process is a waste of time,

which he classifies as bureaucracy (A3). Likewise, one vice-chancellor was keen to explain that the establishment of more universities in Nigeria has caused more harm than good. He stressed that the establishment of new universities has led to more shortages of academic staff in the existing universities, while the existing universities have also failed to produce graduates that could meet the student ratio. He postulated further:

“I think personally that admission and recruitment of staff will play a big role in determining quality in Nigerian universities” (A2).

Recognising the fact that admission and the recruitment of staff will determine quality in university, many respondents indicated that each university sets its own strict admission and recruitment guidelines, outside what the NUC claims to be a minimum standard. Other sub-themes linked with admission are discussed below.

5.6.1.1 Student Ability:

Ten out of twenty-nine interviewees identified the propensity of students for certain disciplines that were more technical (e.g. engineering and agricultural sciences) as a key determinant of student success and motivation on the course. A registrar and a dean of faculty from a public university put it thus: “often many students join engineering science because they feel it may be easier” (B2) and “not so language-dependant” (D3). They explained further that such students might not really have the aptitude for logic and programming and hence might fail badly. However, a dean of faculty was of the opinion that student ability should be factored in when determining which course is most suitable for each student based on their performance, not just what they want (D3). In another section, a few participants also pointed out that a large majority of students essentially could not cope at university because of weak background, such as in secondary or primary school (A2, A4, B4 and B3).

Taking a contrary view, a bursar from a private university expected that student ability could be tested during the screening exercise and even during the orientation programme. She explained that;

“I think we are not doing badly, though I believe student ability should be a factor to determine which type of lecturer we need to do the job” (C4).

But she also pointed out that students need to develop their ability by studying their student handbook, which has been given to them on admission (C4).

5.6.1.2 Attitude and commitment of students:

Three respondents (a vice-chancellor, a bursar and a dean of faculty) identified the importance of students being mature enough to respond “positively and fully” to learning as a criterion that should be considered during the admission session (A1, C4 and D4). When questioned further, the bursar clarified that it is not important to restrict admissions only to the best students in terms of performance at secondary school:

“I felt that student involvement in learning had more to do with “emotional maturity and personal values” rather than actual grades obtained or entry qualifications” (C4).

Meanwhile, the two vice-chancellors (A2 and A3) expressed that students’ attitude and overall interest in the process of their learning and in developing their knowledge and skills is very important. They emphasised that a positive attitude and commitment towards learning and personal development were the key factors that improve the quality of the overall learning process at university, not the admission criteria.

When asked, “What do you suggest that universities do in order to identify the really interested candidates from others, if not focus on marks obtained at entry level?” a vice-chancellor, a registrar and a dean of faculty suggested that one way could be to conduct admission interviews where candidates have to demonstrate their interest in university education and how they would help themselves to learn (A3, B2 and D4). On the same note, a vice-chancellor and a dean of faculty also noted that many part-time working students could really contribute to the learning process, being in a position to appreciate and apply what they learnt to the workplace. Some of them were only interested in obtaining a certificate, as they had already secured “good” jobs in the public or private sector (A1 and D1). A vice-chancellor (A2) clarified the discussion by saying, “the issue is not whether the students are the most intelligent or have the highest grades; what makes the difference is when you have students who are really keen and interested in learning and in developing himself/herself”.

Likewise, one registrar and one director of academic planning from a private university held that student motivation to learn is important if any student will be successful (B3 and E4). They also mentioned that Nigerian universities, just like universities anywhere else in the world, have two types of student – full-time and part-time. They share a common view that the attitude and commitment of students will be determined by the type of student and their maturity to fit into the system effectively. A director of academic planning further discussed that:

“I think full-time students’ concern and motivation to learn was generally good except for a certain proportion who either just wanted a certificate in order to get a government job or who were there because of their parents’ or peers’ influence” (E4).

However, one of the principal officers put forward the factors that hinder students from getting involved in the learning process. He suggested that these factors might include one or more of the following: lack of understanding, lack of resources, obsolete libraries, environmental factors, non-involvement of students in academic activities, lack of interest in the educational process and low levels of self-confidence on the part of learners (D1). A director of academic planning was of a similar view when he listed lack of resources, an obsolete library, environmental factors and non-involvement of students in academic activities as criteria that should be considered in investigating quality management implementation within Nigerian universities (E3). Surprisingly, two deans of faculty from a private university considered the attitudes of students towards each other and their acceptance of responsibility to be more important than their grades in determining quality management implementation (D5 and D3). In fact, a vice-chancellor (A2) felt that students' attitude to work, personal development and responsibility would be key indicators of students' general attitude to work in future.

A vice-chancellor (A1) argued that the attitude of the facilitator, the lack of resources, an obsolete library and environmental factors should not affect serious and focused students: rather, students should see academia as a learning process that they need to achieve independently. Another vice-chancellor (A2) later corrected the impression put forward by vice-chancellor A1, claiming that the reason why the principal officers cannot function well is due to lack of resources, obsolete libraries and environmental factors. He also explained that institutions are different, even though the aim is the same, but if one has to study and work in an environment where everything works, it is inevitable that one's involvement will be different. In one vice-chancellor's opinion:

"I believe the community you come from will have a either wrong or right attitude towards your involvement. I believe our problem here is simple: the quest for money" (A3).

A vice-chancellor from a private university emphasised that, “the Nigerian youth of today wants to make money overnight, which has affected our quality education system because a lack of concentration and focus has set in” (A3). In most cases, these students had to pay their way out by paying the lecturer for marks. Some had given sexual favours to people who should be guiding them, and as a result they had been mismanaged. If quality can be managed, then the attitudes of students who believe that they can buy their way to good marks will change.

5.6.1.3 Range and variety of programmes on offer:

A participant mentioned that creating access is very important, but creating a different range of relevant courses for students to choose from at the point of entrance will be a better way of providing quality service, rather than limiting students to the courses available, which may not interest them. Moreover, a director of academic planning and a vice-chancellor from a private university pointed out that a variety of programmes need to be considered properly, because the main objectives in establishing university education in the 1970s have changed as a result of western education (E3 and A4). They claimed that people’s lifestyles have had impacts on the society, which has caused societal change, and therefore the students’ expectations of university education providers has increased and students now want delivery options to be friendly.

Similarly, four respondents suggested that it is time for universities to start offering a more relevant range of programmes that fit into contemporary Nigerian demands, so that students can choose courses that are a best fit for their future career (D1, D3, E5 and E1). One director of academic planning expressed that:

“I believe if students are orientated to identify their potential and during the process they choose a course to study with the aim of getting a career or the right job that meets what they like rather than compelling them to choose within the limited courses available at the moment, then students will take learning more seriously” (E5).

A vice-chancellor also contributed to the discussion by saying that quality is all about getting it right from the beginning. He expressed that:

“I feel that if universities want to get it right, it’s time they increased the range of courses offered to students by making them industrial-related rather than ministry focused, which was the initial intention of creating universal education in Nigeria” (A2).

In this age, the country is experiencing changes in all areas of industry; graduating students with generic knowledge will be irrelevant to developing the education system, not to talk of developing the nation. Allowing students to choose from a different range of courses will be a good determinant of quality in the university, if the quality definition of fitness for purpose is accepted.

5.6.1.4 Strict admissions criteria:

All participants pointed out that the strict rules for the admission processes should be separate from the admission itself as a criterion in identifying quality management implementation in Nigerian universities. At this point, principal officers who contributed to the discussion were concerned about the way students, who are considered as the raw material for processing in the university, are being admitted. One registrar from a private university said:

“I think we are not helping the students by setting criteria after the students have finished writing their entrance examination. I think it is very unfair to them because they have not worked towards the target we set” (B3).

A registrar (B1) stated that the quality of the student intake is considered by many to be a necessary condition for institutional success, while a vice-chancellor (A3) argued that the quality of intake should not be a criterion to determine whether or not a university is producing quality graduates, but rather that the universities should be ready to face the challenges of transforming a student into a quality graduate. Three interviewees (A2, D5 and E1) indicated that the principal officers who run the affairs of the university should be concerned with students to whom they can add value during their period of learning, rather than setting a standard for brilliant students from secondary school, who may not be willing to further their education, as a determinant factor for measuring quality in an institution.

One vice-chancellor lamented that, “Of course it might make our jobs easier as teachers if all students were the cream of the lot (brilliant)”, but went on to say “I would question the notion of what quality means if you only have to admit the best students? I think, if you admit the best students, universities would do nothing or very little to add value to student life” (A3).

Another vice-chancellor (A2) suggested that strict admission criteria are not helpful in getting the right students into the university system. He pointed out that admission should entail giving students the opportunity to set goals and the targets they want to meet; designing and delivering the whole of the university package to the student, including the courses they must pass before achieving the award. The vice-chancellor expressed that:

“I think in today’s context of education, universities are just interested in getting students into the system and not concerned about exposing such students to likely challenges they may be faced with in the process of education” (A2).

Two registrars further clarified that the admission of students into the university is done by the government agency called JAMB (B1 and B3). They both explained that universities only conduct post-JAMB exams and interviews as an approach of screening students who have been successful in the JAMB examination. A registrar from a private university (B4) maintained that universities should be meant for brilliant students who have achieved excellent passes in their O-level and JAMB examinations. He stressed that students who do not meet the university requirement are given further opportunities to enrol into polytechnics or colleges of education. Furthermore, a registrar from a public university (B2) also suggested that, in order to make the polytechnics and colleges of education relevant, the Nigeria government now operates JAMB with a common name – University and Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME). UTME conduct examination for universities and those who do not met the criteria for university are deployed to polytechnic. Likewise, those students who fail to meet polytechnic criteria are deployed to colleges of education or other monotechnics, which is confusing at times, and this is another reason why principal officers in different universities believe that post-JAMB examinations are important in order to screen students further.

On the contrary, a vice-chancellor (A3) strongly believed that quality of intake may not be a good determinant of a quality university. He claimed that what happens after you have been admitted into the university, and what you take out of the university, is what matters if quality is defined as value for money or fitness for purpose. A vice-chancellor from a private university was also interested in finding ways to uncover how quality

occurs in Nigerian universities rather than thinking about measuring quality (A3). He was sure that quality should be investigated in the university only by considering the transformation process. In addition, another vice-chancellor (A2) agreed that students admitted into university are graduates of secondary school. He explained that the value added to them during their secondary school career would vary depending on the secondary school each student had attended and that the people who had taught them for six years would have had an impact on them. Therefore, it will be good to forget where they had come from and focus on how they can best add more value to their lives and develop them for the task ahead. A dean of student affairs also claimed that:

“I believe determining quality in university should focus on the transformation process, by which I mean teaching and learning” (G1).

5.6.2 Teaching and learning:

Very few of the twenty-nine participants talked about teaching and learning. Amongst those who talked about the subject were two directors of academic planning who stressed the necessity of ensuring that the university education process is rigorous and challenging within the teaching and learning activities to achieve quality outcomes (E2 and E3). One dean of faculty from a private university (D4), when talking about quality management implementation in the university, put it thus: “the delivery of the programmes, particularly the whole approach to teaching, must be appropriate so that ultimately standards are met”. A dean of faculty (D1) clarified that in order to produce quality service in the university, principal officers need to get students involved. He explained that it is very important that the process of teaching and learning is stimulating and interesting to the student. A director of academic planning (E1) and a dean of faculty (D3) laid more emphasis on the student learning process, positing that it should be challenging and engaging enough to enable students to develop themselves and take responsibility for their own learning. Nevertheless, a director of academic

planning (E3) expressed that if this happens satisfactorily, then everything else will fall into place. He pointed out that identifying quality management implementation criteria will require studying not only teaching and learning, but the whole process of how teaching and learning occurs in the university. The following sub-themes emerged from the discussion under teaching and learning:

5.6.2.1 Faculty/Department:

Under this sub-theme, several related factors were discussed and almost all participants identified the role of lecturers as the main actors in the students' transformation process. A dean of faculty (D1) mentioned that the faculty represents the institution and the faculty has a greater influence upon a student's opinion. The faculty also passed on information relating to their students to the university management. A dean of faculty from a private university noted that faculty are constituted by a range of lecturers in the same relevant fields of study (D4). He pointed out that their duties are to see to the academic welfare of the student, for example delivering the service, guiding and supervising as and when needed. He said:

"I believe the faculty system is a way of breaking down the university responsibility into a smaller unit, which is the idea behind using a committee system" (D4).

Conversely, four respondents explained that faculty members are generally hired based on qualifications and not necessarily industry experience (D1, D2, C1 and F3). They emphasised that such lecturers tend to have very good theoretical knowledge in their field, which was considered important in university teaching. A vice-chancellor, in his explanation, postulated that some principal officers tend to lack the creativity, presentation and leadership style needed to carry students along in their teaching (A2). Two of the respondents (A3 and D2) argued that strong academic credentials and

subject knowledge do not necessarily guarantee strong personal skills. But one of the vice-chancellors expressed that:

“I think it is the responsibility of the faculty head to make sure that lecturers have particularly managerial responsibilities to enable them to structure, organise, integrate teaching and learning, access and deliver modules in a way that enhances learning clarity. I think this should be a major concern in determining quality management implementation” (A3).

Likewise, a dean faculty said:

“I think when you talk about a faculty or department, the priority here should be the lecturers who actually make the faculty function effectively. To be honest with you, it will be difficult to talk about quality in the university without considering the faculty that implements the teaching and learning activities of the university” (D2).

Two vice-chancellors (A2 and A4) also expressed that lecturers, who are the main employees, must have impressive/strong communication skills, a warm/confident personality and empathy to understand students' needs, in order to positively influence students' attitude and interest in a subject and in learning. Another participant was of a similar view to the two vice-chancellors, mentioning that lecturers' personality and teaching styles should be considered important in that they can “inspire and motivate students” and can “influence students to move in the right direction” (A3).

A director of academic planning put forward a strong case that the criteria to investigate quality management implementation in a university system should involve the faculty as the processing unit (E3). He stressed that it is important to consider what the faculty have for the student in terms of curriculum and courses, who is delivering the course

and how competent they are. Similarly, a director of academic planning from a private university (E5) stressed the importance of effective communication and presentation skills as important criteria to determine quality management implementation. He explained that highly qualified and knowledgeable academics would have very impressive communication skills and hence have effective teaching methods. Two other respondents (D1 and D4) highlighted the ability of lecturers to plan, organise and present the subject as important criteria in determining quality management implementation in the faculty. A dean of faculty (D1) mentioned that the quality of the lecturer is one thing, but that universities should also ask what type of lecturer they have or need. He said “We need to make sure that the type of lecturers we have can easily meet up with the demands of the student, not lecturers who have no commitment to students learning, and productivity”.

5.6.2.2 Teaching methods:

The teaching function and the use of “interesting” teaching methods was a key criterion identified by some participants; however, their interpretations of ‘interesting’ were ambiguous and varied. Some of the respondents were unable to elaborate when asked for examples of particular teaching methods used by their staff. Besides, two informants did not respond very enthusiastically when asked whether they would like to be more involved in classroom activities. Similarly, three interviewees seemed to link interesting teaching methods simply with lecturers’ ability to explain the subject in a way that is not boring (D1, D5 and A3). They highlighted the role of student presentations and class discussions with the more interactive teaching methods used by some lecturers, as they felt that it improved students’ overall understanding of the topic and forced them to think about concepts, rather than just listen to the lecture. In contrast, one informant (B1) did not seem to have any strong views about teaching

methods. He tended to place more importance on hand-outs and teaching materials and on practical aspects of the course in particular. A vice-chancellor rephrased that interesting teaching methods are a good way to get students involved in the learning process even though some many still not find them suitable. He stressed that,

"I believe the best way to know if quality is managed in teaching and learning is to ask the end user as well as the student about what they assume quality teaching is" (A3).

However, a few participants condemned the inconsistency in teaching methods and the lack of enthusiasm displayed by many students towards a more participatory role in the classroom. These principal officers felt that majority of students tended to be very conservative in their teaching preferences and were more motivated when concepts were straightforward and focused, rather than complex and application oriented.

"I think teaching and learning in the university should focus on taught students, not just all students: for example, online students. I disagree with the general view that they want straightforward teaching. They do not; it is we the academics that are lazy, students don't even know what they want. It is whatever we give them that they take from us. I believe if quality is to be implemented then all lecturers must be re-orientated about how to teach and learn from your teaching" (A2).

A vice-chancellor (A4) also pointed out that moving students away from tutor-centred learning is considered as a major problem that can affect quality. She remarked that some students were "extremely negative towards student-centred learning approaches" and even considered that "lecturers were not doing their jobs", or "did not know how to teach if they moved away from the traditional lecturer-centred teaching approaches". The fact that many students were not enthusiastic about non-traditional teaching

methods indicates a gap between some of the more innovative lecturers and the expectations of the majority of students. One frequent observation among principal officers was that students, particularly towards the end of the semester, wanted lecturers to focus on preparing them for assessments and were not really interested in learning for its own sake.

Likewise, a registrar and a university librarian were of the opinion that lecturers should use similar or consistent teaching approaches/styles (B3 and F2). The registrar explained that lecturers need to understand their students, as most students did not appreciate the wide differences in teaching approaches among staff and found them difficult to adjust to, especially first and second year students. Again, two deans of faculty supported that it is good for lecturers to sometimes make use of non-traditional and interactive teaching methods in enhancing students' interest in the subject to create in-depth understanding and generating discussion around the topic (D1 and D5). Another supporting statement was made by a vice-chancellor:

"I agree with the statement that non-traditional techniques can facilitate learning and should not be difficult for lecturers to engage in because that is the idea behind academic autonomy and they are free to do what will influence their learners to learn fast in the classroom" (A4).

A vice-chancellor was of the opinion that lecturers need to learn continuously in order to constantly update their teaching, teaching materials and their content by using the latest examples and applications; the vice-chancellor lamented:

"to be honest with you, I expect lecturers to be stimulating and interesting and to use teaching methods that break the routine and make students think differently if our work is to be relevant to the community" (A2).

One worrying statement by a vice-chancellor (A3) was that “some lecturers do not take the trouble to make the subject interesting to students. A bursar (C3) pointed out that on many occasions, “Students did not even understand why they have to study some topics or subjects”. She explained that in such cases when students did not understand the relevance of topics, they were not motivated to develop their knowledge or understanding further.

On the contrary, a director of academic planning suggested that lecturers must teach, mentor, motivate, share, plan and lead students to achieve the aims and objectives of choosing class-based courses, rather than online learning (E5). A dean of faculty also held that lecturers must have a good ability towards their work and not just use their qualification as a means of earning money (D1). Three informants (D2, D3 and E1) felt that qualifications, training and experience have a significant impact upon lecturers’ performance and capability, while a vice-chancellor (A1) indicated that qualifications are secondary to a lecturer’s ability to teach. He explained that the ability of teaching staff to make complex concepts accessible and “easier to understand” was more important than their qualifications. “It is the application of the training and skills you have learnt that reflects on your ability to deliver a better service to your learners.” Likewise, three deans of faculty (D1, D2 and D4) were of the same view that a tutor’s knowledge of the subject area and their ability to make theories relevant through “real life examples” was very important.

5.6.2.3 Focus of lecturers on subject knowledge:

Without exception, a university librarian placed the onus on the lecturer to enhance students’ subject knowledge. He stated:

“I think enhancing students’ subject knowledge is not debatable because lecturers develop and deliver the curriculum. I believe there is a responsibility to make sure they focus on subject knowledge” (F2).

Three directors of academic planning (E4, E5 and E1) emphasised their roles in drawing the attention of lecturers to fundamental theories and concepts and making complex concepts more accessible and understandable. Lecturers will expect students to take responsibility for their learning, with more participation. One director of academic planning also put forward that:

“I assumed that the responsibility for making students understand was fully the lecturer’s duties” (E1).

Likewise, another informant (E4) acknowledged the importance of developing independent learning or thinking skills, emphasising the relevance of these skills to performance, both at university and in employment, as important criteria to understand quality management implementation. A university librarian (F1) argued that many students did not see the necessity for wider independent reading and seemed to place the entire responsibility for ensuring the understanding of the subject on lecturers. When the issue of student involvement was explored further, two deans of faculty (D1, D3) and one director of academic planning (E3) indicated that it is the responsibility of the students to prepare themselves for assessments. Their focus was on the assessment rather than on subject knowledge, or what the student had learnt. A dean of student affairs (G3) and a university librarian (F2) were clear about student expectations, but accepted that lecturers are responsible for developing students’ knowledge and awareness to some extent, while students are expected to build on the knowledge acquired.

A vice-chancellor (A2) said that this will be possible only if the government properly funds the universities. Some participants stated that there is considerable resistance to accepting the responsibility for independent learning, even among the best students. They expressed a degree of helplessness about overcoming this problem. Two deans of student affairs (G1 and G2) pointed out that the main issues should be centred on the difficulties of motivating and supporting students who were used to traditional teaching and assessment methods in the primary and secondary school system. A vice-chancellor from a public university (A2) explained that the teaching staff seem to be in dilemma; although many have recognised the importance of student responsibility, they did not seem to have any idea of what they could do to enhance it.

The dean of faculty of a public university (D1) mentioned that teaching staff are claimed to place this responsibility upon the management of universities, whether public or private, the NUC, the Ministry of Education and the general community, arguing that if quality is viewed in terms of teaching and learning, it should first focus on subject knowledge. Another participant (E1) maintained that the student community needs to be made aware of the importance of participation and learning to learn. Similarly, a bursar (C1) pointed out that helplessness on the part of teaching staff could also be based on the fact that they cannot handle issues which may have cultural and social implications or political influence. Again, a vice-chancellor (A2) stressed that universities, the faculties, departments and the organisations that employ university graduates should make it clear to students that “unless they acquire effective skills from learning, thinking and doing things for themselves, they would not be successful both in university and outside of it”.

5.6.2.4 Focus of academic staff on developing skills:

Moreover, there was consensus among a few respondents that developing and preparing students for the workplace by focusing on skills and subject knowledge was very important and should be considered as a criterion for determining quality. While four participants emphasised the importance of enhancing subject and practical knowledge, they emphatically stated that the role of university is to prepare students for the workplace (A1, E5, D2, and G1). However, a vice-chancellor from a private university and a director of academia from a public university stated that students' interpretation of what this preparation entails needs to be clear (A4 and E2). Likewise, a dean of faculty from a private university pointed out that individual principal officers' interpretations of skills vary. Some seemed to equate practical understanding of the subject with the skills appropriate for the workplace, while others were not very sure about what employers required (D4). Two registrars (B4 and B2) assumed that most students enrol for university in order to give them a better chance of getting a good job. He mentioned that:

"I think it is important that graduates are able to do their work properly and this requires practical knowledge of the subject" (B2).

When one informant was questioned further about generic skills required for success, his response was thus:

"I think practical understanding of the topics and having the knowledge to complete tasks is what is required from a university degree" (B4).

Another response was made in support of this view by one vice-chancellor:

"If you are able to do this, then you will develop the communication and self-management skills on the job through work experience" (A2).

A vice-chancellor and two directors of academic planning (A1, E2 and E4) explained that teaching staff should be aware of the need to develop skills of presentation, communication and dealing effectively with people. Another vice-chancellor (A2) pointed out that such skills could be a core part of the overall learning process in Nigerian universities, and that the success of this required both the students and staff to be effective agents. Nevertheless, two directors of academic planning (E3, E4) and two deans of faculty (D2 and D3) stressed the role of lecturers in developing curriculum in a way that includes transferable skills and awareness. They also mentioned that the key objective of universal education is to develop students into mature individuals who have acquired (at least) a minimum level of skills and the ability to learn and develop them further, in essence transforming the students. A vice-chancellor from a public university expressed that equipping students with “the skills of learning, communication, self-management, thinking for themselves, team and people skills and adaptability” was vital for employers, who are willing to pay for these skills (A2).

Conversely, a few respondents emphasised the feedback they had received from those who had employed their graduates. One of the participants (A4) explained that the feedback report showed that if a new employee is adaptable and has good thinking and reasoning skills, then she/he will be able to learn quickly on the job. However, two vice-chancellors (A2 and A3) mentioned that if academic staff have poor adaptability, only being subject to specific knowledge, such staff will take a long time to become productive and even then their contribution will be limited, in terms of research as well as teaching. A vice-chancellor from a public university (A2) who embraced quality mentioned that, “we do not just take in staff, but rather we expose them to training and re-development training as well as personal development.” He pointed out that although his institution has not been supporting staff’s research financially, it has been

incorporated into the university activities (D3, E3 and E4). A vice-chancellor (A3) also maintained that staff should be trained properly and mentored if they are to be able to contribute to student learning.

5.6.2.5 Contribution of other principal officers:

One vice-chancellor (A2) identified the culture among staff as a major contributor to the overall learning experience. Another vice-chancellor (A4), two deans of faculty (D2, D5) and a director of academic planning (E5) mentioned the role of other principal officers as an important criterion to determine quality. A vice-chancellor (A4), a director of academic planning (E3) and a dean of faculty (D2) were very emphatic that group work, attitude and the commitment of other agents inside and outside the classroom were key determinants of the quality of their overall transformation of students in the university. Two vice-chancellors (A3 and A4) expressed teamwork and collaboration as “learning together and from each other”. A dean of faculty (D1) cited examples of specific modules where this had happened, as a result of which his teaching experience was richer in comparison to his other teaching, where students were not that keen or active. Two deans of faculty (D1 and D3) placed the blame for the lack of students’ enthusiasm upon academic staff, stating that “the attitude of the staff, their maturity, family background and personal values” were key factors that affected teaching staff’s contribution to student learning. Deans of faculty (D3) noted that, “the more open and committed the teaching staff were, the more they had to share with each other and learn from each other”. Three principal officers observed that the enthusiasm of the teaching staff also influenced students, who would then be motivated to participate in the class activities (A4, D3 and E3).

In contrast, a university librarian, a dean of faculty and a registrar identified the role of competition among staff for promotion as a key motivator that can help staff to be more

creative in their teaching methods (F1, D3 and B2). A probe question explored whether staff were influenced by the comments of their students regarding their lectures, modules or generally about faculty work. Although some respondents did not want to comment on this, believing that academic work should be independent, a few participants indicated that negative and positive comments from the students, particularly postgraduate students, did tend to influence them in planning for future classes. A vice-chancellor (A3) mentioned that there is no freedom *per se*, but only semi-freedom, because if you use an external examiner properly, he will tell you whether or not the lecturer is doing his job.

5.6.3 Curriculum

While the curriculum was clearly seen as a very important criterion, there was a marked difference in a few respondents' perceptions of what the curriculum should focus on if it is to be relevant. A director of academic planning seemed to feel that relevance and currency of topics covered were the most critical aspects of achieving good standards (E2). In fact, eight interviewees identified the content of the programme as probably the single most important input that determines the quality of universal education (A1, E1, E2, E3, E4, D1, D2 D3, D4). A university librarian (F2) articulated that quality in university education is first and foremost about ensuring the right modules and content relevant to the programme that is taught. When questioned about how she defined the 'right content', she elucidated that this would be content that prepares students adequately for the industry/workplace without employers having to invest further in training them as graduates. A director of academic planning expressed that:

"I think a good curriculum is the one that can be available and you can be very well equipped technically to teach the course, but then if you do not have the

practical experience in the field, it may be difficult to make it relevant to everyday living” (E4).

As six participants put it, sometimes the range of topics covered, especially at levels 100 and 200, is more focused on in-depth knowledge of the fundamental topics with the hope of preparing students for their study (A2, A3, D1, B1, E1 and B2). They explained that universities seem to be focusing on developing students theoretically, rather than impacting on them to be creative and innovative and to fit into the labour market. Subsequently, two vice-chancellors (A2 and A3) emphasised programme clarity, with clearly stated learning objectives, and preferred well-structured programmes that include specific core or essential modules relevant to that discipline, as opposed to many different options. A vice-chancellor (A2) emphasised that knowledge of recent methods of applications and technological advancements in the field were important. He mentioned that academic staff in general should understand their subjects through effective research work, not merely being concerned only about the range of theoretical topics covered.

“I feel that it would be sufficient to focus curriculum on the most important, fundamental and relevant topics in relation to practical skills if quality is to be reflected in the transformation process” (A2).

Surprisingly, other interviewees also echoed this view, as one director of academic planning (E2) pointed out that he preferred to focus on specific topics in substantial depth. In addition, five respondents presumed that the curriculum should focus on in-depth knowledge of selective topics identified as fundamental to the subject and the practical application of those subjects (A4, F2, D4, E1 and E2). Once such knowledge is acquired, the dean of faculty from a private university expressed his belief that:

“it would provide the basis on which students can further enhance their knowledge, either through masters’ programmes or professional courses, depending on personal/career aspirations” (D4).

A director of academic planning (E1) also stated that while students probably needed to have stronger subject-specific knowledge, as some subjects might be “technical”, even this could be focused rather than spread over a wide range of areas. Similarly, a university librarian (F2) and a director of academic planning (E2) also laid more emphasis upon quality and depth of subject-related topics, rather than upon a broad range. They were of the opinion that programmes should have specific learning objectives. A dean of student affairs (G1), a bursar (C1) and a dean of faculty (D3) agreed that the curriculum should be current and up-to-date, particularly in the use of the latest technologies, trends and case-study applications. A vice-chancellor from a private university also explicated that the role of university education is not to “teach everything” in the curriculum, but it is the responsibility of the lecturers to cover major areas that need to be covered prior to graduation. He expressed:

“I think it is impossible for lecturers to teach everything in the curriculum because the resulting outcome may be unsatisfactory for lecturers and students if student are overloaded” (A3).

In view of the above statement, a dean of student affairs (G1) and a vice-chancellor (A1) from a public university highlighted the need to focus curriculum upon building a strong fundamental knowledge of subject areas, with emphasis on developing flexibility, adaptability and application. Likewise, a vice-chancellor (A2) explained that too much subject matter, especially advanced theoretical concepts, would result in the student just studying for the examinations and not really appreciating their importance, or even understanding the subject properly. Appropriately, a vice-chancellor highlighted

the importance of the curriculum to focus on the development of skills. He expressed that if such skills are to be developed, then it is important to consider how the curriculum is delivered (A2).

5.6.3.1 Learning Resources

Whilst resources were overtly emphasised by all the respondents, their focus was mainly upon teaching facilities, up-to-date and adequate libraries and industrial training resources, as these will enhance learning. One university librarian explained that the “range of texts and journals available to students and staff” was a critical barrier to quality due to lack of funding (F1). Two other interviewees joined the university librarian in emphasising the importance of having access to the latest versions of relevant hardware, software programmes and texts in the library (F2 and F3). Eight informants (G1, G2, C3, B2, B1, B3, E2, D3), all from public universities, also talked about the general appearance of the campus facilities for extracurricular activities, such as sport facilities and student forums, that can influence quality of student life on campus, which is an important aspect to learning. When asked further about the student response to extra-curricular activities, one respondent from a private university explained:

“I think academics is not only about learning only, it also help students to discover their potential. I believe some students are not good academically but may pick up some good in the process of learning which may become their profession in the future” (B3).

Likewise, in responding to this question, a university librarian and a dean of faculty (F1 and D3) explained that, given the local culture of Nigerians, wider participation might take time. Nevertheless, they stressed that such facilities were necessary to provide all-round development, and in time, participation would improve students’ reasoning ability.

5.6.3.2 Outcomes

Five participants expressed that the quality of outcome, in terms of graduates' preparation for the workplace, was a key indicator of the quality a university provides (A1, A2, B1, E3 and D2). There was less clarity on the most appropriate vehicles for such measurement. Even though many respondents believed that the best way to measure quality is to evaluate students' outcomes, the sub-themes that emerged under the outcome dimension included assessment methods, student performance in assessments and assessment of subject-specific knowledge vs. skills. One vice-chancellor disagreed with the view of measuring quality from student outcomes, explaining that;

"I think it will be unfair to assume that student outcome should be used to measure quality. I think when students are not serious with their study, the institution's quality will fall below measurement if that be the case" (A2).

A dean of faculty was also of the opinion that outcome should be used as a criterion for accessing quality in the university (D2). However, a vice-chancellor (A2) suggested that the outcome of the curriculum is what academic staff should be concerned with, not the outcome of student performance. A director of academic planning stressed that the subject of quality is a very difficult concept, which has to be taken into account when designing the curriculum, not when evaluating student outcomes (E2). A vice-chancellor from a private university clarified that curriculum should be developed with the aim of achieving a quality learning outcome and not testing students to determine the outcome of curriculum quality (A4). In another statement, the same vice-chancellor expressed that, "if quality will be determined by the outcome of the curriculum, then curriculum should be designed to fit the purpose, not the assessment method."

5.6.3.3 Assessment methods:

Two participants from public universities (G2, C1) and a director of academic planning from a private university (E4) believed that it is the assessment process that has a more significant influence on quality, rather than the outcomes in the form of high grades. Four respondents also supported the view that the use of a variety of assessment methods in order to develop different skills, and not merely subject knowledge, is the best way of determining how quality occurs in the university (D1, D2, E2 and E3). A director of academic planning stated thus:

“I think programme teams must incorporate a varied assessment strategy rather than only traditional examinations, if they are really serious about developing skills and improving quality” (E3).

A vice-chancellor from a private university pointed out that the main objective of an assessment is to develop students' reasoning skills, not to test for quality, although we cannot ignore the fact that quality output will influence the institutional reputation at the end of the day (A4). Therefore, two deans of faculty focused their attention on determining quality via a continuous assessment strategy, involving quizzes, presentations, short essays and tests, arguing that it would be ideal for developing skills and subject knowledge and keeping students focused (D1 and D3). However, the same respondents observed that a continuous assessment strategy would be very demanding for students, given the time demands involved. The dean of faculty mentioned the role of feedback on assessment performance, which he assumed had the most constructive role in influencing transformation quality (D3).

Surprisingly, none of the vice-chancellors mentioned the role of assessments in influencing the quality of transformation, but rather regarded it as a tool to make

students learn (A1, A2, A3 and A4). On being questioned, many participants maintained that assessments were challenging and appropriate to encourage students to learn. A vice-chancellor postulated that the use of assessments to determine quality could be undermined by the integrity of lecturers (A3). He that stressed in a situation where lecturers takes money or sexual favours from students in return for better grades, then determining quality from assessment would mean that quality is measured wrongly. In addition, one vice-chancellor held that assessments can be good tools to determine quality, if they are positioned properly, not in a situation where a lecturer is faced with multiple pieces of coursework to teach and assess. He indicated that the challenge would then be more to do with how lecturers can manage their time rather than with properly assessing student performance (A2).

There was a general consensus that a variety of assessment methods are good and can be employed across a programme of study to help foster the development of core transferable skills and understanding of the subject, but that does not mean that they should be used to determine quality - even though assessment was identified as a key criterion to determine curriculum outcome. Three directors of academic planning and two deans of faculty felt that while examinations were appropriate for assessment, the best way of assessing performance on some modules depends on the nature of the subject matter, but considering the culture of Nigerian universities and the number of students in the class, they all agreed that the only effective method of assessment is examination (E1, E2, E3, D3 and D2). However, few participants agreed that an examination is the most suitable assessment method for their subject. A director of academia, a dean of student affairs and a dean of faculty from a public university explained that to better improve their examination assessment and improve efficiency, computer-based exams had been introduced to every level (E1, G2 and A1). Some respondents, particularly within social and management science, indicated that they

were happier with examinations than with taken-away assignments, presentations etc. because of the huge number of students taking the courses, which made it difficult to go through all the student course work.

5.6.3.4 Student performance in assessments:

Two of the vice-chancellors and one dean of student affairs (A2, A3 and G1) stated that high grades did not necessarily indicate a distinctive quality of university. A vice-chancellor explained that the general perception was that quality in university is much more than a set of grades, percentages and degree classifications (A2). A director of academic planning (E5) and a registrar (B2), both from private universities, supported the vice-chancellor (A2), stating that high grades and high pass rates, although they are indicative of good levels of student performance, are not really indicative of good quality provision. The director of academic planning explained that:

“I believe high grade is an important factor to determine quality. I agree that it would be relatively easy to record high levels of performance in assessments if universities restricted their intake to the best students” (E5).

Meanwhile, the registrar questioned the productivity of such students in the labour market:

“I doubt it if they will fit into practical knowledge training” (E5).

Six respondents noted that performance within student assessments is influenced by factors such as general student motivation, the support mechanisms available (e.g. computer-based exams, workshops on examination techniques etc.), the extent of preparation expended by the lecturer towards assessments in class and students' self-management skills (D2, D3, D5, E2, E4 and E5). They also pointed out that assessment standards may not be consistent across institutions. Hence, it may be

easier to obtain higher grades in some institutions compared to others. Again, a vice-chancellor clarified that ‘as a faith-based institution’, failure was not an option for their students (A4). She explained that their university would never graduate a student with a third class degree or a pass – rather, the student would continue to repeat the course until they qualified for a lower second class degree. Two directors of academic planning assumed that assessments may not really be assessing critical or key outcomes and, therefore, “it cannot be assumed that high grades would exemplify all the required outcomes” (E3).

In fact, two registrars (B1 and B2) and one bursar (C3) stated that they would be reluctant to recruit graduates with very high grades unless they were backed up by a strong personality, good character and well-rounded skills that reflect the grades. As a bursar from a public university put it:

“I would be very suspicious of students who get very high grades. In my experience, I have found that such candidates lack initiative and creativity. They tend to be good at appearing for examinations but such abilities are not very useful at work” (C1).

A registrar from a public university (B2) expressed that his main concern regarding assessments was that, on many occasions, they are not well prepared and guided adequately. For example, one dean of faculty suggested that lecturers should not design assessments which are aimed at testing what students do not know (D1). The aim of the assessment should be to test what students have learnt. When questioned further, although few participants agreed that high grades were not necessarily an indicator of quality, a director of academic planning clarified that performing well in assessments did make a student feel good and more motivated to learn (E4). On the contrary, a director of academic planning also pointed out that overall poor

performance of a group is indicative of problems. For instance, if many students fail their exams or assignments, then there is something wrong, which will affect the institution's reputation (E3).

5.6.4 Institutional Factors:

This sub-theme was identified as factors that should be considered in determining institutional quality. Many respondents were of the opinion that institutional factors are good criteria to help identify quality management implementation within Nigerian universities.

5.6.4.1 Institutional Reputation:

Many of the respondents were concerned about their institutional reputation. A registrar from a public university (B2) and a bursar from a private university (C3) considered the reputation of their institutions and the resulting prestige associated with studying at them to be very important. The bursar expressed further that:

"I mean reputation that can be sustained for a longer period of time. Reputation that is consistent, not the one that can be changed easily" (C3).

Three participants (F1, G3 and F2) talked about Institutional reputation in terms of the employability of graduates as very important. They pointed out that there is no joy for lecturers in hearing that their graduates cannot get a job. Seven principal officers, including two vice-chancellors, one registrar and four bursars, considered institutional reputation to be a key criterion in attracting good students and faculty members and in ensuring the employability of graduates, which they pointed that should be used to determine quality (A1, A3, B1, C1, C2, C3 and C4). The registrar (B1) admitted that in some instances, employees were short-listed based on their past experiences with graduates of particular universities, or the reputation of their attended institution.

Accordingly, a vice-chancellor from a public university pointed out that many Nigerian universities were quite new and it would not be fair for graduates to rely too much on institutional reputation (A2), while a bursar from private university elucidated that they had feedback from employers:

“I mean those who employ our graduates. They give us good feedback from time to time and they find that our students are hard-working and they are of good character” (C4).

She expressed that the institution is happy with the feedback from employers, although a vice-chancellor expressed that institutional reputation could be better if quality were built into every aspect of the service (A3). A bursar from a private university (C4) and a dean of student affairs from a public university (G1) also argued again that institutional reputation can be gained on anything. A dean of student affairs discussed, for example, that as a faith-based institution, “we enforce a dress code for our students. When we first started it lots of people referred to our institution as a glorified secondary school. Today, many of the institutions who referred to us as a glorified secondary school are now coming back to learn from us”. She expressed that,

“I think because the success of the dress code is adding value to our students’ behaviour and character. I believe it has added to the institutional reputation as well. Generally, today there is moral decadence and it is the institutions that are trying to put things right: we take it as part of our duties” (G1).

A vice-chancellor (A4) mentioned that every institution is independent. As a result, an institution can think about what it can give to its students to better their performance in the workplace after study. Her institution encourages our students to enrol on charter courses during their degrees. She pointed out that in this institution, for example,

"I can tell you that we are the first university to officially start entrepreneur education for all students. When we were visited by the NUC, the NUC officials embraced the idea and suggested it to the government for all universities in Nigeria. I believe this innovative idea has added to the reputation of our institution in the labour market" (A4).

In another view, a registrar from a public university affirmed that institutional reputation can be achieved through feedback from the services of graduates:

"That is, the feedback from those who employ our graduates. We have received different feedback from all over the world, that our products have been doing very well, which means our graduates still carry our image anywhere they go and they have been representing the institution very well" (B1).

A vice-chancellor from a private university also mentioned that it is good to talk about the reputation of the institution, but he claimed that the outcome that has become a point of reference is the hard work of transformation;

"I need to repeat here again that quality is a function of all university activities because they are linked from input to transformation and from transformation to output" (A3).

Therefore, a vice-chancellor suggested that if a university is to enjoy a good reputation, then it must provide quality in all areas of academia, including standards (A2).

5.6.4.2 Academic standards:

Three vice-chancellors, two bursars and one dean of student affairs indicated that they expect institutions to be representative of certain standards, as set by the NUC (A1, A2, A3, B3, B2 and G1). They were very emphatic that such standards must be

maintained. Similarly, a vice-chancellor from a public university pointed out that institutional reputation was considered to be a link to perceived academic standards. These are representative of certain outcomes, such as graduates' ability to be creative (A2). Another vice-chancellor from a private university stressed that the reputation of the institution is a key indicator of good quality, that the institution has been working overtime (A3). Equally, two vice-chancellors (A4 and A2) and one dean of faculty (D5) actually linked reputation to academic standards and graduate outcomes.

Furthermore, three participants stated that if the standards are not high, then students will not be interested in learning and the reputation of the university will not be good (E1, C1 and G1). A university librarian disagreed with the standard set by the NUC as a yardstick to measure quality (F2). He said that until universities begin to conduct research within their institutions and work is above a standard set by the NUC, Nigeria universities will keep producing poor quality graduates. Meanwhile, one vice-chancellor was concerned about the reputation of individual agents who implement and contribute to the design of the university policies. He explained that they should keep away from playing politics within the educational system, if quality is to be achieved and institution reputation increased (A2).

However, two registrars and two bursars were not clear on what institutions with good reputations could do in a market like Nigeria, where millions of candidates are seeking admission into university yearly, and there is not yet sufficient capacity to accommodate them (B1, B4, C3 and C2). Other than that, one bursar mentioned that Nigerian universities were perceived to be superior, for admitting many candidates based on the standards set by the NUC, even if they could not cater for the students' needs (C2). On the contrary, a dean of faculty pointed out clearly that in some instances, a minimum standard for each program is set. That is, there must be a

certain number of students enrolled into a course. There must be certain numbers of credits that students must take and pass before they can graduate. The dean of faculty stated:

“I think that is what standard means; it’s all about benchmarking that needs to be obeyed” (D1).

A registrar claimed that, in terms of admission, standards are being followed (B1). He explained that there are general guidelines for admission, which all universities must follow. A good example is that the applicant must have a credit in Mathematics, English and three other subjects - regardless of which course he or she is studying.

5.6.4.3 Extracurricular activities:

Although one might expect extracurricular activities to be important to university students in general, two vice-chancellors claimed that academic staff should not be exempt from engaging in extracurricular activities (A4 and A2). However, a director of academic planning identified this as an important criterion and was very emphatic about the role extracurricular activities plays in the lives of lecturers and their overall ability to function effectively in impacting knowledge to their students (E5). A vice-chancellor explained that lecturers should see extracurricular activities as an opportunity to understand students’ reasoning levels, their ability to learn quickly and how students can function in all areas of life beyond class-based activities (A2). He considered extra-curricular activities to be opportunities to develop closer bonds with students, academic staff and other institutions, which can have a positive influence on students’ overall development and attitude. A director of academic planning from a private university explained that the university can also organise vice-chancellor or registrar competitions for the students to engage themselves with the support of their lecturers. He stressed:

“I think we need to show love to our students, I believe in most situations we place ourselves like small gods to them. I think this affects their learning. I believe our involvement in non-academic activities with students will be a good way to identify their potential and support them to achieve something in life” (E5).

5.7 THEME 6: QUALITY MANAGEMENT IMPLEMENTATION

Quality management implementation was considered as a major theme for discussion in order to uncover quality management implementation within Nigerian universities. During the interview sessions, all participants clarified that the Nigerian university education system is run through a committee system. Two respondents explained that within the management body, different committees are formulated for different purposes (D2 and A4). The management then disseminates information through the heads of these committees to the whole university community. A registrar from a private university stated that the head of each committee is responsible for the monitoring and control of the committee (B3). Another registrar (B4) also supported the notion, and added that these heads of committees report directly to the management body, or in some cases, directly to the vice-chancellor, who is a member and head of all university committees.

Nonetheless, a registrar from a public university pointed out that in fact, all committees are linked with a member of the management body in one way or another (B1). In other words, each principal officer has a stake in the committee’s activities prior to the vice-chancellor’s involvement; while in a situation where the vice-chancellor is busy, it will be the duty of the principal officer linked with the committee to relate or communicate

any of the committee's requests to the chief executive. In the same vein, two respondents established that Nigerian universities are run by a committee system and that every committee established has a link with one department or the other, and each department head reports directly to the faculty, the faculty head reports to the management team, and the management team then takes a decision on whether to query or ratify the committee's decision (D4 and E2).

In essence, the ability of university to facilitate the development of students in terms of generic transferable skills was the main recurring theme among the participants who contributed to the discussion on how to implement quality management. They were also firm in their opinion that the purpose of a university education is to produce graduates who are equipped with the right range of skills and knowledge for the workplace. However, a dean of faculty (D2) and a director of academic planning (E3) both stressed the importance of preparing students for the workplace, while a director of academic planning laid more emphasis upon the importance of principal officers' roles. He pointed out that in most cases, principal officers were not really aware or concerned about the relationship between a rigorous and challenging learning process and the ultimate portfolio of skills and abilities. The fact that students need to function well in the workplace makes it very difficult to ascertain quality management implementation within the universities.

Again, while there was consensus amongst respondents that the outcome of university in terms of knowledge and skills is very important, a vice-chancellor (A2) laid more emphasis upon the process of the university as probably the most vital aspect in developing the longer-term abilities of students. A few participants referred to academic standards as synonymous to quality guidelines, while seven respondents did not exhibit much appreciation for the importance of academic standards. Others

emphasised that for quality to be present, the university process and the curriculum must be challenging enough to have an impact on students' overall development and abilities. Three principal officers were more concerned that the programmes should meet students' and workplace expectations and needs. However, many were not very clear about exactly what the expectations of the workplace are.

Several participants placed the greatest emphasis on the role of the academic staff, as one of the most significant inputs that can help in implementing quality. A vice-chancellor mentioned that the role of the academic staff in shaping students' classroom experience, and thereby the "actual" process of teaching and learning through lecturers' teaching methods/styles, was greatly valued (A2). An important aspect which was conspicuous by its absence was research and its role in underpinning teaching in classroom learning, which was not mentioned at all. This omission, however, is consistent with the general focus in most universities in Nigeria regarding the teaching function. A significant finding was the lack of appreciation by respondents of their own role in contributing to the teaching and learning process. This ultimately influences the overall quality of the process and outcomes. To uncover the truth about how quality management implementation has been implemented, a probing question was asked to encourage respondents to reflect on their practices and identify mechanisms used in implementing quality management.

5.7.1 Quality mechanisms identified

A university librarian (F1) identified that quality management mechanisms are different approaches or techniques set to run or maintain quality in an institution. A few respondents also held that quality mechanisms are different approaches or methodologies used to maintain quality. Six participants (A1; A2; B2; D2; E4; F2) mentioned that quality mechanisms are facilities and processes that have been put in

place to ensure that quality standards are met. They were asked further about the arrangement that should be put in place to implement a quality mechanism. The following sub-themes emerged from the discussion.

5.7.1.1 Assessment:

Five participants identified assessment as a tool for quality management. Two of the participants mentioned that if a quality mechanism is introduced and the quality management mechanism does not have adequate assessment to implement quality, then policies on how to manage quality management will just be words on paper. A vice-chancellor (A3) highlighted that Nigerian Universities need to develop assessment mechanisms that are practicable and not just paper documents. A dean of student affairs (G3) expressed the opinion that though efforts have not been made to ascertain how best to improve on the quality of the institution in terms of student intake and transformation, this university have tried to improve what we give to the students by monitoring the assessment process through examination of papers through internal examiners, external examiners and paper moderation. The dean of student affairs also pointed out that,

“I think we make assessment clear in that there is a procedure on how to assess. If you were not satisfied with the result of the assessment, your paper would be reviewed until the panel is satisfied with it. We do this to assure the quality of the certificate issued to the student” (G3).

Further, a director of academic planning explained that in most cases, assessments are used for programme delivery in order to know if the method of delivery suits the students. Academic planning department also assess the ability of the lecturer through the assessment (E5). A director of academic planning maintained that assessment is the easiest method of collecting information from both students and lecturers in order to

identify areas that need development (E4). Another director of academic planning (E3) expressed that my department do not only assess for improvement purposes, but to know which of the teaching methods students enjoy, what makes them enjoy the method, which methods do they dislike and why. All this information is what is put together in his institution for lecturer training at the beginning of the session. He stressed that,

“I think assessment should be considered as a strong quality management tool or mechanism” (E3).

5.7.1.2 Appreciation of university community for quality:

Collectively, all the vice-chancellors pointed out that if the executive head or management team have visions for quality and the average lecturers or staff are not ready to work in line with the principal officers' goals, then there will be conflicts of interest (A1, A2, A3 and A4). A vice-chancellor (A2) emphasised that it takes more time to educate people with a need for quality. Another vice-chancellor suggested that, even when all efforts are made to introduce and implement quality, there is still some abuse of quality along the line (A3). Meanwhile, another vice-chancellor explained the need for lecturers to appreciate quality first, before they could understand how to implement it (A1). An interviewer asked if what they refer to is clear vision for quality. One of the vice-chancellors clarified by saying:

“I think you need to like, embrace, associate yourself with the word ‘quality’ first before you can have a clearer picture of it” (A2).

Furthermore, a vice-chancellor mentioned that;

“As a principal officer, our role is very demanding that we do not have the time to evaluate our supporting workers whether or not they comply with instructions that we pass on to them...I believe that to make the system work, we all need to

*know that quality is everyone's responsibility, including students and end users:
I mean the employers of our graduates" (A1).*

A vice-chancellor (A2) summed up the discussion by saying that if a quality culture is to be developed, institutions need everyone to get involved and comply with the guidelines for quality management implementation. At the moment, not everyone is involved, as it is difficult to change the orientation of the lecturers who should be more responsible for the implementation of a quality community because they do not know what quality is.

5.7.1.3 Proper mentoring:

One of the vice-chancellors (A2) suggested that if quality is appreciated as a community, then employees will be thinking of transferring what they know into the new generation - so that they can continue to develop the culture for quality in the university through mentoring, guiding and support. Three respondents (A1, B2 and D3) mentioned that the mentoring of new and young graduates and students will encourage them to be more productive and make them more fulfilled in their chosen profession, which is better than allowing them to work on their own without proper guidelines. Another participant (A3) mentioned that new employees need to be mentored into the system, otherwise there would be no continuity, because even though academics are autonomous, they need support to develop themselves. One of the participant claimed that academics are autonomous, but "only when they know what to do, how to do it and when to do it" (A4). He also supported mentoring as a mechanism to sustain good practice.

A dean of faculty from a private university (D4) revealed that mentoring goes a long way in the university system. He pointed out that mentoring in the university cannot be

compared to that of any other sector. He highlighted that mentoring should cover a range of services, including supporting students with a well maintained power and water supply and ensuring that students can get to their classes on time and that they can read their books when they should. A director of academic planning (E2) also opined that until students are given necessary support, any mechanism used will continue to fail because the objective of university is to equip students with knowledge that can be translated into workplace activities.

5.7.2 Factors affecting principal officers' ability to produce quality service:

Many participants agreed that their ability to respond to things that matter is affected in one way or the other, which has impacts on how principal officers discharge their duties. One registrar was not sure whether or not his ability had been affected, but he claimed that the workplace environment might affect anybody's ability to function properly (B1). The other respondents who answered these questions came up with the following points.

5.7.2.1 Funding:

Significantly, all the participants talked about funding in one way or another, and a majority of the respondents complained that Nigerian universities are not well funded, and as a result, are lacking up-to-date facilities. A registrar articulated that up-to-date facilities could help universities to sustain, as well as motivate, both teachers and learners to stimulate the learning processes (B2). Five informants explained that they have not been able to carry out proper research work because funding is not available to them (D2, D4, E1, E5 and F1). One of the informants elucidated that there is "no doubt a lack of funding to carry out current research work will affect our own exposure." He expressed further that:

“I am very sure that as academics, we cannot rely solely on theoretical knowledge: even the theory that we will teach is the work of another researcher. As a good lecturer, one needs to test the theory before going to class” (D4).

All these activities involve funding: if students are to be properly transformed, then the lecturer must first be well equipped for quality graduates. Another three principal officers (A3, B4 and C3) acknowledged that money answered all things and that if the government could support private universities with research funds, similar to the Education Trust Funds (ETF) that academics at public universities benefit from, then this would go a long way to develop principal officers' best practices. A bursar from a private university suggested that such assistance from the government to the private universities would go a long way in terms of staff capacity development (C3). On one hand, an informant suggested that although funding is a key issue that affects principal officers' ability, it should be the government's responsibility to develop all academic staff, irrespective of where they are practicing. This was because academic staff are migrating from public to private universities and vice-versa at various points in their career. A vice-chancellor maintained that if government funding is spread on university education, then there will be enthusiasm in staff attitudes (A4).

On the other hand, a director of academic planning postulated that funding is a major problem that affects everyone (E3). The way the society has been involved in politically corrupt practices has affected every individual. He pointed out that, “every citizen now looks forward to money, whereas in the last two decades you would never think of money: people were so committed to their work.” The population has increased and many factors that need to be increased have been neglected, due to lack of financial support to the education sector. A university librarian gave an illustration:

“...if I stay in this office and there’s no light, I won’t be able to stay because of the heat and even the students will not cope in class if there is no light. I believe all these factors are as a result of poor funding” (F3).

One vice-chancellor (A1) also mentioned that although funding is the major factor affecting all principal officers in all departments of the education sector, funding is a major issue even in developed countries such as United Kingdom or the United States of America and that is why they scout for international students abroad to be able to fund their universities. Similarly, a vice-chancellor from a private university supported the assertion that funding is a major issue, but clearly mentioned that in some cases, accountability is the issue, not realising funds (A3). He mentioned that some staff are dishonest, in that when they are given funds to do a project, they divert the funds into other things that are unrelated to the reason for which the funds were allocated.

5.7.2.2 Government policies:

Overall, six participants mentioned that the government’s policies themselves affect their ability to provide quality services; they gave examples such as ‘free education’. A registrar from a public university lamented that if the government knew that they would not keep to their mandate in terms of free education, they should allow universities to charge appropriate fees (B1). A dean of faculty from a private university also pointed out that government policies are really affecting principal officers’ ability to function properly, because the government has failed to provide the support necessary for the smooth running of the institutions, but has instructed the university not to charge fees (D4). Three of the respondents commented that government policies established the public universities and then the mandate to the general public by the government was that there would be no tuition fees, while a vice-chancellor (A2) mentioned that as a result of the government wanting education to be free in public universities, many of

their facilities have become obsolete and need replacement. A dean of faculty also put forward that if the government would continue funding the public universities in this manner, then there would be more problems beyond the principal officers' control (D4).

A vice-chancellor from a public university (A2) declared that one of the reasons why he disagrees with the quality definition as value for money, was "when you do not pay for the service and the government pays for you, how can you quantify what you do not pay for?" He claimed that students in public universities cannot justify what they are paying with what they receive, because the tuition fees they are asked to pay are less than one hundred and twenty dollars per session. He re-emphasised that what one hundred and twenty dollars will achieve in Nigeria, the same amount cannot achieve in the United Kingdom. On the contrary, two participants mentioned that government policies on university education do not affect the universities, but other government policies in the communities within which the universities operate are in conflict with how to run a university.

A dean of faculty mentioned that, at the government level, the NUC is the primary organ that monitors the affairs of the university, but today:

"I think the NUC is becoming very powerful, which it is not supposed to be, because universities are supposed to be autonomous. We have a group dictating almost everything to us; we think the NUC is overdoing it. Universities are supposed to be international centre of discourse. Anyway, that's my own little criticism of the NUC" (D1).

A director of academic planning (E3) revealed that "government policies are sometimes unbalanced, in that when we make a budget of our spending, we base the cost on the current price of commodities, but suddenly all these prices can change by up to fifty

percept within six months (for example petroleum). This will not only affect the society: it will affect us as an institution because we all pay for the commodities. It is not free, even though government has forced us to render our own services for free.” On a different note, another director of academic planning (E5) pointed out that government policies have encouraged the establishment of new universities, while the existing universities are over-stretched because their staff, including principal officers, are moving to new universities for promotion or better pay. He said: “The government is not even helping matters by delaying salaries of the public university staff, which has caused many of our colleagues to travel abroad for good pay and a good working environment, as they claimed. All these are the effects of government policies on our ability to produce quality service to our consumers.”

Moreover, another participant pointed out that, “the government’s policies conflict with normal practices, in that the government policies state one thing today and tomorrow another government policy says something different: these on their own affect our abilities as human beings” (G3), while a director of academic planning expressed that, “a major area where our ability is most affected as principal officers is the issue of students-to-teachers ratio. Universities cannot meet the demand due to lack of funding: for example, the curriculum states that the staff-to-student ratio should be one to ten for medicine, and for other subject areas one to thirty. This means that one lecturer should have direct contact with five students, but it’s not achievable because one lecture has at least two-fifty (250) and above in a reasonable class which can go up to one thousand five hundred (1500) in a lecture hall” (E3). One directors of academic planning (E2) stated that “to make matters worse, the Federal Government of Nigeria has mandated that every lecturer who teaches in the university must have at least PhD qualification and there is no money to employ PhD holders”. Likewise, another director of academic planning (E5) stressed that it is very difficult to meet staff-to-student ratios

with PhD holders, even using lesser qualified PhD holders who are ready to supervise students up to PhD level. He said, "We are trying as much as possible to meet up with these demands, but it's not possible for now. These are major areas affecting our ability to focus solely on developing ourselves as well as the students."

5.7.2.3 Shortage of manpower and overworked staff:

This sub-theme first emerged during an interview with a dean of faculty from a private university, who stated that;

"I can only give you ten minutes for the interview: as you could see, I am worn out for the day" (D4).

Another dean of faculty also complained at the beginning of the interview session that;

"I would have loved to have spent more time with you for the interview session, as your topic interests me personally, but I am overworked for the day. I have been teaching since 7am, I just have one hour break before the next class: I am sorry I cannot talk to you" (D2).

Another arrangement was made to meet with the participant outside work and see if he was happy to contribute to the research. When the researcher met with the dean of faculty (D2) again, he claimed that he had been working all day, teaching different courses that had lasted for two, one and three hours respectively, with an attendance of 500, 2500 and 750 respectively, and with at least 80% attendance. He was asked about the factors affecting his ability to produce quality service. His response was:

"When you talk about quality service, we are trying, but we all know it's not good enough, because take for example in own case: I am not teaching tomorrow but I will be busy marking their scripts for continuous assessment. I have also been allocated ten PhD students for supervision. When do I have

time to improve myself? We are all overworked and some staff are still leaving for better jobs, which creates a compounding problem for us to cover their subjects” (D2).

A dean of student affairs with a similar experience mentioned that his lifestyle has been affected by his workload and as a result he is looking for another job in the industrial sector, rather than academia. He said that academics are always overstretched, which affects the time they spend in conducting meaningful research or even preparing for lectures. He stressed further that:

“I was supposed to go on sabbatical leave six months ago but the faculty has been looking for another person to cover my duties, which they have not found at the moment. I cannot wait to get another job: lecturing here is too stressful” (G3).

A dean of faculty held the opinion that, “student-teacher ratios/student population in class outrange both quality criteria and government standards, which affects the disposition of lecturers to students” (D1). He mentioned that “in a Nigerian university, only the good student survives, because they are not mentored; rather, students are overloaded with theories, which will cause their employers more money to re-train them when employed.” A university librarian from a public university (F3) also argued that when teachers do not know their students, they cannot impact meaningfully on them. One bursar (C4) said, “talking about shortage of manpower is a factor of lack of funding: we know what our capacity can carry, but the university needs more money to operate, therefore pushing us to work toward survival rather than being centres of knowledge.”

However, a director of academic planning mentioned that strikes affect principal officers'; ability to provide quality service, because they do not allow students to graduate at the right time and also the lecturers have to rush their work when they resume after the strikes (E2). Likewise, a university librarian (F3) agreed that "the major problem is, either we do not have enough staff or we do not have competent staff. We keep going back and forth on staff issues, but the fact remains that an academic institution is not a robotic industry. We need competent hands to work with." A director of academic planning from a private university supported this argument by saying:

"I think it's the shortage of manpower. I think that the major issue is the shortage of manpower. For instance, the NUC came up with a report in 2012 that Nigerian universities are lacking 32,000 PhD holders: you can imagine what that means" (E5).

Similarly, two registrars mentioned the non-availability of infrastructure, teaching aids and funding, explaining that it may be difficult to get all that you need to deliver quality service (B1 and B3). One stated "The major factor affecting my own ability to provide quality service will be the quality of the people that run the institution, how they approach things that matter and their integrity as well" (B3). Again, the stakeholders also have an influence:

"When I say stakeholders, you know I mean both the students, the staff, their parents and even the society and the community" (B3).

All these people would produce influence and corrupt this system with one decision or another. A registrar from a public university also maintained that stakeholders need to avoid negatively influencing the principal officers (B1). He stressed that universities should be autonomous and should be run independently. He also explained that the

fact that a stakeholder has a say in the affairs of the university does not place them in any position of authority or dictatorship.

5.7.3 Environmental factors:

Three informants (F1, F2 and G1) discussed the environment where learning is conducted as a key issue that affects their ability to produce quality service. They revealed that in most cases, students are overcrowded in classrooms, lecture halls or libraries with no cross ventilation, bad lighting and no quiet room for reading in the library - although in theory spaces are created, in practice the library is overcrowded. One of the informants mentioned that the community students and staff come from also plays a key factor in their degree of participation in class activities, which affects the principal officers. A dean of student affairs from a private university also commented that the environmental issue is a problem: "A lot of students now live outside the campus, and as a result some of them get into trouble, which takes much of our useful time to resolve" (G2). A registrar also identified political instability, changes in principal officers and the lack of continuity on the part of new officers as factors affecting principal officers' ability to produce quality service (B4). He lamented that universities should not be run like any other sector, because a university is classified as a knowledge-based institution. He assumed that it would be wrong for universities to be imitating other sectors: rather, they should follow the good example of successful universities.

In furtherance, a dean of faculty (D2) and a director of academic planning (E3) highlighted a few environmental factors that have directly impacted on their own ability to be religious. A dean of faculty from a public university cited the crisis going on in the northern part of the country as an example of the environmental factors that affect the ability of principal officers in that part of the country (D2). He mentioned that he had

relocated back to the west as a result of this crisis. Additionally, a director of academic planning added that the environment in which the students study is important, because it can motivate or demotivate student learning. He said:

“I remember when I was at university in the 1970s, we all had good accommodation, conducive environment suitable for learning and many more facilities to enjoy, but now I pity the students sometimes when I see them struggling for chairs in the lecture hall” (E3).

Collectively, three informants listed poor funding, little or no space in the classroom, not enough textbooks and even students wanting to be accommodated on campus and not getting beds as environmental factors that will impact on student learning (F3, E3 and G3). They voiced that all these factors will affect output in one way or another.

On the other hand, two directors of academic planning (E1 and E4) identified societal issues as factors that affect principal officers' ability to provide quality service. A director of academic planning (E1) explained that, “In some situations you will find out that you are begging students to come to lectures, do their assignments and many more things which should have been their responsibility or duties, and if you as a lecturer correct them, your life may be in danger, with cultism and all sorts around: students may even go and kill the lecturer and nothing will happen.” The other director of academic planning mentioned that, “Although cultism has reduced drastically because of the high discipline in the private university, you as a lecturer need to fear for your life because the university cannot guarantee your security” (E4).

A dean of student affairs from a private university also postulated that, “lack of discipline is a societal issue that has transferred into the institution, so also if you are talking about roads network, light and many others” (G2). Likewise, a supporting

statement was raised by another dean of student affairs, who held that, “you need electricity, water, good road networks. Even when you are reading, you need to be assured that you have money for food at the end of the day.” She lamented that all the basic things driven by money are not there - that is the cry of all major universities;

“I think there is a United Nations policy on education, which tries to influence government by detecting a percentage of the income by the budget of government that should be devoted to education; Nigeria is not there” (G3).

Rather, political office holders embezzle the money and travel abroad with it to develop other countries while the future of Nigerians is in question (B3). Likewise, a director of academic planning discussed his experience overseas:

“When I went to the America last year, in a small city I saw up to forty PhD holders - all of them are Nigerians - in one small university. Can you imagine?” (E5).

He explicated that if such numbers of academics were allowed to stay in Nigeria, the impact would be huge, but they have gone abroad to help others instead of staying at home because the government is not helping matters and there is no motivation for them to stay (E5).

5.8 THEME 7: FACTORS AFFECTING UNIVERSITY QUALITY BEYOND THE INSTITUTION:

Many respondents stated that there are other factors beyond their institutions’ control that affected the overall performance of Nigerian universities. The following themes emerged:

5.8.1 Power supply:

Some respondents mentioned that a disordered power supply affects their university performance in many ways. The vice-chancellor (A2) elucidated that, “if you want to have quality research and there is an erratic power supply, you will not be able to concentrate on the research that you are doing.” A director of academic planning pointed out that, “in a situation where you have to test for a result in the laboratory and you have low power supply, the technology you are using may give you a poor result or may not even work at all” (E3). Two participants also condemned the administration of the power supply in the country (A3 and C1). They mentioned that their shoddy efforts affect all parts of the business sector in the country. They explained that the Power Holding Company (PHC) gives them a bill for the amount they need to pay every month, whether or not they supply the university with electricity. A bursar lamented that the amount of money their institution invested on running a generator would be enough to develop other aspects of learning (C1). He emphasised that power issues cannot be compromised and that is why they invest in other alternative ways to generate power, which are far more expensive. One of the vice-chancellors explained that;

“I think we need electricity to run our computers, to carry out our Computer Based Examinations (CBE). I cannot rely on PHC to supply power throughout the day when the CBE is going on. It is difficult for us to use power supplies by the PHC: rather, we prefer to use generators for the period of the examination” (A1).

Interviewees were questioned further about why Nigerians are still suffering from an unreliable power supply and a lack of good roads when Nigerian universities have been producing graduates in mechanical, electrical and civil engineering. Two vice-

chancellors elucidated that many Nigerian graduates have passed through the university education system not because they want to contribute to the development of the nation, but because they want to get a degree in order to secure a white-collar job (A1 and A3). Again, it was echoed by one of the vice-chancellors (A1), in justifying the low performance of graduates in the community, that many of these graduates have good intentions to develop the nation, but the major problem is that without a power supply, nothing can work. In addition, a dean of faculty from a public university pointed out that, "in an instance where we are talking about getting students involved in their learning as well as encourage them to do better, there is no power supply to power electrical materials to ventilate the reading room or the library: even the environment in which students receive lectures is not good. All these will have an effect on quality, especially quality of transformation" (D1).

5.8.2 Quality of the family in the community:

Two informants (B3 and D4) placed serious emphasis on the home and community that the student comes from as a factor beyond the university's control. One of the informants explained that many students cannot cope at university as a result of family problems, which affect their ability to respond well in the classroom (D4). A bursar from a public university (C3) talked about students' family background. She mentioned that in a situation where a husband beats his wife in front of the children before leaving home in the morning and refuses to give his children money for school, such students will be nursing that feeling even in the classroom, rather than concentrating on the class activities. However, one vice-chancellor added that, "from the academic staff, like every human being, you find some bad ones who are not doing their job properly - for example, collecting money to pass students or having sex with them in return for marks - and again, these are coming from the society" (A3). Another issue is of corruption,

whereby everybody wants to get money at all costs. Further, a dean of faculty from a private university mentioned that;

“I would also add that, when we talk of the society, parents must be involved because a lot of students are distracted right from home. Some parents want their children to study a course that does not interest the student themselves. These are major concerns for the institution” (D4).

One of the vice-chancellors also supported the contention that family background plays a vital role in the life of the student. He mentioned that some students are willing to study but the families they come from cannot even afford to feed them, let alone pay their school fees (A2). A director of academic planning from a public university said, “We cannot blame poor funding 100 percent. Likewise the government: “The parents also have their own share of it; some students will come with very high marks, but you do not know how they got them, and the only way you admit candidates is to use their obtained grades. How can you explain if a graduate finishes university and he comes for an interview and cannot express himself; how do you explain that? It never happens these days” (E3). A dean of faculty from a private university also added that “student indiscipline is from the society, because the students are the heartbeat of the society. We have students from various backgrounds here and the society has affected many students’ behaviour, maybe from home. Some lack guidance or parental care: hence, when such students come to university, it reflects in their way of life. We see that from the end of the students very often” (D4).

5.8.3 Quality of primary and secondary schools:

Five participants talked about pre-university education quality as a factor that affects students which is beyond the universities' control. One of these participants (a bursar), revealed that a few students from public primary and secondary schools were not performing well at university. His opinion was that there are many factors that are responsible for this poor performance, among which he mentioned funding (C4). One of the registrars supported the view by adding that on many occasions, primary and secondary teachers' salaries are delayed or not paid for five to six months (B2). As a result, many primary and secondary school teachers now commit themselves to trading as a second job and are thus unable to devote adequate time and attention to lesson planning, innovative teaching or further research. Another dean of faculty from a private university who supported this assertion stated that:

"...primary and secondary schools should be a learning place, where teachers should support pupils to discover their potential and guide them to fulfil their dreams. But that is not the case. Take for example myself: I was forced to enrol in science class when I was in secondary school but I ended up studying accounting in the university as my chosen career" (D4).

A bursar from a public university mentioned the issue of overcrowding, non-conducive environments for learning, a lack of student-centred learning, the maltreatment of pupils, unnecessary disciplining that can affect pupils' concentration in class and many more. These are issues that have been translated into student life that the university cannot control (C1). Similarly, a vice-chancellor (A2) and a dean of student affairs (G3) discussed that, even if pupils are taught in a dilapidated building, if teachers focus their attention on learners, they will still perform better if they are motivated to read and take responsibility for their own learning. On the contrary, a dean of student affairs assumed that it has been difficult to achieve good practices because teachers are very lazy (G3).

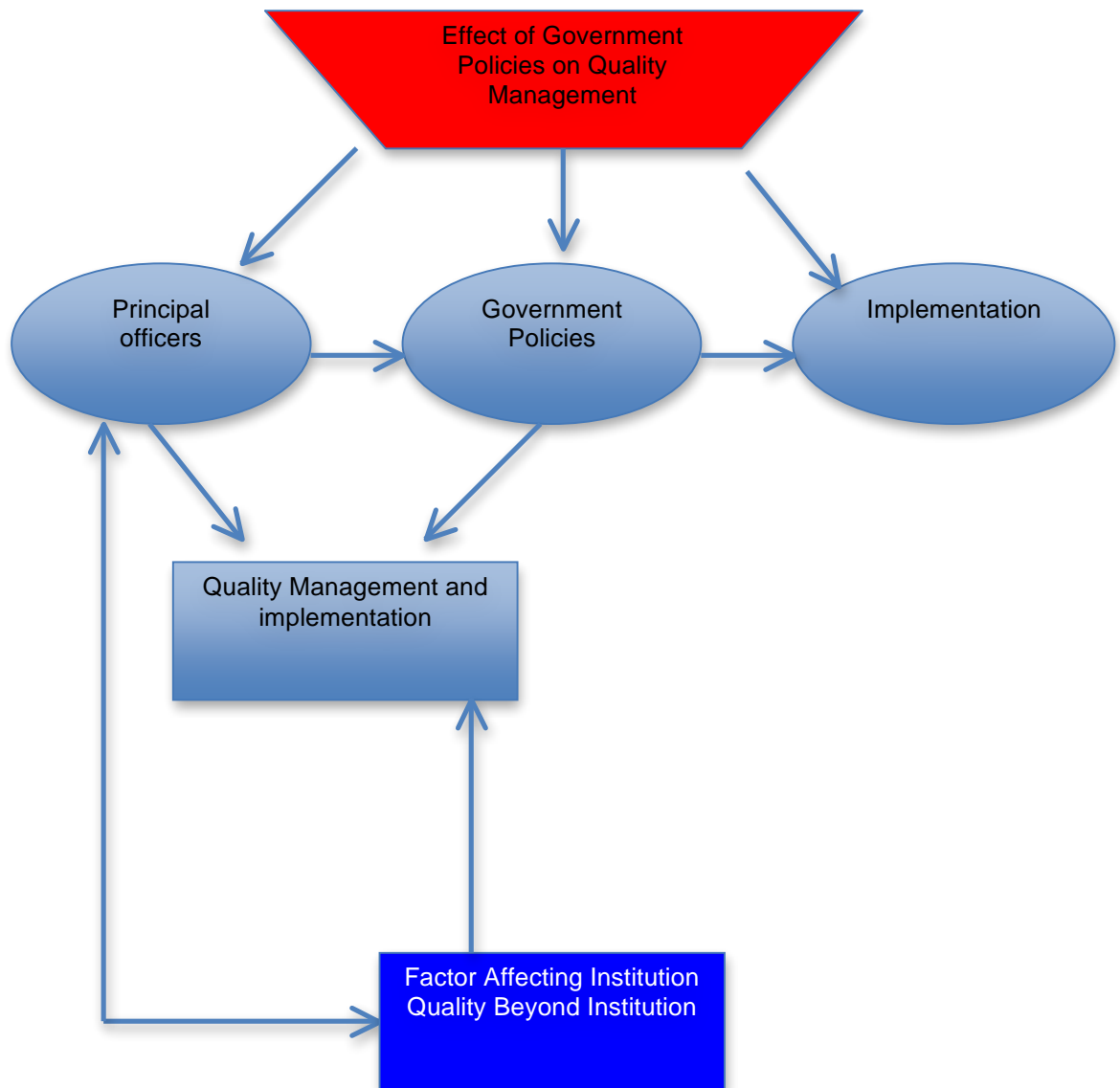
A few of them also struggle because they have not had a good education, but have picked up teaching jobs as a means of livelihood.

Additionally, two registrars stated that it has been difficult to ascertain whether grades assigned to pupils are as a result of their good work. Whether or not they are a quality output, it is not known until they are entered into the university system for further or advanced transformation (B1 and B4). Therefore, if quality is to be achieved, there is a need to know how best to filter and sustain students at university. A director of academic planning from a public university accentuated that quality should be a focus from the primary school level, because without a very good foundation, you will have it wrong (E3). Similarly, a dean of faculty (D2) and a director of academic planning (E3) both argued that graduates from primary and secondary schools are the input of university. Dean of faculty (D2) explained that if there are faults in the level of transformation at both primary and secondary school, it will reflect in the life of such students at university. Therefore, he believes that the quality of university education should be tested right from primary school up to the university level.

5.9 MODEL OF WHAT WAS AT WORK IN NIGERIA UNIVERSITIES

Having discussed the outcome of interviews with twenty-nine principal officers who play key roles in the affairs of their universities, either private or government-owned, the researcher observed that there are misplaced priorities in the manner in which the sector operates. This was evident in the responses given by the twenty-nine respondents from the six universities studied. However, after the whole exercise, the researcher was able to put together the factors that the twenty-nine participants suggested were at work at the moment in their various institutions (private and public).

Figure 5.1: Diagram of what was at work in Nigeria Universities



The diagram above shows that government policies, among other mechanisms, have a very strong effect on how principal officers discharge their duties and how government policies themselves are being designed or formulated, which in turn instruct the ways in

which principal officers will implement the policies. In the diagram above, implementation stands alone because the findings suggested that implementing any part of the government policies is a matter of desire and not of necessity. Even though managing quality is a demand for change, government policies in Nigerian universities are centred toward only certain aspects of the universities, such as input (admission of students), while other input factors such as recruitment of staff and facilities are being ignored. No wonder a few respondents could not discuss in detail what they understood by the quality of education they produced. The few that had this understanding are still affected by many factors beyond the control of their institutions, such as the students' family background, community, past knowledge acquired, such as secondary school attended, and many more. If these factors have effects on quality management implementation, then they will definitely affect those who are expected to implement the mechanisms.

5.10 SUMMARY

This chapter has discussed the empirical findings from the semi-structured interview transcripts and the themes that emerged, and explored the outcomes of the findings within these themes. Seven major themes emerged in the findings, which provide answers to the research question and the interview question, and are linked with the research aim and objectives of the study, as highlighted in the introductory chapter, which is to uncover quality management implementation in Nigerian universities. The themes that emerged from the study are government policies, the effects of government policies on principal officers, government policies and implementation, quality management, quality management and implementation and factors affecting universities beyond the institution. The approach has helped to identify causal and missing mechanisms causing the universities in Nigeria to function differently from any of their counterparts around the world where human values of freedom and

emancipation that are centred on a valid conception of national development are not ignored (Njihia, 2011, p.61).

The next chapter discusses the empirical findings, focusing on the seven major themes identified. The chapter aims to achieve the fourth and fifth research objectives, which are to evaluate and discuss the empirical findings with reference to theoretical perspectives and the organisational characteristics that influence the phenomenon and to develop a model of quality management implementation that can help to improve university education in the Nigerian context.

6 CRITICAL REALIST EVALUATION AND DISCUSSION OF PRINCIPAL OFFICERS' RESPONSES TO QUALITY MANAGEMENT IMPLEMENTATION WITH THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES.

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6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses and evaluates the seven major themes identified in Chapter Five, focusing on the narrative accounts of the participants' social and personal involvement in quality management and relating them to the theoretical perspectives as discussed in Chapters Two and Three. This approach is generally acceptable to critical realist study of this nature, as mentioned by Blom and Moren (2011), who argue that theory should be in process throughout the whole research process. Likewise, the discussion is centred on a re-description of the themes from the researcher's own perspective, as supported by O'Mahoney and Vincent in Edwards et al. (2014), who argue that the critical realist belief is that research of this nature should involve combining theory identified in the standard literature review with observation conducted in the fieldwork to produce the most plausible explanation of both mechanisms and causal mechanisms that trigger events.

In this thesis, two distinct critical realist explanatory logics are adopted, in order to move from the empirical to reality through the use of retroduction and abduction, as suggested by O'Mahoney and Vincent (2014). Retroduction in this context seeks to explain what the universities must be like for quality management and government policies observed to be what they are or what they are not, in order to identify causal mechanisms, while abduction serves to re-describe observable everyday objects of the university process. Observations from principal officers in the six selected universities give rise to irregularities in the pattern of events provided in these data.

The main aim of this thesis is to uncover how quality management implementation occurs in the Nigerian university context. The present chapter sets out to draw together the empirical findings in a sequence of analyses and put into context discussions relating to the specific research questions raised in Chapter Four. The chapter starts by

discussing principal officers' experience and their position on the following: government policies, the definition of quality management in a Nigerian university context, the quality criteria identified and university management commitment. It then develops a model of how quality management should occur in Nigeria.

The findings identified are explained in light of the themes in the participants' narrative to provide a better understanding that will allow the researcher to look back critically and review the discussion in detail, in order to help produce abduction and develop a model in the Nigerian context. This approach is similar to that used by Juran (1988): although Juran does not express himself as a critical realist, the reality that emerged from his argument explains the breakthrough to events such as quality can only be achieved when the management focuses on planning. He argued that events do not happen by accident: they must be planned. He stressed that organisations accept the management's responsibility for quality – that is, “at least 85% of failures in any organisation are the fault of the system, controlled by management” - and the demand to set goals and targets for development and improvement (Juran, 1988, p. 45). Therefore, to uncover how the event occurs using Juran's assertion mean, it is necessary to plan properly. While, critical realist study suggested that event can not be plan because event are caused by generative mechanisms for example events such as admission intake are caused by availability of space but its occurrence may suggest how it will be managed because events are driven by its occurrence such as environment (catchment and non-catchment area). What critical realists explain in this study is the presences of impeding factors that cause the mechanisms to function wrongly not lack planning alone. Using a critical realist approach of this nature means that there is a need to uncover how mechanisms drive structure and identify those causal mechanisms that affect proper functioning. It is useful to first understand each

mechanism that emerged from the study, their entities and how they relate to the context of discussion (i.e. quality management in Nigerian universities).

It is important to first mention here that critical realist analysis of this nature can sometimes be based on observation in a situation where the researcher seeks to unveil the reality of an event, unlike constructionist analysis, which seeks to develop theoretical explanations which often posit entities despite such activities being inconsistent with their professed ontology (O'Mahoney and Vincent, 2014). This approach was adopted in discussing mechanisms and causal mechanisms as well as entities that are impeding on the functionality of government policies and the implementations of quality management in the Nigerian university context.

6.2 GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Following the establishment of the Macpherson Constitution of 1951, which placed university education on the Nigerian government's agenda, university education then became a strategy in the government's quest for national development. However, it was not until 1979 that the country first revealed its policy for education under the National Philosophy of Education (NPE) and Section 1, Sub-Section 5 of the 1979 Nigeria constitution. The constitution states that the philosophy of Nigerian education should be based on the development of the individual into an effective and sound citizen. The policy further stressed that policies both inside and outside the formal school system should be prioritised by provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at all levels and full integration of individuals into society. Hence, both the regional and central governments could legislate on education. In the present study, six of the respondents agreed with the policy set out by the government but they explained what the policies should be doing as decisions backed up by laws. They shared a common view that government policy should be

guiding people to know when and how to do the right thing at the right time. They were also clear that there could, however, be various decisions on the operation of the institution, such as guidelines or actions that allow the easy running of these policies in different institutions inclusive of the policies set by the government. But nine of the participants claimed that these policies were not properly implemented due to a range of constraints (such as historical antecedents, indirect policy, communication, change in political office holder and many more), which have influence on their implementation. These constraints are referred to as entities impeding on implementing the mechanisms discussed in this thesis.

In an argument put forward by seven of participants as what a university should be, six of them were from private universities, and were of the opinion that university education should be a platform that produces graduates of sufficient quality and quantity to drive the various sectors of the economy forward. This statement was not in agreement with the four of the participants, formed an important group, who were of the opinion that lack of common practice in formulating and implementing government policies is a major factor that continues to jeopardise government intentions to establish policies to govern university education in the country. They identified lack of common practices as one of the causal mechanisms that impede the implementation of government policies. They also expressed that if government only focus on guaranteeing university access, as mentioned in the government philosophy for education, without committing immense resources towards making the university relevant to the general public, then the policies they formulate will not be relevant to the universities for which they design the policies: rather, they will become obstacles that will continue to cause the types of crisis that have been experienced in the past (such as the ASUU strike and many more).

The identification of this impeding factor was also evident in the work of Adesina (2002) and Akinyemi and Abiddin (2013), who made suggestions as to what an ideal situation of government policies on university education. They explained that government policy is a guideline for developing the institution. They stressed that it is in recognition of these facts that governments of many countries ensure the provision of education for their citizens, commit immense resources and also tailor their policies towards guaranteeing that it is made available to the general public. The findings revealed by this study contradict the literature, as fifteen participants claimed that government policies on university education in Nigeria are not realistic in nature. One directors of academic planning backed up their argument by stating that ‘the Federal Government of Nigeria has mandated that every lecturer who teaches in the university must have at least a PhD qualification and there is no money to employ new PhD holders’ (E2). Likewise, it is very difficult to meet staff-to-student ratios with PhD holders: as one respondent stated, “even when we have students willing to study for PhDs, we have less PhD holders who are ready to supervise PhD level” (A2). Another respondent concluded that “We are trying as much as possible to meet up with these demands, but it’s not possible for now” (D1). These are numerous causal mechanisms that impede the implementation of government policies. Twenty-four of participants involved in this study agreed that if government policies are to be relevant, the government must take responsibility for promoting understanding between the policies and the people who drive the structure to implement them.

Despite the importance given to government policies, six of the participants were of the opinion that government policies are rigid. They explained that government policies, for example on entities such as curriculum, dictate what courses to teach, sometimes in what sequence and at other times at what intensity, that is whether courses should be

core or elective: this affects the creativity of lecturers working to develop added value to students' learning. This is in stark contrast to the situation in Western countries, where lecturers must be ready to conduct meaningful research that will inform their teaching and add value to student learning. It is no wonder few participants assumed that research activities in Nigerian universities have suffered, considering the fact that resources to carry out meaningful research are scarce and new knowledge is not valued or appreciated as much as is in the Western culture. This means that even if the lecturers carry out research on their own, it is difficult to implement or put into practice.

A similar view to how government policies on university education are formulated was also presented by the two vice-chancellors, both of whom shared the view that in the Nigerian universities, governments are unfair in the way they design their policies: for example, they had both had the same experience with a particular aspect of the indirect rule policy which was called the quota system. This entity was influenced and introduced by the Nigerian government using catchment areas. Several participants from private universities stressed that the unfair practice was encouraged by the government through its discrimination between northern and other part of the country. The Northern parts were allowed to use indirect rules and classified as non-catchment areas, while direct rule is imposed on other parts of the country and they are classified as catchment areas. This approach impedes the use of a common policy within the country. Twenty-five of the participants acknowledged that the issue of indirect rules used in the Northern part of the country was the reason for poor education in the Northern part of Nigeria.

Another entity impeding government policies in relation to the indirect rule policies was the structured entry requirements supported by the NUC. Several of the participants from private universities shared a common view on structured entry requirement used

by the university, which is sometimes referred to as the quota system. This was further confirmed by nine respondents from public universities, who stressed that their universities cannot determine exactly how many candidates they will admit because of the quota system. Twelve of the informants from public universities debated this point further by saying that admission varies from one university to another. For example, the NUC would assess each university first and give a quota of candidates that must be admitted into each programme. A few respondents from private universities shared a similar view on the quota system's effect on the university system. They expressed that when the NUC sets an admission quota for a particular course, it should not be exceeded - otherwise the university's licence may be withdrawn by the NUC. This approach serves as a form of control, but also threatens the activities of the university, as freedom is withdrawn and replaced with conditions.

For example, six participants expressed that, in the Northern part of the country, candidates' criteria and applications for admission are given lower preference: therefore, government policies on admission procedures are slightly more relaxed in the North than those in the Southern or Western part of the country, where regular procedures are deployed. No wonder a few respondents were frustrated that government policy, in terms of intake, may be difficult to regulate when it comes to catchment areas and non-catchment areas, indigenes and non-indigenes. Again, in some cases, the government wants to give preference to science and technology courses over those in arts and social sciences. This was also noted in the empirical findings to be the major cause of difficulty in implementing government policies on university education in Nigerian universities.

In a report by Obikoya (2002), it was clear that Nigerians became the key policy makers of their educational scheme, where the three geopolitical regions had their own Ministries of Education under the Council of the Minister of Education. The council is typically in charge of education policies for each region. The director of education for each region treats and implements policies on education at the national forum, with the intention that government policies will focus on government intentions to create access and develop manpower. Treating and implementing policies on education at regional level was consistent with a few of the participants' views in the empirical findings that Nigerian government policies on university education focused more on creating access to universal education, ignoring the need to facilitate the education process by making available the necessary resources for a university to operate. Ignoring the need to facilitate the education process was therefore one of the mechanisms causing poor implementation of government policies in the region.

In addition, nineteen of the participants were of the opinion that that not all government policies are communicated. They acknowledged that government policies for the universities come from different external agencies such as the NUC, JAMB, ETF and many more. Many of the respondents agreed that the NUC can make policies for the smooth running of universities, the JAMB can make policies on how to improve intake and the ETF can made policies on how to support the universities. Some of the participants clarified that the government does not have the right to force policies on any university; rather, the NUC advised a minimum standard that all Nigerian universities must follow.

The position of government involvement was further evident in the work of Oyewole (2009), who argued that the problem of implementation is associated with the frequent

changes in policies, politics and changes in government, which have negatively affected the implementation of the NPE. He identified that the Presidents, Ministers, Governors and Commissioners within this different regime had their own policies and notions on education that they attempted to implement during their time in office. He added that with such instability in the system of government, coupled with constant changes in political office holders, one would not be surprised at the level of the crises the nation's education system has witnessed over the years; showing inconsistency as it follows the contradictory nature of the educational policies and practices. This inconsistency is evidenced in the empirical finding that it is difficult to implement government policy, as identified by principal officers from public universities, who pointed out that government policies on university education come from different external agencies, making them difficult to understand and implement.

Twenty-five of the respondents reported that on many occasions, government policies are in conflict with academic practices. They were of the opinion that each university has its own distinctive features in terms of how it runs its own training, does its research, conducts its teaching and carries out the functions relating to student life on campus, which is the process of transformation. These are major areas where government policies are frequently in conflict with university organisational characteristics. No wonder principal officers advised that government policies should be developed in the form of workbooks of different professional contributions, to guide the implementation of government intentions and to avoid manipulation of the policies for political issues. This was assumed to be a method of defining a well-structured standard for the university to follow.

Likewise, Lomas and Tomlinson's (2000) findings were in line with the approach that the standards set for a programme of study are inevitably linked to the outcome and a

certain level of knowledge and skills from graduates of that programme may be used to measure quality. A debate was raised here, as Lomas and Tomlinson identified that a key characteristic of standards in academic environment is that they are never static, but Morley and Aynsley (2007) and Cartwright (2007) flagged the issue that standards imply standardisation or homogenisation, with tacit and explicit understandings of what constitutes desirable graduate qualifications and characteristics. Together with the increasing focus on student satisfaction in university, there have been increasing assertions of falling academic standards and grade inflation (Clayson and Haley, 2005; Ekundayo and Ajayi, 2009).

On this note, questions were raised about government policies in terms of teaching and learning. In response to this, registrars and deans of faculty in three universities expressed that it is difficult to talk about the policies of transformation without considering those who are involved in the procedure, as they are the ones who can improve or abuse the system. They should also be responsible for defining how quality will be managed or administered in the various universities.

6.3 DEFINING QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

In terms of the definition of quality and quality management, all respondents held different views. The participants' responses were not surprising, as it was earlier identified by Modebelu and Joseph (2012), as discussed in Chapter Two, that it is pointless to identify a single best definition of quality, particularly in the university context. They noted that quality is best defined in terms of different criteria. Saiti's (2012) argument for quality definition in higher education was centred on using institutions' broad autonomy to agree on their own visions and mission as a function of mechanisms that can help them achieve their institutional objectives. One registrar

from a public university concluded, after some debate, that “quality education would mean different things to different people, depending on who you are, what you do and what you want to achieve from the education system (B1).” In an earlier discussion in support of not depending on a single definition of quality, Harvey (2005) and Iacovidou et al. (2009) recapitulated that reliance on a single definition of quality can be a source of conflict and can result in communication problems. This was exactly the scenario that resulted from attempts to use a common policy to implement government policies in the Nigerian context, as evident in the previous section.

A fact-finding presentation by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in UK (2004, p.1) defined quality academic quality as “how well the learning opportunities provided to students enable them to achieve their award.” In this context, it is being assumed that the situation of higher education in terms of learning environment will be similar: they expect all entities that generate the mechanisms to function perfectly, such as the provision of water, light, ventilated areas for learners and many more. But this definition does not fit well into the Nigerian university context because there are so many causal mechanisms impeding the communication of different entities to drive the functionality of actual mechanisms.

In line with the above arguments, nine of the participants claimed that quality education is more than providing one aspect of education but rather education that will impart on the student the right kind of knowledge: that is, “education that would positively affect society”. Meanwhile, bursar was of the view that “Quality education occurs only when you are able to sustain a balance between what is learnt and the learner’s character” (C4). These respondents emphasised their belief that many

Nigerian universities should be planning to produce graduates that will be good in the office and of good character.

This participant, a bursar was of the understanding that “Quality education occurs only when learners are exposed to good academics as well as good characters and they grow to be people of integrity that will add value to society” (C4). This statement appeared to be in agreement with the claim by Townsend and Gebhardt (1990) and Ishikawa (1985) that quality is everybody’s business, including the business of the consumer. Similarly, Ishikawa believes that quality should not be left in the hands of professionals alone: everyone in the organisation should be involved. He defines quality as, “Not only the quality of the product, but also of the company itself, after-sales service, quality of management and the human being” (Ishikawa, 1985 p. 57). In an attempt to clarify his statement that everybody should be involved in the quality of service they receive, Ishikawa’s work gave a rise to other critical studies to investigate quality from the customer’s point of view, even looking at students as customers or investigating the quality of service students receive or the grades they obtain in class assessments.

In contrast, thirteen of participants from private universities debated more about students being classified as customers: they expressed that students should be included amongst those who should be responsible for quality of the learning, but sixteen of participants who were from public university disagreed with this. These latter participants claimed that students do not know what they want to study: students have no choice in selecting which course they get enrolled on, therefore student may not contribute to their learning. Meanwhile, nine of participants from the private universities explained that in some cases, students are allowed to make contributions: surprisingly three of the participant who shared a common view happened to be registrars, and said

student contributions are limited and they have no rights, and that therefore their contribution is not like that of a customer.

Although the customer definition of quality integrates very well with the generally accepted tenet of service quality: that is, that employees and customers are active participants in the service delivery process assumed in the United Kingdom. Nonetheless, there is still considerable debate about student customer acceptance in the United Kingdom. Other works, such as studies in the United Kingdom by Telford and Masson (2005), have argued that students' transformation requires very active and joint participation between students, employees and universities and other providers (Williams, 2002; Hill et al., 2003). Likewise, Hill et al. (2003) critique the assertion that many students do not have the time, are not sufficiently well informed or do not have prior knowledge of what is expected from them at university, making it difficult for them to actually identify whether or not quality has been put into what they receive in terms of lecture delivery and other criteria. This critique was in line with Cheng and Tam (1997) and Cullen et al. (2003), who argued that in reality, where the product or service is complex, such as university, defining its purpose is no simple matter and any assumptions can weaken the product or outcome. Thirteen of the participants from private universities were of the opinion that if standards, specifications and indicators are used for formulating, designing, implementing and judging quality, evaluating whether the prescribed objectives have been attained using a common yardstick will find acceptance by all involved constituencies.

Following this trend of arguments that everyone should be involved in the composition and implementation of services they provide, five of the respondents were of the view that knowing what to do, how to do it and when to apply it is a way of maintaining standards, and argued that this approach is what some writers now refer to as quality.

Based on the fieldwork, the Dean of Faculties shared a similar view that university education operates within a standard laid down by the NUC, which is referred to as the minimum benchmark. Three of the respondents explained that the minimum benchmark is what every Nigerian university should build on. In their opinion, if universities are in line with the benchmark set, then they are rendering a quality service. In support of this notion, four of the total participants were of the view that, “before you can talk about quality, there must be standardized roles of activity that are fulfilled.” The point put forward by the bursars here is that quality must be quantified, and it must be above the standard set by the NUC.

When this participant was questioned further, it was evident that their responses were based on their roles: that is, their social environment and duties had immediate impacts on their decision when responding to the question. This emotional involvement of participants outside what it should be is what this study is keen to identify, representing causal or missing mechanisms that are not considered in the United Kingdom, when quality is defined in terms of how well the learning opportunities provided to students enable them to achieve their award. Surprisingly, the informants believed that quality can be measured even though there is still a standing debate on how best to define quality. The assumption of respondents about what should and should not be measured in assessing quality as a mechanism in higher education is an important issues that requires another approach to look backward into the misconception of what quality is or is not in the Nigerian university context.

A clear picture of what to measure and what not to measure was identified in the work of Lomas and Tomlinson (2000), who claimed that standards are measures of outcomes that provide for clear and unambiguous judgments about whether or not the outcomes are satisfactory. Lomas and Tomlinson stated that standards set for a

programme of study are inevitably linked to the outcomes and ensure a certain level of knowledge and skills from graduates of that programme. But surprising thirteen of the participants were of the view that with recent debates on the increasing focus on student satisfaction and the mass appeal of university, there have been increasing assertions of falling academic standards and grade inflation, which may render the yardstick for measuring standards or quality invalid (Ekundayo and Ajayi, 2009). The vice-chancellor's group put forward the claim that the use of assessment to determine quality could be undermined by the integrity of university in a situation where students are not serious about their studies. Therefore, determining quality from such an outcome would only mean that quality is measured wrongly. This assertion that in the Nigerian context, using student performance to determine institutional quality means that institution will now be working towards earning students' favour when it comes to ratings, gained the support of nineteen of the participants,.

Gallifa and Batelle (2010) argued that other characteristics of quality, including excellence/high standards, fitness for purpose, efficiency and effectiveness, are simply part of the view of quality as transformation. But Beckford (1998, p. 6) had earlier asked, "what if such characteristics do not satisfy the consumers?" Likewise, in the fieldwork, Three dean of faculties were of the opinion that defining quality education in relation to standards and achievement will be a process where the recipient has been turned around, to reason, to think, to change situations and then to manage him/herself. Yorke (1999) and Telford and Masson's (2005) findings relate to the deans of faculty's view that quality is the totality of all the aspects that influence the students' experience. Meanwhile, the directors of the academic group were of the view that academic standards should be referred to as a set of expectations about the students' programme of study. Almost half of the respondent from private universities made a clear statement that quality is anything beyond what it is technically required to pass on

to the students. The respondents shared a common view that, for example, dean of faculty from a private university said ‘there is a syllabus, and lecturers go to class with the aim of covering the syllabus, but beyond that, what students take out of the class is what matters to the development of quality. That is not saying that your manner of preparing for the class, your technique in teaching the student, all of those will not be part of quality, that's not what I am saying. I think that is standard, you'll accept that standard is a subset of quality” (D5).

On the contrary, twenty of the participants define quality education as graduates being fit for purpose. Likewise, one vice-chancellor from a public university explained what he understand by fitness for purpose further by using an example: he stated that definition of quality from a fitness for purpose point of view will be when a graduate of chemistry from a Nigerian university can perfectly fit into another Nigerian university and also into any part of the World for further studies. He mentioned that until this happens, quality of education is not fit for purpose. Twelve of respondents from public universities also supported the assertion that quality education must be universal, in that the teaching curriculum must be designed in accordance with what is applicable and acceptable globally. The use of what is universal and acceptable as a best practice is in accordance with Watty's (2005) opinion that the ‘fitness for purpose’ definition of quality can accommodate all other views of quality, such as in Gibbs and Simpson's (2005). Watty detailed that the fitness for purpose definition may be identified as excellence, value for money or transformation, all depending on who is involved. A clear picture was included in participants' definitions of quality as ‘value for money’. Twenty-five of the participants were questioned further, and their opinions as to why they defined quality as value for money differed. Few respondents were of the view that this assertion could be critical in defining education quality in relation to money. Seven of the respondents were of the opinion that defining quality as value for money has

environmental implications: that is, what one dollar can achieve in Nigeria, it cannot achieve in the United Kingdom. Therefore, it will be difficult to define quality of university education as value for money in the Nigerian university context.

Similarly, the registrars' opinion is not far away from the vice-chancellors' suggestion that if quality is defined as value for money, then the students paying the highest fees should be guaranteed high quality education, irrespective of their contribution to class activities. Sixteen of respondents from a private university did not support this argument: they claimed that defining education in terms of value for money in this context ignores the environmental factors and concentrates on the core academic work itself. The participants mentioned that money is not all that education can achieve, but the value placed on education is what matters more than the value of money. Therefore, in principle, it is assumed that quality cannot be defined without considering the criteria that make up quality itself in the university context. These criteria are presented as causal mechanisms or entities in this study. The directors of academic planning also added that just as manufacturers think about the components of their production, assembly methods, processes and the finished stage of the production process, that university management are not exempt from this process, as failure to plan means planning to fail. Therefore, the next section considers university quality criteria identified by principal officers who participated in the empirical research.

6.4 UNIVERSITY QUALITY CRITERIA IDENTIFIED

6.4.1 Academic standards

The issue of academic standards is very closely linked with the concept of academic rigour. Quality, as the standards that are set for a programme of study, is a key determinant of the level of performance expected from students. This was confirmed in

the empirical findings as a dean of faculty summarised his definition of quality as a virtue. “It is a virtue that is correct and sometimes has a determination or focus to get it right” (D3). This was what quality was assumed to be like in the university, if the mechanism were to function effectively. This means that there is a standard to discuss, whether or not it is explicit. The discussion also has a link to the work of Juran, who claimed that that quality involves getting it right. Juran’s assertion was also supported by thirteen of the informants who referred to academic standards as being synonymous with quality guidelines. No wonder Doherty (1997) and Ndirangu and Udoto (2011) claimed that high standards are supposed to be indicative of a high level of quality. It was also observed in the empirical findings that the views of respondents from public universities on academic standards were divided. Eleven of the respondents agreed that academic standards should focus on the process and curriculum, eighteen of the respondents believed the focus should be on assessment, while respondents from private universities were of the view that universities should meet students’ and workplaces’ expectations if they are to be proud of quality service. They also claimed that principal officers’ responsibilities are how best they can manage the importance of maintaining standards versus students coping with their courses.

On the whole, the informants’ responses to academic standards varied, as a comparatively lower proportion of participants valued high academic standards. Several respondents shared the common view that high grades and high pass rates, although indicative of a good level of student performance, are not really indicative of good quality provisions. A number of respondents believed that high grades are an important factor to determine quality, especially a vice-chancellor (A2), who said, “I concur that it would be quite easy to record high levels of performance in assessments if universities restricted their intake to the best students”, while another respondent from a public university questioned the productivity of such students in the labour

market, doubting whether such students will fit into practical knowledge training in the labour market.

About eighteen of the respondents mentioned that a significant proportion of the students do not appreciate or possibly even understand the importance of setting or maintaining high standards, particularly assessment standards, in the development of their learning. Instead, students place more importance upon how easily they can cope with the demands of their study. This assumption is consistent with the findings by Eagle and Brennan (2007) and Stensaker et al. (2011) that students may not really consider high academic standards as essential for career advancement or even as representative of high quality. While students consider university as essential for a career, they are indifferent as to whether high standards are maintained or not (Rolfe, 2002). Likewise, Carlson and Fleisher (2002) and Gallifa and Batalle (2010) also note that many students now tend to shop around for the easiest courses, seeking to obtain the highest grades. The lower importance attached to assessment standards by a few informants may also reflect Mattick and Knight's (2007) observation that students are anxious about assessment performance and as a result do not consider or reflect upon the quality of their learning approaches. However, by all implications, standards set by the NUC focus on performance and do not consider how well students are motivated to learn.

Likewise, thirteen respondents from a private university revealed that they are driven by NUC set standards and do not have time to consider the importance of quality management or government policies that can drive quality service in most cases. They also cite example of students' involvement, understanding and contribution, student support services and quality culture as missing mechanisms that could have made things better. This might reflect Eagle and Brennan's (2007) claim, discussed in

Chapter Two, that while students may consider gaining an advantage in terms of their career as a key indicator of quality, they may not really consider high academic standards as representative of high quality or as essential for career advancement.

Three of the respondents from public universities expressed that they greatly valued programme standards and were firm in their view that academic standards cannot be sacrificed to keep students happy or to ensure that they can cope with the demands of the programme. No wonder Gibbs and Iacovidou (2004) argued against student satisfaction and expressed that the concept of students as customers is often criticised by educators and blamed for falling academic standards. Meanwhile, principal officers from private universities were of the opinion that it is important to understand students' expectations and needs and to motivate their interests for better productivities, although sixteen of respondents from the public university agreed that Nigerian universities have not been considering students' views in taking decisions as one of the missing mechanism in this study. Surprisingly, the participants acknowledged that maintaining high academic standards is a vital element of ensuring quality of university for both internal and external stakeholders. Clearly participants do not consider the non-student-oriented approach as inappropriate or incompatible with maintaining high academic standards.

Five of the respondents were consistent that the emphasis should be on assessment standards. The differentiation by informants between assessment standards and programme standards is difficult to explain. Logically, high academic standards are measured and maintained via high assessment standards and accordingly the responses of twenty-three of the respondents were consistent on both criteria. One reason for this differentiation could be that some respondents feel that the whole process of the university should be of a high standard, with appropriate checks and

balances, which should not be only reflected in the standards of assessments. Furthermore, responses to other relevant criteria show that some participants do not really consider assessment performance as a good indicator of the quality of education. Participants' views about students' comparatively lower appreciation of high assessment standards may just be reflective of their overall perception of assessments. Maybe this was why the few participants from public university expressed that they would be reluctant to recruit graduates with very high grades, unless this was backed up by a strong personality, good character and well-rounded skills that reflect the grades. Another reason is that as three of the participants argued, it is not just about the grades: the facilities and resources to train students from whom you demand these grades should be available, up to date and appropriate to meet the students' demands.

6.4.2 Resources

Participants from private universities attached more importance to the resources dimension in comparison to participants from public universities. Among the different resources, the greatest importance is given to the quantity of library resources, teaching facilities, the environment in which the learning takes place and extra-curricular activities, which is not very surprising. Many participants from the public universities cried out for more supply of necessary resources for proper transformation, such as classrooms built to suit the development in the community, learning resources, teaching staff, learning aids and other resources. All the resources mentioned are entities of the actual mechanisms: that is, if all these entities are present, the actual mechanisms will function effectively. Twenty-two of respondents believed that if the government provides these facilities, it will be easier to implement university education policies. These assertions were evident in the work of Oyebamiji (2005), who found that the availability of the right resources will help the university leadership to discharge

their duties effectively. Some informants emphasised student-to-staff ratio as a key determinant of quality. It does not end there, as thirteen of the respondents, especially the director of academic planning, were of the view that student/teacher ratio is very important, especially in that the student population in class should not exceed what a lecturer can control. This aspect was also valued by the majority of the principal officers, indicating the difficulties of managing larger student numbers in what would essentially be mixed ability classes with poor quality students, due to the diversity of student intake or lack of facilities. Therefore, these causal mechanisms are impeding factors explaining why principal officers in Nigeria are not functioning in the same way as those in the United Kingdom, for example.

Likewise, the difficulties of managing larger student numbers emerged from all the participants views. Although they claimed that it was not convenient for them to handle such large numbers of students, they could not do anything about it. Principal officers from both public and private universities were of the opinion that larger lecture sessions were never seen as very conducive for learning or to learners. This was evident in the way eight of the respondents responded that some willing learners found it difficult to engage in the class sessions, which sometimes had adverse effects on their learning process and grade achieved. The deans of student affairs unanimously recommended that smaller class sizes and closer personal interaction between students and staff should be encouraged, if tutors are to influence students' personalities and help them to develop their skills. Sports and recreational facilities were also valued by twenty-five of the participants, which is not surprising. Nineteen of the participants were also in agreement that the overall development of students, not only through teaching and learning, but also through recreational activities which provide opportunities for personal development, are important to quality. The respondents added that resource

availability should be incorporated into the university or subject curriculum if quality is to be sustained.

6.4.3 Curriculum

The importance attached to the curriculum dimension by participants underlines its relevance in achieving the desired outcomes of university. The importance of achieving these outcomes is consistent with Kleijnen et al. (2011), who stressed the critical impact of curriculum on almost all aspects of university. They pointed out that curriculum can encourage or discourage the development of subject and practical knowledge, the development of core skills, the choice of teaching and learning methods and assessment strategies. However, a few informants mentioned that student responses in class activities indicate that they are not fully aware of the primary role of curriculum in influencing their overall experience and the outcomes of their education. Twenty of the respondents explained that, as a result of students not knowing what their primary roles are, the teaching staff also seemed to be in a dilemma: although many recognised the importance of student responsibility, they did not seem to have any idea of what they could do to improve it or make it better.

The highest importance attached by participants to the curriculum focuses on transferable skills, which is consistent with the findings in the previous section. Many researchers support the importance of incorporating skills development into the curriculum. For instance, Thomas (2007) and Ardi et al. (2012) stressed the need for more flexible curricula with a greater emphasis upon the skills required for lifelong learning, as a result of economic and demographic changes. The curriculum can also encourage the adoption of active teaching and learning methodologies by tutors and students, which is fundamental in developing reflective abilities and critical thinking skills. Twelve of the respondents from public universities expressed that achieving

critical thinking skills will only be possible if the only outcome of the curriculum is what academic staff are concerned with, not the outcome of student performance, as one of the missing mechanisms discussed in the previous section. Informants' comparatively lower emphasis upon skills improvement in students' performance are consistent with Dillon and Hodgkinson (2000), who found that some students find it irritating and demoralising when they are repeatedly faced with similar advice that focuses on skills development. It is also consistent with students' reluctance to engage in interactive learning methods and non-traditional assessment methods, as indicated in other sections. These factors form a major reason why government policies or quality management are not implemented in the Nigerian context.

An important aim of this study is to identify causal mechanisms and entities that stop the functionality of mechanisms that lead to the cause of an event within the structure by providing an understanding of how subject knowledge is viewed by agencies. The study found significant differences between agents' focus on the curriculum and subject knowledge. This is strongly consistent with the fieldwork, as few respondents identify curriculum focus on the subject and coverage as very important, while others do not share the same emphasis on subject knowledge. Twelve of the participants from private universities argued that strong academic credentials and subject knowledge do not necessarily guarantee a strong personal skills profile. On this note, seven of the participants revealed that they felt undergraduate programmes should focus on in-depth knowledge of a more narrow range of core fundamental topics, rather than a broad range of topics.

All respondents in the vice-chancellors' group and even some academic directors expressed their concerns as well. They mentioned that an extensive coverage of subject topics may often result in the majority of students not really having an in-depth

understanding of most topics. It was also noted that, with their focus on an extensive range of topics, universities seem to be producing undergraduates who are not really fit for the junior or middle level jobs for which they are recruited, or for the higher-level jobs, which require considerable experience. Hence their observation was consistent with Baruch and Leeming's (1996) findings. Baruch and Leeming mentioned that an employer considers that more focused in-depth knowledge of the core and fundamental subject concepts may be needed in the early stages of a graduate's working career. This must be complemented by an awareness of how to adapt theoretical understanding to practical work situations, which was also valued very highly by participants.

Middlehurst (2001) contends that a critical issue in effective curriculum development is whether curriculum developers are able to determine if the curriculum meets the ever-changing needs of both students and potential employers. Otherwise, the content will not be fit for the purpose for which it is designed, either directly for the student or indirectly for the employer. Nine of the participants raised concerns about the curriculum during their interviews, arguing that if the curriculum was clearly seen as a very important criterion, then its relevancy should be considered as a critical aspect of achieving good standards. Universities in Nigeria may consider it productive to evaluate whether the curriculum does provide adequate in-depth and focused subject knowledge required at this level, or whether it is too ambitious in that it ultimately provides only a superficial knowledge of too many topics without sufficient emphasis on core skills. Hsieh (2005) notes that curriculum can influence tutors to focus on the subject matter, rather than on the development of critical thinking. Twenty-five of the participants were of the view that the practical implication and challenge for Nigerian universities lies in designing a curriculum that provides a balance between subject content and context, with adequate scope for students to enhance their practical skills

and develop a critical mind-set. Ultimately, a curriculum should be built around the needs and aspirations of the learners, so that they are adequately motivated in order to become deep learners, while considering the intake process as a normal academic procedure.

6.4.4 *Quality of Intake*

Pursglove and Simpson (2007) indicate that admissions standards have a significant quality control role in influencing the quality of the overall educational outcomes, as entrants with lower achievements at entry level are more likely to continue to perform poorly in university. This study found that although informants were significantly more enthusiastic about strict admission policies, they did not consider them as very important. Two vice-chancellors (A3 and A2) downplayed the importance of intake in determining the quality of government policies, stating that it is very difficult to regulate. They pointed out that different approaches are used in terms of catchment areas and non-catchment areas, indigenes and non-indigenes. Again, in some cases, the government wants to give preference to people in science and technology courses over arts and social sciences, which makes it difficult to access quality. The literature, however, identifies that the quality of student intake is considered by many to be a necessary condition for institutional success, (Tan and Kek, 2004; Cheng, 2009; Dumond and Johnson, 2013). However, this study found that high academic standards for programmes are very important to respondents in the private universities, while high admission standards - that is, restricting the student intake in terms of marks or grades at entry - are not considered a key determinant of quality, particularly by informants from private universities.

A vice-chancellor (A3) in a private university argued that quality of intake should not be the criterion to determine whether or not a university is producing quality graduates, but

rather that universities should be ready to face the challenges of transforming a student into a quality graduate who is good in character and skills. Furthermore, although participants considered an institution's reputation to be an important indicator of the quality of its provision, apparently the majority did not feel that this reputation should be based on restricting admissions to the best possible student intake. Determining the aptitude of students for the programme of study, their attitude and commitment to university are considered more important than a restrictive admissions policy in terms of high grades. As suggested by respondents in the interviews, conducting admissions interviews aimed at determining a student's level of interest and commitment to learning can be a better measure of whether students are really interested in developing themselves through university than a restrictive admissions policy.

It should be considered whether these findings are contrary to those of Telford and Masson (2005) and Morley and Aynsley (2007). They found that employers in the United Kingdom associate high academic standards with strict entry requirements. However, a restrictive admissions policy made it easier to achieve higher standards even though the institution may have put in comparatively less effort in providing high quality teaching and learning experiences. It is easier for universities to demonstrate better outcomes with a higher quality student intake, irrespective of the actual quality of the provision or effort by the institution. With a broader range of abilities at entry level, no doubt an institution will have to expend more effort to ensure that its provision is adequate for attaining the desired standards. We should also consider whether the fact that in contrast to developed countries like the United Kingdom and the United States of America, some universities in Nigeria are relatively new, while the demand continues to rise, may be accountable in part for employers not currently equating high academic standards with strict entry requirements. Over time, with more graduates leaving the university system, there is the possibility that employers in Nigeria may form stronger

perceptions about the educational provision (including admission policies) of the different universities and as a result may equate stricter admissions policies with higher standards.

The findings clearly showed that principal officers made a distinction between high standards and the quality of the process of achieving such standards. The value added to students' knowledge and skills profile through the input of teaching and learning opportunities provided by a university education is considered to be an indicator of quality. This view sees quality as a measure of whether a university has provided a satisfactory bridge between entrants and the intended outcomes by providing adequate opportunities that sufficiently enhance their knowledge and skills, rather than based on the inherent ability of the students (Yorke, 1999). Irrespective of the quality of intake, what would be more relevant is whether the curriculum, teaching, assessment, support and guidance are the most appropriate with respect to the student profile in order to achieve desired outcomes. This does not imply that the extent of the value added is not important, as a few participants mentioned that employers would also expect universities to maintain rigorous standards and regulate their awards, which would involve not rewarding those students who fail to meet these standards. Five informants (A4, F2, D4, E1 and E2) were concerned about how best to drive features such as academic standards, resources, curriculum and intake in the transformative process effectively and achieve high quality service in the university. They argued that discussing quality without considering what happens in the transformation process is an inappropriate method of defining quality.

6.4.5 Teaching and learning

The very high importance attached to the teaching and learning dimension in this study is consistent with the increasing focus in the recent literature on the resurgence of the

importance attributed to the teaching function. Consistently, throughout the interviews, faculty-related factors and teaching methods were given high importance by principal officers. The importance attributed by participants to the lecturers' teaching methods and styles and their ability to communicate and explain topics reinforces the critical role of teaching staff and the teaching function in enhancing the quality of university. Although factors such as accessibility of explanation and the lecturers' ability to stimulate thinking and behavioural skills were highly valued by many of the participants, especially in private universities, it was assumed that students would not attach the highest relevance to these factors, resulting in a significant lack of congruence, as noted by a few respondents. They are of the opinion that few students have knowledge and understanding of what they will experience in the transformation process. This assertion was rejected by principal officers from private universities, one of whom stated that "on most occasions, student do not have a clue about what they are about to learn, which makes our work very difficult, especially in this part of the world where students and their parents can pay their way to have whatever they want. This is not to say that we do not have serious students, but they are very few."

Four of the respondents from public universities claimed that the responsibility for 'making a student understand' is not the lecturer's duty. Therefore any failures recorded by students are their own doing. They argued that all students are given equal opportunity to learn and subsequently to be assessed. This view was contrary to what was suggested in the literature, which indicates that the focus on learner-centred methods has resulted in the critical role of academics being generally underplayed (Holmes and McElwee, 1995). Lomas (2004) highlights the need to reward and recognise good quality teaching in an environment that does not adequately emphasise the teaching function. The ability of teaching staff to stimulate students' interest in the subject and to motivate them to participate in the learning process is considered

extremely important. Also, teachers' ability to stimulate student interest is consistent with Cardoso et al. (2012), who stress that a crucial factor in the complex interactions in university is students' engagement with the subject, which is influenced in part by the enthusiasm and skill of the lecturer. This was confirmed in the empirical findings when ten of the participants from a public university argued that many students did not see the necessity for wider or independent reading, seeming to place the entire responsibility for ensuring understanding of the subject on lecturers. Papadimitriou et al. (2008) also emphasised that the lecturer's personal commitment and enthusiasm for the subject is vital in shaping students' interest and thereby deepening approaches to learning, which, in this highly tutor-centred context, is highly relevant to the development of critical skills. What is generally not sufficiently considered is that student-centred teaching, and the complexities inherent in mass education, require tutors to adopt more effective and innovative teaching and learning methods and assessment strategies. When the issue of student involvement was explored further, three informants indicated that it is the responsibility of the students to prepare themselves for assessments. It simply means that agents' focus is on the assessment rather than on subject knowledge or what the students have learned.

Reflecting the emphasis on transferable skills, the empirical findings noted that twenty-three of the participants greatly value the ability of teaching staff to be transformative: that is, to stimulate thinking and develop behavioural skills in their students. Twenty of respondents from a private university reported that employers particularly value a tutor's focus on skills and behavioural development, more than most of the other teaching and learning criteria. The notion that employers value debating skills is also supported by Hawawini (2005) and Oyewole (2009), who observed that employers of business graduates are increasingly demanding behavioural and social skills. Likewise, Stefani (2005) argued that the traditional role of tutors in the transmission of knowledge

is no longer adequate, as today's knowledge economy requires tutors to develop a different skill set. However, the lack of congruence on the tutors' ability to stimulate thought and behavioural development suggests that a smaller proportion of students are likely to attach the same level of importance to this factor. In comparison, ten of the respondents observed that a higher proportion of students will consider the development of workplace skills as important, which indicates that many students do not relate critical thinking and behavioural skills to the workplace. Considering workplace skills is important, as the findings in the interviews suggested: some participants revealed that some students are not aware of what transferable or workplace skills entail.

However, the informants also established that while development of transferable skills is vital, there was less clarity on principal officers' role in developing such skills. Four of the respondents shared a common view that some lecturers did not really know what was required from them in terms of effective skills and personal development, and seemed to perceive their role as that of imparting subject knowledge and following the syllabus. Some principal officers lamented that it is impossible for lecturers to teach everything in the curriculum, because the resulting outcome may be unsatisfactory for lecturers and students when students are overloaded. Therefore, it was observed that few consider their ability to develop skills as very important; the interview findings indicate that lecturers require further guidance on how this can be achieved. The interviews also found that while academic staff do acknowledge that they have a key role to play in inculcating core skills, they nevertheless consider that the curriculum plays a stronger role in this process in comparison to them.

Hence, it appears that a degree of confusion exists among participants about their own role in developing skills and whether the inclusion of skills development in the

curriculum will naturally allow such skills to be developed without an equal focus by teaching staff. The empirical findings from four of the respondents supported the benefits of lecturers' occasional use of non-traditional and interactive teaching methods to enhance students' interest in the subject, to create an in-depth understanding and generate discussion around the topic. As the development of core skills would require extensive input from teaching staff, especially in the current context, which is heavily tutor-centred, any lack of awareness about their role on the part of academic staff will have a negative influence on the ultimate outcome of universities. Several informants stated clearly that all these activities involve funding if students are to be transformed properly and the lecturers must first be well equipped to turn out quality graduates. Nineteen of participants from private universities supported this, acknowledging that money is important, as is requesting government support to fund research, as it will benefit university academic staff, improve teaching and learning and promote and foster cooperation with the government. They suggested that this would go a long way in staff capacity development. Two key factors emerged through this discussion, uncovered via the critical realist approach: student involvement and assessment.

6.4.5.1 Student involvement

Student transformation requires very active and joint participation between students, lecturers and universities (Williams, 2002; Hill et al., 2003). This was confirmed in the empirical findings when eight of the participants were talking about students' attitude and commitment to their studies. Another six of the respondents also identified the importance of students being mature enough to respond "positively and fully" to learning as criteria that should be considered during the admission selection, rather than a strict admissions procedure. In the literature, it was noted that Stensaker et al. (2011) made a case that students' analytical and critical skills can be developed only by the joint participation of students and academic staff. The concept of students as co-

producers of their own learning requires them to participate to the fullest possible extent, or the learning outcomes and objectives may not be met satisfactorily. This assertion is reflected in the finding that thirteen of informants from a private university felt that student involvement in learning had more to do with “emotional maturity and personal values”, rather than actual grades obtained.

All participants agreed that students’ attitude, commitment and involvement in the teaching and learning process is extremely relevant to quality, as well as fulfilling government policies on university education. No wonder the work of Hawawini (2005) detailed that the employers of business graduates, alumni and even students are also increasingly demanding behavioural and societal skills as well as critical skills. These behavioural skills are what the vice-chancellors highlighted will keep students on their toes. Supportively, Hawawini (2005) and Oyewole (2009) itemised such skills to be: entrepreneurial and leadership qualities and the ability to work with others, to communicate effectively and to demonstrate multicultural awareness. Societal values include the ability to make ethical decisions, which take into account corporate social responsibility. However, it may not be possible for universities to develop behavioural and social values in their students, as students may already have developed certain behavioural values by the time they are of college-going age. This was illustrated in what all deans of faculties involved referred to as ‘student indiscipline’, which may be picked up from society. They noted that universities have students from various backgrounds and that society has an impact on students’ behaviour, maybe influenced by their neighbours. Some lack guidance or parental care: hence, when such students come to university, it reflects upon their way of life. This lack of guidance or parental care has made it very difficult for universities to focus on students and facilitate learning

to the fullest possible extent. This does not preclude students from taking responsibility for their own performance and learning.

A significant finding of the interview section is the confirmation that the majority of students have no awareness of the importance of the concept of student participation in their learning process. Some participants found that students expect a lot from universities and their tutors, with regard to their academic success. On the contrary, three respondents from public universities suggested that until students are given the necessary support, any mechanism used will continue to fail, because the objective of the university is to equip students with knowledge that can be translated into workplace activities. This proclamation was consistent with Doherty's (2008) opinion that the impact of the transition in graduates from university education to the workplace in the current competitive economic climate means that it is the responsibility of the university to equip students with the skills to think for themselves. This statement was simplified by Gouthro et al. (2006), who emphasised the role of lecturer and student interaction and the passion and enthusiasm conveyed by the lecturer in enhancing students' engagement with the subject. They pointed out that high levels of staff motivation also correlate positively with professional satisfaction and the overall quality of services offered (Konidari and Abernot, 2006).

However, Hill et al. (2003) found that while lecturers have a role in giving information, they do not necessarily stimulate thought, change attitudes or develop behavioural skills that are necessary for the complex interactions essential in university. Hence, in order to be effective, educators must use their judgement, rationality and decision-making abilities rather than relying on routine (Hill et al., 1996). This was coherent with what thirteen of the participants from private universities explained: going beyond what is technically required to pass on to students in terms of knowledge and skills with

greater awareness of other issues. For example, there is a syllabus to follow and you go to class as a lecturer with the aim of covering the syllabus, but beyond that, what does the student take out of the class? Interestingly, the discoveries of Mattick and Knight (2007) support the notion that undergraduate students may not be prepared for a learning environment which involves self-directed participation and that they may find the process and participation daunting. In order to overcome such trepidation and encourage student participation, tutors and academic advisors should provide a supportive learning environment with adequate guidance on self-directed learning and how its success could be evaluated. Twenty-three of the participants agreed that this approach is one out of many of such practices that have been lacking in the Nigerian university transformation process since 1960, when the first university was established.

Telford and Masson (2005) they found that students did not consider their own commitment to learning as important. This was consistent with the view expressed by a number of principal officers, who indicated that it is the responsibility of the students to prepare themselves for assessments. Their focus was on the assessment, rather than on subject knowledge or what the students had learnt. Six of the participants from public universities were clear about their views on student expectations, but accepted that lecturers are responsible for developing students' knowledge and creating awareness to some extent, while students are meant to build on the knowledge acquired. This was in line with Hill's (1995) findings. Hill made the connection between students' expectations and their prior educational experiences and found that students are not motivated to learn. Hill's work was expanded upon on by Rolfe (2002), who found that students tend to adopt passive learning approaches and expect all information to be provided to them as a result of their secondary school experiences, time and societal constraints.

Although Rolfe's findings, which cover undergraduate students, do not have any comparative frame of reference with regard to their expectations in university, other than that of their schooling system, it is assumed that they may have unrealistic expectations: this is clearly the case with students in Nigerian universities, as fifteen of respondent from public universities were of the opinion that many students come from traditional tutor-centred schooling environments especially from there primary and secondary background. Six participants from private universities agreed with their counterpart from public universities that enhancing student participation will involve careful management, because both informants revealed that few teaching staff have a clear idea of how they could motivate and support students, the majority of whom are comfortable only with traditional teaching and assessment methods. These findings also lead the research to consider the concerns raised by Clayson and Haley (2005) that students as fee-paying customers will take less responsibility for their own learning and will place the responsibility for their failure or poor performance on the universities - or more precisely, their tutors. It would be interesting to find out if students in Nigeria universities especially government-owned universities, who are not charged fees, share this attitude. However, twenty-six of the participants strictly rejected the suggestion of classifying students as customers in the Nigerian context, claiming that students are never seen as customers even if they are paying tuition fees. This raised a concern between public and private university participants: while respondents from public universities supported the notion that students should be referred to as customers, other respondents from private universities were against this notion. They were of the opinion that the amount paid by students does not justify them as paying customers, as the fees have been subsidised by the government. Though debating the issue of students as customers is beyond the scope of this study, further research could explore this debate.

6.4.5.2 Assessments

Four of the respondents described quality as the enjoyment or attribute of a product when assessed by an end-user. They pointed out that such assessment depends on what you put in and how it is processed. Another five respondents claimed that such assessment may be quantified in order to test its validity. The testing of such validity was assumed to be the most significant factor affecting transformation, as noted in the work of Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2007). This contemplation was evidenced in Barnett's (1994) and Basheka's (2009) reports that measuring assessment of a complex nature, such as university, cannot easily be reduced to a set of easily measurable competencies. However, it is often found that tutors encourage a surface approach to learning by assessing those aspects which require memorisation of facts, rather than focusing on how students use, evaluate and interpret information (Struyven et al., 2002). Participants' responses indicated that this occurs in Nigeria regardless of whether universities are public or private, particularly towards the end of the semester, when lecturers focus on preparing students for assessments and are not really interested in learning for its own sake.

The results also indicate that none of the respondents consider high grades in assessments to be a reliable or important indicator of quality in the university. Although they argue that the university process should be challenging enough to mould and develop students' skills and knowledge, they do not trust higher grades as an indication of better skills. This shows that few participants really trust assessment strategies to induce a transformative process in students or to be a valid measure of the extent of transformation. One may conclude that these participants share Trow's (1994; 1996) opinion that attempts to measure educational outcomes are spurious, as education is a

process rather than an outcome. However, many organisations do rely on grades in the first instance to screen applicants, as revealed in the interviews.

This was also a major practice in Nigerian universities, as directors of academic planning (E5) explained: “in most cases, we use assessment for programme delivery in order to know if the method of delivering suits the student as part of the university assessment method”. Surprisingly, Stefani (2005) warned that assessment should be considered as a separate entity from teaching and learning and should be used to consider the course content delivered. She recommended an integrated view of the scholarship of teaching, learning and assessment, where it is recognised that all three are complementary and directly related. Feedback on assessments provides students with closure and constructive ideas for improvement, and is also an integral part of an effective assessment strategy. This resonated in four of the participants’ views, as they argued that if a quality mechanism is introduced and its management mechanism does not have adequate quality management assessment to implement the quality, then the method to manage quality management will just be ordinary information on paper.

This was supported by the work of Gibbs and Simpson (2005), who observed that quality assurance agencies and universities focus on assessments in terms of what they measure, rather than how they support worthwhile learning. They contend that standards are improved when assessments improve student learning, rather than simply measuring limited learning. They also noted that the quality of student learning has been shown to be higher in assignment-based courses than in exam-based courses in places like the United Kingdom. Some aspects of their findings were also consistent with the comments from nineteen of the participants who clarified in the interviews that their universities place more value on the assessment process in

influencing the quality of university, rather than on high grades obtained by the students. However, while some principal officers shared the view that good grades in assessments are not an indicator of quality, seven of the participants attached considerable attention to the role of assessments and assessment standards in influencing the overall quality of university. This reveals a lack of consistency in the informants' responses, because if nineteen of the participants really believe that assessments and assessment standards are integral to learning and can affect student transformation, then they should in effect consider assessment performance to be very important.

This lack of consistency implies that, while seven of the participants acknowledge that assessments are a vital factor in driving university quality, they also acknowledge that assessment strategies are not appropriate in terms of measuring their own competencies. It was also found that all informants support the provision of rigour and challenge to the process of university implementation for continuous assessment strategy. The endorsement of continuous assessments by the majority of respondents is surprising, considering the workload that this entails. Feedback on assessments is an integral part of an effective assessment strategy in an ideal situation. Findings from twenty-six of the respondents suggested that feedback is a missing entity of assessment in Nigeria universities and all the participants clearly realise this. Seven objected to the view that feedback is a missing entity, claiming that it was not their fault: as one participant said, "we always plan to give students feedback but when you cannot even identify student in your class because of the population, then you may be miss-informing students. The respondents agree that the challenge here is to provide opportunities for students to receive regular constructive informal and formal feedback on their performance. They clarified that if students receive constructive feedback on their skills and subject understanding, they will be motivated to spend more time and

effort in developing them. However, eighteen of the participants confirmed that improving quality or the role of academia in implementing quality in the university context is easier said than done. They pointed out that without committed university management who are involved in decision-making in the Nigerian universities in particular, discussing quality will be a waste of time.

6.5 MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT

In order to build commitment to quality, twenty-three of the participants agreed that both academics and management must fully appreciate the reasons why managing quality is imperative. Ultimately, informants' quality standards will provide the main competitive edge and ensure the longer-term survival of an institution. The reality may be that when the government funds universities, the criticality of achieving this competitive edge may be diminished to an extent. On the other hand, when universities are privately funded, economic considerations and shorter-term objectives of meeting student expectations may overrule the longer-term objectives of meeting the broader university purpose. Nevertheless, in the long run, both public and private universities would have to reconcile their longer and shorter-term aspirations in order to remain successful, forget whatever differences they have and focus on national development on education, which is still government policy. On this note, the importance of government policies is evident, even in implementing quality management in a multifaceted institute like a university. It then becomes very important to have common theories that will support the activities of the university management. Otherwise, no quality model will be effective or can be successfully implemented, unless there is adequate management commitment to understanding the complexities and details of government policies on university education in relation to quality management.

The success of government policies is a quality strategy that is dependent on the acceptance and involvement of everybody involved in its implementation, as suggested by Juran (1988) in the literature review and supported by the empirical findings. Likewise, the implementation process will require a more conducive organizational culture for quality and improvement. As Senge (2000) and Modebelu and Joseph (2012) observed, university institutions are very complex organizations where knowledge is fragmented into specialized areas and educators are engaged in the highly individual activity of teaching. The informants agreed that bringing about changes in such a complex system requires commitment and acceptance of a holistic, integrated approach to quality management, so that it permeates throughout the universities and becomes everyone's responsibility.

Fifteen of the participants clarified that adequate attention must be paid to the appropriateness and interdependence of leadership strategies and internal structures, in agreement with Oyebamiji (2005), who argued that paying attention to university leadership will enable the integration of quality management as a normal integral and continuous function within the institution. All the discussions in the previous chapter and the sections above have contributed immensely to the development of a quality management model on university education that can help to improve university education in the Nigerian context. The next section discusses this model in detail.

6.6 QUALITY MANAGEMENT MODEL

Seventeen of the participants in the study revealed that principal officers in public universities had migrated to private universities for promotion, sabbatical leave or increased salaries, taking with them the norms, culture and beliefs from public

universities. This claim justifies reasons why the activities of private universities are very similar to those of public universities: therefore, causal mechanisms affecting the actual mechanism in the public universities also affect private universities as well. This makes the activities of the two types of institution similar and means that it is very difficult to compare the two types of university in this thesis, but that does not mean that such an approach cannot be taken in a future study.

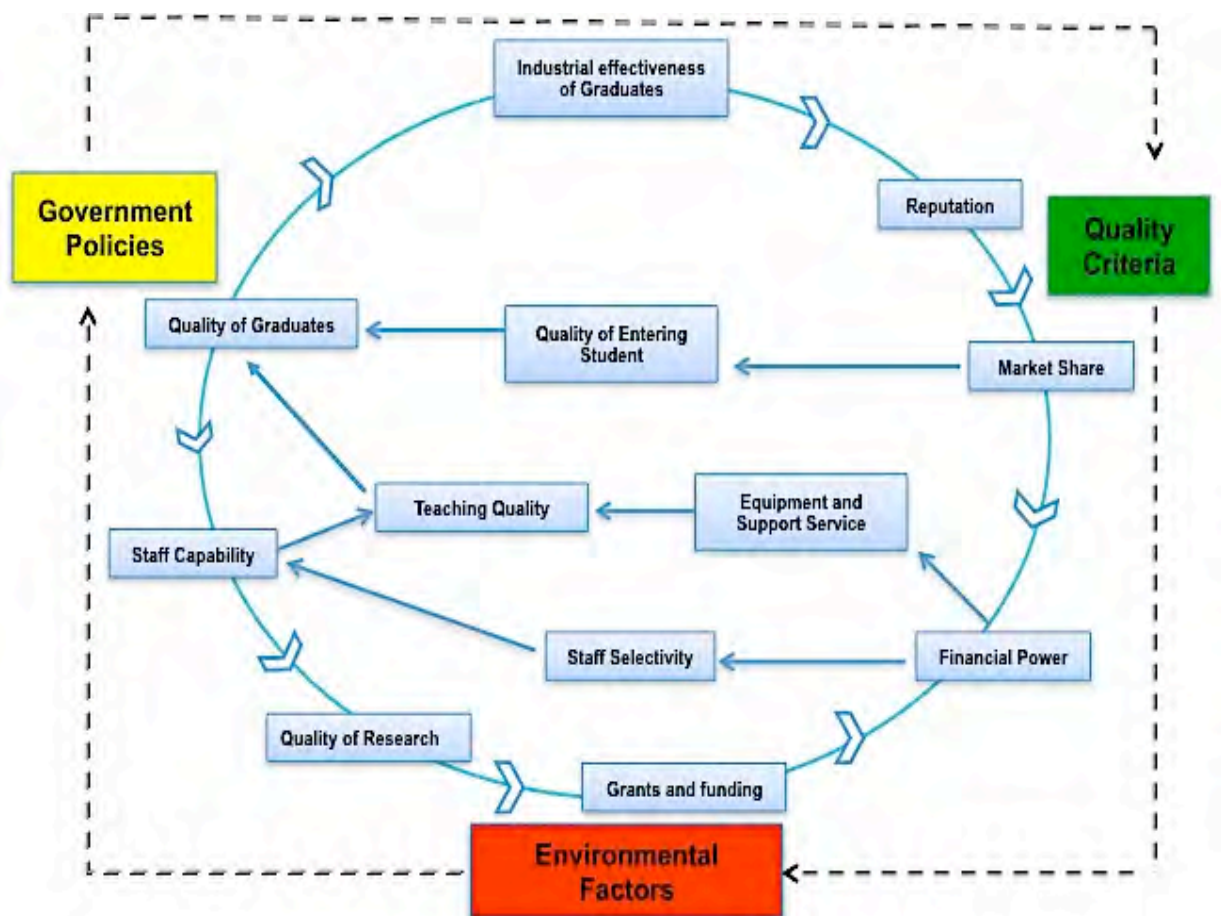
However, six of the respondents from private universities agreed that the major market-share of principal officers in Nigeria still remains in the public universities - either federal or state-owned. As a result, principal officers agreed that they share similar roles, duties, attitudes, beliefs, skills, abilities and other characteristics that are crucial to the implementation of quality management in the Nigerian university context, and that this also impedes their abilities. Thus, the major intention of the study is to identify a possible model of quality management implementation for university education that can cater for the key triggers that affect the improvement of quality in Nigerian universities.

This model was mostly developed through varied participants' experience, situations and circumstances that reflect individual respondents' social and personal human values of how the events occur. However, over the years, the degree of importance that they attached to each component of the model and the extent to which they had selectively applied these components to their work differed one from the other, giving this model a rich insight into how to manage the events. This is a key element that is never considered by either interpretivists or constructivists, or in the agenda of any traditional approach. Researchers who use the inductive or the deductive approach are also always on a quest to develop models based on their surface understanding of the

phenomenon they study.

On the basis of these divergences observed from the literature in Chapters Two and Three, a profile of the principal officers applicable to the Nigerian universities was identified in Chapter Five. Likewise, university education as an organization was examined with the view to uncover quality management implementation and the complexity of such implementation was discussed. The substantive findings of this study are illustrated in the model below, although environmental factors, government policies and quality criteria are seen as key contributing elements to all components of the model:

Figure 6.1: Model of how quality occurs in the Nigerian university context



One major link between the conceptual framework of the study and the model developed is the importance of the human social and personal values of participants, which generates the entities and mechanisms that were used to develop this model. The focus of the model is centred on the transformation event of the university, which was the focus of the conceptual framework: to uncover the cause of problems faced within the Nigerian university context. Critical realism is the central discussion that drives all the components in the conceptual framework together, giving room for agency to function properly within the structure with the guidance of mechanisms and entities. However, as the findings reveal, according to twenty-three of the participants, there are no guidelines to implement either government policy or quality management within the structure: this has resulted in the malfunction of the structure, causing different events to occur. This approach is not considered necessary by positivists, as they rely on figures that can be represented as graphs, charts and tables to explain what happens with the event. Likewise, constructionists also focus their attention on discussing the events' components rather than focusing on how the components they discuss have been affected by the environment in order to remove the trigger that causes the event to happen rightly or wrongly.

In this study, it was observed that quality can be affected at any point in the sequence, as quality will only be present if all other components/entities supporting each other function properly. Therefore, the model was developed to pull together all components that participants suggested should be present for quality management to occur in Nigerian universities. It enables the researcher to explain that when constructive feedback loops are present in the system, changing a variable in one direction (either a decrease or an increase) will definitely lead to an increasing change in the same direction. For example, if a university produces a better quality of graduates than it has

earlier produced, that is the loop keyed at the "quality of graduates" stage. Two things will happen: it will result in higher job performance for graduates in industry, and it will improve the university's reputation. An increase in the university's reputation will increase the number of applicants willing to obtain a degree from the university. This will also increase the university's market share. It will allow the university to raise its standard above the minimum requirement set by the NUC. Likewise, it will attract more qualified students and staff, which will in turn increase its financial power and lead to higher quality graduates.

Another strong connection in the model is how the financial power of the university can influence both the quality of graduates and the teaching. It was observed that quality (and quantity) of equipment and support services and the level of staff ability will produce teaching quality, which is required to produce quality graduates. However, it was also observed that throughout the fieldwork, less attention was paid to student support services. The entire focus shifted to financial power, although additional financial power will increase the market share, as well as the capability to attract grants and funding, which depend on the research effectiveness. Questions were raised about the accountability of research funds, but the model suggests that if the policy implementation procedure is put in place, it can serve as a control mechanism. The loop is closed when deliberating the point that quality staff are expected to be more able to carry out meaningful and effective research. The entire element can have a conflicting influence once one feature starts to go wrong. For example, low quality graduates can lead to a poor university reputation, which can result in a worse condition for the quality of intakes and graduates.

Although the humanistic nature of education makes it more complex, the model suggests some relationships with a manufacturing system. This is because the system functions in a similar way, but with a major difference in the form of the input, as in producing an inanimate object that cannot be involved in its production, compared to students who are involved in the education process. The fact that the products of the system (such as students themselves) have a direct effect on the process and there is dynamic communication between teachers and students makes a big difference, while the problems of defining students as customers mount. There are also a variety of stakeholders with different interests - for example, parents, employers, university management, government, external agencies (such as NUC, JAMB, WAEC, NECO), the community and students themselves - adding to the complexity of the events, which makes it difficult to define quality, but this should not overshadow the need for an operational definition of quality.

An important point which can be observed in the model is the existence of a strong connection between market issues and quality. University quality can be attained through attracting more capable students and most especially through hiring higher quality staff, as well as absorbing more industrial grants, which are all market-related. This suggests the possibility of the adoption of commercially based approaches, such as improving quality in a public sector institution such as a university. However, it is worth mentioning that the beliefs, views and perceptions of principal officers in Nigeria were taken into account in designing this model. Participants' belief is that policies will only achieve a greater improvement if there is a policy implementation guide to make them more practicable and implementable. It was also observed that when Nigerian universities start following a workable model like this, they can fulfil the government policies and start producing graduates who will be relevant to society.

6.7 SUMMARY

This chapter has answered the fourth and fifth specific research questions in line with the research objective, which were to evaluate and discuss quality criteria that influence principal officers' decisions on how to implement quality management within Nigerian universities with reference to theoretical perspective and to develop a model to improve university education in the Nigerian context. The chapter has re-described and discussed the seven major themes identified in Chapter Five in the researcher's own words under the government policy, quality definition, quality criteria and quality management model. The analysis from this perspective aims to clarify why mechanisms that are meant to function in certain ways are not doing so. The next section was used to identify the appropriateness of using university principal officers. Here, it was observed that Nigerian universities operate a committee system for their day-to-day business activities via the principal officers, therefore making them relevant in the operation of the university.

It was observed from twenty-seven of participants' responses that government policies on university education cover every activity of Nigerian university education, but following the fieldwork, participants expressed that they do not have a written document on government policies or any common guidelines on how to implement these policies. Although a few informants claimed that they know what government policies are even though they do not have a written copy, they also claimed that government policies are communicated verbally across the university. They agreed that it is very difficult to implement what you do not know, especially given the level of autonomy in a university. Discussion was also centred on creating a definition of quality management in Nigerian universities. Under this section, respondents revealed that it is difficult to define quality in a particular way, as the university system is comprised of

multi-layered activities for which a particular meaning will degrade the integrity of the university as a whole. Rather, when identifying a specific definition of quality, principal officers talked about quality criteria.

The next section discussed the university quality management criteria as suggested by the principal officers in six sections, namely academic standards, resources, curriculum, quality of intake and teaching and learning. The section explained that all of these criteria must be adequately serviced to achieve quality. This chapter also laid more emphasis on the importance of management commitment both to achieve organisational objectives and improve quality management. Having re-described all these themes, the research developed a quality management model that takes into account all discussed causes and failures of quality management and government policies implementation in Nigerian context.

The final chapter will summarise the whole thesis by reviewing the research aims and objectives, outlining the findings, stating the thesis's contribution to knowledge, evaluating the research objectives, explaining the limitations of the study, suggesting future research and giving the researcher's personal reflection on the whole process.

7 CONCLUSION

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7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses how the thesis has answered the research question raised in Chapter Four in line with the research objectives in Chapter One. The first section focuses on introducing the conclusion. The second section of the chapter reviews the research aim and objectives in line with the research question. Discussion is centred on how the objectives set in the Introductory Chapter of this thesis have been met. In the third section, attention is paid to the major research findings, which are based on the data obtained from the empirical findings. The fourth section of the chapter presents the study's contribution to knowledge and the fifth section draws attention to the research limitations and suggests future research areas that the present research did not cover. The sixth section presents the overall concluding remarks and a personal reflection on the study.

7.2 REVIEW OF RESEARCH AIMS

The overall aim of this thesis is to uncover how Nigerian universities are responding to quality management and its implementation in order to identify generative and missing mechanisms and develop a practicable model in the Nigerian university context. This means that the main purpose of this research is to understand how quality management have been measured by past researchers occurred in the Nigerian university context using the principal officers' beliefs, experience and practical knowledge of the events and how they have been discharging their roles and duties in terms of implementation. This approach differs from that which would be adopted by positivist or interpretivist research. Five specific research objectives were developed to address the main aim. Therefore, there is a need to discuss how each of these specific research objectives has been achieved. The researcher started the study by collecting and exploring secondary data using a critical realist approach, as mentioned in Chapters One and Four of this thesis. During this period, the researcher's attention was

centred on quality and quality management and its relation to higher education literature around the globe. While doing this, the researcher discovered that there are links between the first and second objectives set, which are as follows.

Objective one: To undertake a critical review of relevant literature with particular reference to quality, quality definition, quality management models (in the context of university processes), and quality value.

Objective two: To review relevant literature related to Nigerian higher education institutions, the history of Nigerian universities, university management, the quality management debate and the present status of Nigerian universities.

The first research question was designed to probe into the activities of the Nigerian Universities from the perspective of the existing literature, but little literature was found in the Nigerian context. The concern about the limited literature found in the field of quality management and university education spurred the researcher into re-translating the research question into interview questions so as to engage the respondents (the principal officers) in questions such as “What are the perceptions of the principal officers about government policies on university education and its implementation?” Their responses were discussed in Chapter Five, with particular attention to the major events in the universities, which include intake, transformation and output. Just as in any other organisation in Nigeria, the principal officers were more concerned about the effect of government policy on them, most especially when government policies function as structures or mechanisms used to drive the system. This is further reason why retroduction was used in Chapter Six to re-describe the discussion in Chapter 5 as to what the purpose of universities is, principal officers’ involvement, government policies and position, the definition of quality and its criteria and management

commitment to establish their perception of quality management implementation as it relates to government policies in the university.

The second question was “how has the application of government policies been linked or discussed in relation to quality management in Nigerian universities?” The question was re-phrased to what the researcher believes would interest the respondents to respond to the research question and participate in the discussion. The question was re-written to ask what principal officers perceive as major problems of implementing government policies in Nigerian universities, and what still needs to be done about government policies. From the respondents’ answers to the question, the focus was more on what other authors (such as Telford and Masson, 2005; Eagle and Brennan, 2007; Stensaker et al., 2011) identified as quality criteria in the university. These include quality of intake, academic standards, resources, curriculum, teaching and learning. These criteria led to a focus on quality management and not on government policies. In Chapter Six, more attention was paid to what the respondents identify as university quality criteria, and their relationship was discussed.

The third research question was “How have principal officers in Nigerian universities responded to the development and implementation of quality management mechanisms?” The research question was re-phrased into “How have Nigerian university principal officers perceived quality in their universities and what are the key criteria?” The researcher was first interested in respondents identifying those mechanisms that are at play which enable them to function within the university sector, seeing university education as a multifaceted entity. The aim here was to identify what causes an event to happen in a particular way by looking at respondents’ personal commitment from how they interact with the services

The fourth research question was design to help understand quality criteria that influence principal officers' decisions on how to implement quality management within Nigerian universities. The question was further interpreted as "what are principal officers' perceptions of quality, and what important tools are needed to improve the quality of education in Nigerian universities?" The intention of the research is to contribute to the general development of the Nigerian universities as a whole. Factors affecting the quality of university education that are beyond the institution's control became a bone of contention, and this hindered the quality of services delivered. Therefore, the fifth research question was linked with the other four research questions to develop a more suitable and practicable quality management model for Nigerian Universities.

The research explored the secondary data in order to uncover how attention has been paid to the phenomenon under study in past literature. During this period, the researcher noticed that there is a 'Grand Canyon' between practical and academic knowledge. The opinions of university management regarding quality-facilitating elements in university systems are not represented in defining quality in educational literature; neither is the view of principal officers represented in the design of government policies on university education that they are meant to implement. These are some of the missing mechanisms that affect principal officers' responsibilities and how they discharge their duties. Therefore, extensive literature was presented in Chapters Two and Three in order to expose these gaps, thus setting a clear picture of how critical realists use secondary data to generate discussion centred on how government policies have been positioned within the context of university education and Nigeria in particular.

The researcher explored different literature on the history of higher education and university study in particular, as stated in objective two. Particular attention was paid to literature between 1970 and 2013 in order to step backward to understand the reality behind an event from the secondary data to generate discussion, as suggested by the critical realist approach in the introductory chapter, because the research is interested in the reality of how the event has positioned itself in the university sector, though the researcher found that very little study had been conducted in the field. From the narration of the data, a key challenging issue for university management in Nigerian universities is increasing competition between public and private universities and a reduction in university budgets from the government. Higher expectations of stakeholders, a changing mix of student backgrounds and different interpretations of the meaning of quality in university education have led researchers in the field to use a variety of methods when attempting to discuss or measure quality. The researcher started working on the thesis in November 2011 and discovered that the issue is a global problem. The researcher started off with an exploration of the relevant literature and the research methods used in each of these studies to generate discussion. This objective outcome was first expressed in the form of a draft literature review, which was refined into a draft chapter in July 2012. It was observed that researchers in the field have focused mainly on using deductive approaches to measure quality, but such approaches ignore the human values of freedom and focus their attention on materials (Njihia, 2011, p.61). The researcher was able to develop a comprehensive literature review to guide the research. After the rigorous critique of the literature, the researcher shifted his focus towards achieving the third specific research objective, since the critical realist approach gives the human value of freedom more inclination over materials.

Objective three: To undertake empirical research using a qualitative approach within a critical realist paradigm to identify how principal officers in Nigerian universities are responding to the development and implementation of quality management mechanisms. With the above aims, purposes and expected outcomes in mind, qualitative research within the critical realist paradigm was deemed to be the most appropriate means of understanding the practical knowledge, experiences and beliefs of principal officers to unveil generative, causal and missing mechanisms. A deep review of the relevant literature in Chapters Two and Three raised major concerns, from which the research questions were designed. These questions served as a guide to develop a semi-structured interview schedule, which is provided in Appendix Four.

To enable the researcher to address these research questions, an informative sample was needed. The research required ethical clearance, which was granted by the Cardiff Metropolitan University ethical committee, and upon approval, the researcher commenced interviews in with selected Nigeria universities principal officers. Purposive sampling was regarded as the most appropriate sampling strategy for this research, as discussed in detail in Chapter Four. A total of twenty-nine principal officers across six structures (three public and three private universities), located in different parts of the country (excluding the northern region), with a diverse range of academic backgrounds, disciplines and experiences, participated in the study. The participants had a significant role in the decision-making of the university, such as vice-chancellors, registrars, bursars, university librarians and deans of faculty, directors of academic planning and deans of student affairs. It is worth mentioning here that beliefs, perceptions, perspectives, thoughts, feelings and experiences cannot be objectively measured or replicated, as would be expected. The use of a qualitative approach (semi-structured interviews) produces rich, detailed and descriptive data for understanding the subjective and complex human experiences involved.

During the fieldwork, the researcher endeavoured to transcribe all the interviews in full. Shortly after the fieldwork, coding and categorizing was then employed to narrate and analyze the data collected. The process involved the development and affixing of coding categories to different sections of the twenty-nine interview transcripts. The transcripts were arranged and categorised in various groups relating to major issues as they arose. These issues were later categorized into themes as they emerged from the transcripts and were used to produce a narrative account in Chapter Five.

Having achieved objective three, the researcher decided to merge objectives four and five together. These objectives were as follows:

Objective four: To evaluate and discuss quality criteria that influence principal officers' decisions on how to implement quality management within Nigerian universities with reference to theoretical perspectives.

Objective five: To develop a model of quality management implementation that can help to improve university education in Nigerian context.

These objectives were combined because they are both linked with the generative, causal and missing mechanisms identified in Chapter Five. From their contributions, it was observed that universities in Nigeria do not operate using quality manuals. It was also observed that quality assurance or audits by the NUC are the only outsourced quality management process in Nigerian universities. The study also found that rewarding staff, motivation, training and development are critical success factors to the implementation of both government policies and quality management in university operations.

The study revealed that many principal officers in public universities had migrated to private universities for promotion, sabbatical leave or increased salaries, taking with them the norms, culture and beliefs from public universities. However, it must be noted that the evidence presented on the quality practice of Nigerian universities in Chapters Five and Six only reflects the perceptions of the cohort of universities studied. This evidence was used to develop a model. It is worth mentioning that the beliefs and perceptions were neither triangulated nor generalized. Likewise, the model developed was not tested by this research. The researcher suggests that further studies could explore this gap.

7.3 OUTLINE OF FINDINGS

The major gap in knowledge of the quality gurus was that, firstly, quality was studied with the belief that it must be measured: therefore, they all focused on the quantitative approach to determine quality. Conversely, an interesting area in the findings was the general consensus that top management should take a leading role and responsibility for implementing quality. However, no researchers have looked into the human value of how top managers perceive quality or how they have been implementing quality. This gap in knowledge is filled by this study. This research then disagrees with the ideology of quality gurus such as Crosby and Juran's view of measuring or discussing quality from a quantitative perspective. This research suggested that it would be interesting to step back from observing the event and ask, "What must be true in order to make this event possible as well as discover missing mechanisms?" as raised by Easton (2010a, p. 123). This requires the use of a critical realist approach to uncover real thoughts, human value, experiences and practical knowledge (Njihia, 2011, p. 62) in order to understand how the mechanisms (quality management) that are measured had

occurred. That is, the study sought to understand the actuality that leads to an event, which determines whether or not quality exists.

Likewise, the study observed that quality assurance is widely accepted by many organisations as a method of planning to improve efficiency, especially in university organisations. However, the past literature on quality assurance has failed to draw its findings about quality from human value: that is, university management, who are expected to implement the quality they plan, although the quality assurance literature had assumed that principal officers played a key role in implementing or enforcing quality in their respective universities. Rather than defining and creating lasting solutions to the issue of quality through principal officers, the quality assurance literature had attempted to apply pre-determined models or designs from the manufacturing or service industry. This was pronounced in the work of Silvestro (2001), who argued that models that have their roots in manufacturing could be easily applied to mass services, requiring comparatively less contact with customers. The thesis finds that it may be more difficult to do so with more complex professional services such as university education, especially in Nigeria, where students are never regarded as customers. Further support for this view is found in the work of Chua (2004), who clarified that the application of TQM to universities is considered inappropriate, as it is based on the principle of customer satisfaction. Universities are not in the business of delighting the students who are their primary customers. The gap was widened by Oakland's view that quality assurance is centred on prevention, management procedures, adequate audit and review. This will translate into improved quality performance and increased work efficiency. The study found that the NUC had failed Nigerians by not being able to assure users of good service delivery due to the months of ASUU strike yearly has shown in the work of Andrew (2011). Therefore, this study

claims a gap in knowledge in the past literature, which ignores or fails to access quality from the perspective of human value.

Similarly, the study finds that positivism's preoccupations with prediction, quantification and measurement, used by earlier research to determine quality in developed countries, cannot be replicated in a country like Nigeria: such an approach is inappropriate, as the study outcome suggested different results. For example, the study suggested that the amount that one dollar can achieve is very different in Nigeria compared to, for example, the UK. However, this study agreed that if quality is defined as standard, then using a quantitative approach may be acceptable. The study also found that although managing process quality may be the most important aspect of ensuring quality outcomes, it may be difficult to assess and evaluate this process effectively and independently of the inputs and achieved outcomes. It is important to realise the interdependent character of the input, process and output and the human values that make them function. Furthermore, the degree of importance that is attached by principal officers to the input, process and output aspects of the university may differ. Therefore, this research puts rational thinkers in the position of making rational decisions to undermine irrational thinkers' existing knowledge of using tangible products in quality management models in the university.

Another major finding from the thesis is that the application of industry models to universities places undue focus on measurement, whereas the subtle process of teaching and learning does not lend itself to meaningful measurement, as claimed by Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2007). Even if quality is measured in the Nigerian university context, there is no unified yardstick that is commonly accepted by all universities in the country. Chapter Six evaluated this issue, finding disagreement as to whether quality should be measured in terms of student grades, input, discipline etc. The empirical

findings in Chapter Five affirmed the level of indiscipline that is rife among Nigerian academics, where lecturers have sex with female students or collect money in return for grades. From the discussion in Chapters Five and Six, it was evident that government policies are structures pretending to be mechanisms, or vice-versa, which makes it difficult for principal officers to drive their implementation within the structure. Likewise, it was observed that mechanisms are meant to drive the structure with the support of principal officers, as mentioned in Chapter Six, but when the mechanisms are not understood by the principal officers, then they will not work as they were designed to.

The overall picture that has arisen from this small-scale study of how the twenty-nine principal officers perceived quality management implementation is informative, revealing causal and missing mechanisms that have significant implications for Nigerian university education. In brief, the findings of this study provide an insight into the obstacles that affect the implementation of the government policies on university education and quality management. In spite of the small sample size, a degree of generalisation of the research findings may still be feasible, but is limited only to public and private universities in similar situations or operating in similar ways to the universities studied in this thesis. The study therefore has important and broader implications for implementing quality management in university practice.

The results of this study will serve as a useful source of reference for how to implement government policies on university education in the Nigerian university context and for inspiring principal officers in Nigerian universities to reflect on their intrinsic characteristic traits, as well as skills and abilities developed through maturity and experience. The researcher hopes that sharing the findings and conclusions of this

study with existing and potential key actors will enable them to gain invaluable insights into what perceivably constitutes the causal and missing mechanisms that affect the way principal officers discharge their duties and reflect upon what they can do to enhance the implementation of events. Achieving this will certainly render the research undertaken more significant, meaningful and valuable. The limitations of this study, as acknowledged above, entail the need for further investigation, analysis and testing on how quality management implementation can be more effective in a future study. Hopefully the preliminary small-scale research can contribute to the development of research practice and policy for executing quality management in the progression of education reforms in both Nigerian and international contexts. Having arrived at the very end of this thesis, I hope that my study has lifted the tip of the veil of the complex and sometimes-unclear concept of government policies and quality management and their implementation in universities.

7.4 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

This study has made a significant contribution to knowledge in two ways. First, the research uses a qualitative approach within a critical realist paradigm to uncover causal and missing mechanisms that cause an event to occur. That is, it uses semi-structured interviews to probe into the minds of principal officers and uses human abilities to drive the structure (the university sector), and Its Methodological contribution is through the use of a critical realist approach to produce a social and personal identity of principal officers involved and re-descriptive narrative account of events that have been hitherto unexplored locally and internationally.

Second, the study contributes to knowledge through a review of the relevant literature

and empirical research related to the cause of poor quality, and quality management implementation as it relates to Nigerian universities. The study steps back to study causal and missing mechanisms that cause the major quality barriers facing the principal officers by exploring major gaps between theory and human value. The study has also developed a practicable model of quality management in the Nigerian context.

7.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study adopted a qualitative approach within a critical realist paradigm to collect secondary and primary data. The approach is generally perceived to have a number of inherent weaknesses, including the uniqueness of the nature and characteristics of the structure (institution) selected. The qualitative approach adopted was extensive and informative in uncovering the causal and missing mechanisms that cause an event to occur. But where there is lack of sufficient literature like government policies, a quantitative component could have been beneficial to the study, as it would have extended the research findings in some areas, although not necessarily uncovering how the event occurs. This approach is acceptable by Ackroyd and Karlsson (2014), who state that the research techniques used should serve mainly to gain access to information that is particularly important to develop researchers' understanding. Furthermore, as the study focused on three public and three private universities in Nigeria, it may lack applicability to other university environments, especially in the Northern part of the country. Although employees, as the principal officers, were the focus of the study as the internal stakeholders, the study does not consider the views of other external stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education, National Universities Commissions, Education Trust Fund and many more who have a key regulatory role in the university sector. Similarly, it is not the intention of this study to claim that the results and findings are applicable to other educational institutions, although great care

was taken to ensure that only common variables pertaining to the cause of an event (government policies on university education and quality management implementation) were investigated and discussed. Thus, the onus and responsibilities lie with the information users, who must check for themselves to confirm the appropriateness of any application of the results to their particular institutions, situations and environmental characteristics.

Care was taken to ensure that the subjective influences of the structure had no part to play in the research design. However, it is worthwhile to reiterate that this study is the work of a single researcher, who is a doctoral research student, with no external funds and resources to rely on. In such case, a small-scale study is the only viable option (Punch, 2003), and the in-depth interview within a critical realist paradigm (Easton, 2000), fits the research conditions and requirements. Ultimately, there are criticisms that the study is too narrow and does not cover areas of related interest in detail, such as pedagogy, teaching methods and techniques, learning styles, etc. This is undoubtedly true, but the PhD thesis is limited to 80 to 100 thousand words and therefore the scope cannot be so broad. In order to produce meaningful results within the space available, the aim and research objective have to be tightly focused. This renders the scope of the study narrow, but detailed. Related content areas not visited by this study can be investigated by further and future research.

This study was limited to six universities (three public and three private), located in different parts of Nigeria (excluding the Northern part). The model developed from the missing and generative mechanisms, which suggest practical involvement of principal officers involved, was not tested. Therefore, the study does not make a claim in this

respect rather suggest that the researchers will test this model in his post-doctorate research work. The research suggested that further study could be carried out to explore policy or government policies theories as it relates to university education in Nigeria. Also further study could approach policy by drawing on theoretical approach to government policies and its effects on the structure. Further research into how events occur will provide an understanding of whether such human values will differ according to the ownership orientation of the universities. Research into objects relating to events on the quality of students and academics in the transformation system would be valuable in determining whether quality is attained across the university process. Future studies could also explore the quality of the human value of similar key actors in other countries, with different types of tertiary institutions, in order to test the model whether the results obtained are general and consistent across different samples.

7.6 PERSONAL REFLECTION

I reflected on several issues on my journey during the research period. In terms of the research theoretical stance and critical realist approach taken, I learnt that quality is a critical issue to study, especially in a multi-faceted industry like university education, because quality has several definitions originating from the perspectives of different authors. Using the critical realist approach suggested that in the university education industry, it is difficult to study quality rather than policies because of the intangible nature of the service offered by universities and the difficulty in identifying their customers; whereas in manufacturing industries, it is easy to identify quality aspects of a product and measure it from customers' satisfaction, knowledge or experience of the product.

In terms of the practical research stance, using a critical realist approach unveiled to

me that the university industry in Nigeria is far behind in terms of approaching how to implement quality management for two reasons. First, the principal officers have not yet realized the importance of the quality management culture. They are also incapable of identifying quality aspects of their services. This is one of the missing mechanisms identified through the use of the critical realist approach, while a positivist approach would have been focused on measuring quality aspects. Second, principal officers have not yet realized the importance of mentoring in the management of quality in the university. They only perceive one side of the university process, which is the intake. They do not, however, see the rest of the picture, which includes the transformation of students by adding value, which upholds the functionality of the system, and even the mentoring of principal officers themselves. Again, the use of critical realist interviewing further enriches our knowledge and draws upon fresh insight from an insider's perspective. This perspective was used to identify the generative mechanism causing the structure to function wrongly, whereas with a pragmatic or positivist approach, the attention would have been centred on student grades as a yardstick for measuring university performance. Likewise, a positivist, interpretivist or pragmatic paradigm might not have identified missing or generative mechanisms in the way this study had done because critical realists pay more than lip-service to questions asked by probing into the minds of respondents, allowing them to explain their practical involvement rather than what they feel or think.

If I had to conduct this research again, there are some things that I would do the same. First, I would review literature about quality, quality management, and documents on government policies using a critical realist technique by taking a step backward to study the phenomenon in the way it is constructed and obtain knowledge of it. Secondly, I would aim to develop a model from the literature review to use as a

conceptual framework for the study. Third, I would use a critical realist paradigm, within which semi-structured interviews with more principal officers and universities would be explored. Fourth, in the field study, I would also target different categories of universities, such as private and public institutions.

On the other hand, there are some things I would change: if I ever had the chance to conduct such research again, I would try to involve more stakeholders such as students, employers and government agencies such as NUC, JAMB and NYSC as research participants. I would like to reflect more on each interview before proceeding to another interview section in order to scrutinize the response of the first respondent more with the second respondent, with the intention to establish common thoughts. I would try to develop a model from the literature and test it during the fieldwork in an attempt to see how informants would accept the model.

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APPENDIX

Contents

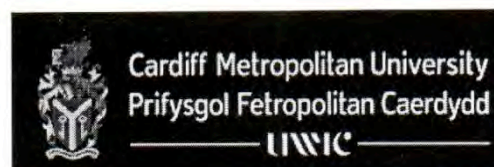
Appendix 1: Letter of Request

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet

Appendix 3: Voluntary Informed Consent Form

Appendix 4: Semi-structured Interview Schedule

Appendix 5: Letter of Authorization

Appendix 1: Letter of RequestNovember 12th 2012

The participants,

Letter of Request

I am currently conducting research for a PhD thesis, under the supervision of Dr Anthony Thorpe and Dr Mervin Sookun in Cardiff Metropolitan University. The title of my thesis is *"An investigation into how Nigerian universities are responding to government policies on university education and how quality management implementation occurs within Nigerian universities"*. The purpose is to know how Nigerian universities are responding to government policies on university education and understudy how quality management implementation occurs with public and private universities to help develop a quality management model that could help improve quality in Nigerian university.

At this stage of my thesis, I am concerned with collecting data from public and private universities. I have chosen your high esteem institution as one of my study site. I write to request your assistance for this exercise. Therefore, I would be very grateful if you can inform me in writing that you will give me the access I require in the completion of the thesis. In addition your opinion is important to me and will enhance the research project by revealing how Nigerian universities are respond to government policies on university education. In turn, I will be happy to provide you with a summary of the research findings and other suggestion that will be helpful to your institution.

To achieve this purpose, a semi-structured interview will involve key actors (such as; Vice- Chancellor, Registrar, University Librarian, Deans, HoDs, Bursar, Quality Assurance Manager, Student affairs unit and other principal officers). Each interview will cover duration of 30 to 45 minutes depending on the response of the respondent. The fieldwork proposed to start from 10th January 2013 to 1st of March 2013. Copies of the following documents are attached with this letter. Voluntary informed consent form, participant information sheet, interview question, interview arrangement form. Please complete and send back by email the interview arrangement form upon approval.

I need to re-emphasis here again that your responses will be treated in complete confidence and the information that you provide will be used solely for my doctoral research.

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your time, if you have any queries regarding the research please contact me by the telephone or email below.

Yours faithfully

'Niya Adetunji (FHEA, M. Sc., B.Sc.)

PhD. Student,

Cardiff Metropolitan University

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Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Introduction

My name is Adeniyi Adetunji. I am a PhD researcher student at Cardiff Metropolitan University. I am working on a project investigating how Nigerian universities are responding to government policies on university education and how QM implementation occurs within Nigerian universities. I am talking to a number of key actors about their experiences of how QM implementation and government policies on university education in Nigeria occur. I have not chosen you because I think you have not been implementing QM, it is simply that your role fits within the scope of the study.

What will I have to do if I take part?

If you agree to take part, I will ask you to answer some questions. There aren't any right or wrong answers I just want to hear about your opinions. The discussion should take about an hour at the longest. Please note that some of the questions will relate to your personal and professional practice and experiences in university education settings.

Do I have to take part?

No, taking part is voluntary. If you don't want to take part, you do not have to give a reason and no pressure will be put on you to try and change your mind. You can pull out of the discussion at any time. Please note, if you choose not to participate, or pull out during the discussion this will not affect you.

If I agree to take part what happens to what I say?

All the information you give me will be confidential and used for the purposes of this study only. The data will be collected and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and will be disposed of in a secure manner. The information will be used in a way that will not allow you to be identified individually.

What do I do now?

Think about the information on this sheet, and ask me if you are not sure about anything. If you agree to take part, sign the consent form. The consent form will not be used to identify you. It will be filed separately from all other information. By signing below, you are agreeing that: (1) I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet; (2) I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time for any reason without prejudice. (3) I have been informed about the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded. (4) I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study. (5) I agree to the processing of such data for any purposes connected with the Research Project as outlined to me. (6) I agree to allow the interview to be audio-taped. And that I am taking part in this research study voluntarily (without coercion).

Participant's Name (Printed)

Participant's signature and Date

Name of person obtaining consent (Printed)

Signature of person obtaining consent

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP!

Niyi Adetunji (FHEA, M. Sc., B.Sc.)
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Appendix 3: Voluntary Informed Consent Form**VOLUNTARY INFORMED CONSENT FORM****Introduction**

I am seeking your consent to involve you in a study relating to post-graduate student, academic and non-academic staff that I am carrying out.

Description

The study is titled 'An investigation into how Nigerian universities are responding to government policies on university education and how quality management implementation occurs within Nigerian universities'. It will involve interviews with you.

Risks and Benefits

Occasionally, people do not like to be participants in research studies. This is the only risk associated with this study. The benefits, which may reasonably be expected to result from this study, are that you may be helping to improve our understanding of universities response to government policies on university education especially how quality management implementation occurs within Nigerian universities.

Ethics and Participant's rights

This study adheres to research ethics and I assure you that:

- The study will not interfere with your activities
- You will not be identified or named
- You will not be assessed or graded
- You can choose to withdraw from the study at any time.

Participant's Consent

Signed..... Printed name.....

University name..... Date.....

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP!

'Niyi Adetunji (FHEA, M. Sc., B.Sc.)
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Appendix 4: Semi-structured Interview Schedule

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Greetings. Introducing the research aims and explaining how the interview will help achieve the objective

Can you please tell me your position in this university and what does this position require you to do?

What role do you have in decision taking? Give example of your recent activities focusing on Quality Management (QM)?

Who are the key actors (decision making body) in your institutions? Give example. What do the key actors do?

Government policy

- What do you think government policy is?
- Are there government policies that you follow?
- Do you or your institution follow any policy procedure in taking decision about intake, teaching and learning, research and enterprises? Who developed these policies? Can you please tell me if there is any relation in these policies and the government policy on university education? Give example?
- Who do you think should be responsible for implementing government policies? Who decides this in your institution?
- Do you know if any institution influences government policy? For example public or private universities? If yes or no can you please tell my why?
- Do you think there is any problem in implementing these policies? Give examples?
- Could you tell me your opinion whether or not government policies improve/influence your own professional practice (in terms of research work)
- Could you please explain how your professional practice promote student learning and teaching?

Quality management

- Can you tell me what you understand by quality? How does quality occur in your university?
- Can you give me any example of factors affecting quality in your university?
- What do you understand by quality management mechanism?
- How do quality management work in your university?

Government policy implementation

- Do you know if your institutions have guidelines on how to implement quality management and government policies? Give example of what is in the guidelines?
- How about guidelines on quality of intake, teaching and learning and graduates?
- What have you done in the last past years to implement these policies?
- What influence or impact are these policies having on both your professional practice and organisational characteristics?
- What arrangements do you think should be put in place for implementing quality management and government policy? Give examples
- Who gets the results of the implementation? Are they made publicly available?
- What still need to be done about government policy?

Quality management implementation

- Are you worried about how to improve your institution quality? (For example quality of intake, transformation and output)
- What according to you is an important tool to help improve quality and government policies? Give examples
- Is there any other problem affecting your ability to produce quality services?

Thank you for your time

'Niyi Adetunji (FHEA, M. Sc., B.Sc.)

PhD. Student, Cardiff Metropolitan University

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Appendix 5: Letter of Authorization

**London School of Commerce**

Chaucer House, White Hart Yard,
London SE1 1NX, UK
Tel : +44 (0)20 7357 0077
Fax : +44 (0)20 7403 1163
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Website : www.lsclondon.co.uk

The Associate College of

Cardiff Metropolitan University
Prifysgol Fetropolitan Caerdydd
UWIC

PO Box 377 Western Avenue, Cardiff CF5 2SG, UK
Tel : +44 (0)29 2041 6296 Fax : +44 (0)29 2041 6918

Dear Principal Officer,

I am the Director of the Research Degrees Programme at the London School of Commerce. The School is an Associate College of the Cardiff Metropolitan University (UWIC), the University of Gloucestershire and the University of East London. It is empowered to teach Undergraduate, Masters and PhD degrees from these Universities in the areas of business studies and information systems. There are currently 4000 mainly international, students on these programmes. The Research Degrees Programme is taught in collaboration with the Cardiff Metropolitan University (UWIC).

I am writing to introduce Mr. Adeniyi Temitope Adetunji who is pursuing Doctoral studies in the area of Higher Education. To carry through this research Mr. Adeniyi Temitope Adetunji needs the collaboration of Universities such as your own to gather data on senior executives' views on the issue of quality and the extent of the involvement of the University in activities which might fall under this heading.

Mr. Adeniyi Temitope Adetunji will provide you with further information on his research programme and the nature of the data that he wishes to collect in your University. You will be able to comment on this and approve it before the research proceeds. The project will involve interviewing personnel at different levels in the University.

I hope that you will be willing to offer Mr. Adeniyi Temitope Adetunji the collaboration and assistance that he needs. The outcome of the research is likely to be of interest to your University and at a suitable point in time Mr. Adeniyi Temitope Adetunji will be happy to give a feedback seminar that would, I think, be useful and interesting for your staff and may well be of assistance to the University in developing its policies and activities in this area.

I would like to assure you of the integrity of Mr. Adeniyi Temitope Adetunji and to emphasise that questionnaires and the collection of other information will only proceed with your approval. The information collected will be confidential and will be reported anonymously in the PhD dissertation unless you agree otherwise.

The academic supervisors of Mr. Adeniyi Temitope Adetunji are Dr. Anthony Thorpe of Roehampton University and Mervin Sookun of the London School of Commerce.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Bernadette Warner
Research Degrees Programme Leader

Appendix 6: Respondents, and coding

Twenty-nine respondents participated in the study, from six universities across the country, excluding those located in the Northern part, as there is currently a crisis in the area. During the field work, seven major office holders who take responsibility for what happens within their universities were asked probing questions, as listed in Appendix 3. Code letters were attached to the seven major groups of respondents based on their level in the hierarchy from A to G. Even the method of assigning codes may not be necessary, which means that the group of respondents that come first takes more responsibilities than the other groups. Therefore, coding was used to identify who was speaking at a particular point within the text and what responsibilities such respondent had in taking decisions in his or her university. This approach became very important, as the researcher promised confidentiality of any data obtained during the fieldwork. The selected institutions were stratified for clarity, not for the purpose of comparison.

Table 1

Respondent	Code	Post held	Establishment
R1	A1	Vice-Chancellor	Public
R2	A2	Vice- Chancellor	Public
R3	A3	Vice- Chancellor	Private
R4	A4	Vice-Chancellor	Private
R5	B1	Registrar	Public
R6	B2	Registrar	Private
R7	B3	Registrar	Private
R8	B4	Registrar	Private

R9	C1	Bursar	Public
R10	C2	Bursar	Public
R11	C3	Bursar	Public
R12	C4	Bursar	Private
R13	D1	Dean	Public
R14	D2	Dean	Public
R15	D3	Dean	Public
R16	D4	Dean	Private
R17	D5	Dean	Private
R18	E1	Director of Academic Planning	Public
R19	E2	Director of Academic Planning	Public
R20	E3	Director of Academic Planning	Public
R21	E4	Director of Academic Planning	Private
R22	E5	Director Academic Planning	Private
R23	F1	University Librarian	Public

R24	F2	University Librarian	Public
R25	F3	University Librarian	Public
R26	F4	University Librarian	Private
R27	G1	Dean of Student Affairs	Public
R28	G2	Dean of Student Affairs	Private
R29	G3	Dean of Student Affairs	Private

Table 2: Respondents' classification by establishment

Code	Post held	Establishment
A1	Vice-Chancellor	Public
A2	Vice-Chancellor	Public
A3	Vice-Chancellor	Private
A4	Vice-Chancellor	Private
B1	Registrar	Public
B2	Registrar	Private
B3	Registrar	Private
B4	Registrar	Private
C1	Bursar	Public

C2	Bursar	Public
C3	Bursar	Public
C4	Bursar	Private
D1	Dean	Public
D2	Dean	Public
D3	Dean	Public
D4	Dean	Private
D5	Dean	Private
E1	Director of Academic Planning	Public
E2	Director of Academic Planning	Public
E3	Director of Academic Planning	Public
E4	Director of Academic Planning	Private
E5	Director of Academic Planning	Private
F1	University Librarian	Public
F2	University Librarian	Public

F3	University Librarian	Public
F4	University Librarian	Private
G1	Dean of Student Affairs	Public
G2	Dean of Student Affairs	Private
G3	Dean of Student Affairs	Private

Table 3: Respondent by stratification

Respondent	Code	Post held	Provider
R3	A3	Vice-Chancellor	Private
R4	A4	Vice-Chancellor	Private
R6	B2	Registrar	Private
R7	B3	Registrar	Private
R8	B4	Registrar	Private
R12	C4	Bursar	Private
R16	D4	Dean	Private
R17	D5	Dean	Private
R21	E4	Director of Academic Planning	Private
R22	E5	Director of Academic Planning	Private

R26	F4	University Librarian	Private
R28	G2	Dean of Student Affairs	Private
R29	G3	Dean of Student Affairs	Private
R1	A1	Vice-Chancellor	Public
R2	A2	Vice- Chancellor	Public
R5	B1	Registrar	Public
R9	C1	Bursar	Public
R10	C2	Bursar	Public
R11	C3	Bursar	Public
R13	D1	Dean	Public
R14	D2	Dean	Public
R15	D3	Dean	Public
R18	E1	Director of Academic Planning	Public
R19	E2	Director of Academic Planning	Public
R20	E3	Director of Academic Planning	Public

R23	F1	University Librarian	Public
R24	F2	University Librarian	Public
R25	F3	University Librarian	Public
R27	G1	Dean Student Affairs	Public

Table 4: Participants' Group participation in percentage

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS	No. of participants	Codes	Participant Percentage
Vice-Chancellor	4	A1 – A4	14
Registrar	4	B1 – B4	14
Bursar	4	C1 – C4	14
Dean of Faculties	5	D1 – D5	17
Director of Academic Planning	5	E1 – E5	17
University Librarian	4	F1 – F4	14
Dean of Students Affairs	3	G1 – G3	10