

Targba, Aondowase; Osuji, Celestina

## Article

# The impact of the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) on the development of university education in Nigeria

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## Kontakt/Contact

ZBW – Leibniz-Informationszentrum Wirtschaft/Leibniz Information Centre for Economics  
Düsternbrooker Weg 120  
24105 Kiel (Germany)  
E-Mail: [rights\[at\]zbw.eu](mailto:rights[at]zbw.eu)  
<https://www.zbw.eu/>

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Aondowase Targba,  
Celestina Osuji

## THE IMPACT OF THE INTEGRATED PAYROLL AND PERSONNEL INFORMATION SYSTEM (IPPIS) ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

*The object of the research is anchored on the introduction of the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) by the Federal Government of Nigeria and the opposition by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the implication of the dispute on the development of university education in Nigeria. The main objectives of the study were to determine the major motives and examine the suitability of IPPIS for the development of university education in Nigeria. The paper employs the equity theory of motivation to explain how Nigeria's payment system affects effective service delivery in the entire university education system. The study was based on secondary sources from existing literature. The findings of the paper show IPPIS was primarily introduced by the federal government to curb corruption in the university system. The paper also revealed that IPPIS does not capture the peculiarities of university lecturers. The study concluded that IPPIS will contribute to the development of university education in Nigeria if it can accommodate the peculiarities of academic staff.*

*The paper recommended that the Federal Government of Nigeria and Academic Staff Union of Universities engage in dialogue to harmonize the payment system for the overall interest of university education in Nigeria. And the Federal Government of Nigeria should show some level of sincerity in the testing of UTAS (University Transparency and Accountability Solution), the alternative payment platform provided by ASUU to build confidence among disputing members. This will also encourage the development of local content.*

**Keywords:** *Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System, IPPIS, development education, Academic Staff Union of Universities.*

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### 1. Introduction

The controversies arising from the federal government payment system technology, otherwise known as IPPIS, and the subsequent opposition to the platform by many civil servants, especially the academic staff union of universities has been an issue of concern in the development of university education in Nigeria. These disagreements have had a number of consequences, particularly for university education due to the disruption of academic activities in Nigeria's institutions of learning.

A good education system, no matter where on the globe it is found, is a knowledge fountain. It can help to attract energetic children and save many of them from being idle. More than anyone can possibly understand, education may contribute to the gradual building of civilization. A well-coordinated, knowledge-driven educational system is the source of the roads, bridges, technologies, interpersonal relationships, scientific research, and techniques for reaching intended objectives [1]. Unfortunately, Nigeria's scenario is plagued by a lack of resources and a lack of drive as a result

of a complex educational system and an appalling political structure which needs serious improvement.

To ensure reciprocal trust, confidence, and a universally harmonious relationship, the government is expected to establish broad policy guidelines that may continuously improve education and labour relations. It must also work with policy experts, supervisors, and implementers to actualize this goal [2].

It is regrettable that the government has not paid much attention to Nigeria's educational system. Higher education institutions, for instance, are about to enter a time of financial crisis. More than ever, funding for higher education in Nigeria must be continually balanced with competing demands for the use of available resources, both now and in the future. Therefore, ASUU's present demands and budget needs must be evaluated in light of the available financing possibilities for public University [3].

Many developing nations have spent three to five percent of their gross domestic product on education, up from one to two percent fifteen years ago. Additionally, many now spend between 15–25 % of their total public budget on education, up

from prior levels of less than 10 %. The proportion of national resources going toward education cannot continue to expand at this rate indefinitely [3]. It is disturbing that despite the UNESCO minimum guideline of 26 % of the national budget, spending for education has never reached 17 % in any given year in Nigeria. According to the Central Bank of Nigeria's (CBN) statistical bulletin, public spending on education in Nigeria ranges from 4 to 13 percent of the total budget [3].

It is a matter of concern that the harmonious relationship between the government and university lecturers is full of acrimony and uncertainty traceable to the introduction of a payment platform on the university system and the controversies surrounding it. This singular payment platform has been the central focus of the crisis in the university system which had disrupted academic activities in Nigeria universities on several occasions. It is against this backdrop that the study seeks to examine the impact of IPPIS on the development of university education in Nigeria.

Thus, *the object of the research* is anchored on the introduction of the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) by the Federal Government of Nigeria and the opposition by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the implication of the dispute on the development of university education in Nigeria.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The research was by desk review using secondary sources. Data were derived from newspaper publications and other published journal articles and other government cooperate entities. The paper adopts the equity theory of motivation to explain how the flaws in the IPPS affect workers morale and effective service delivery in the entire university system.

The theory is adopted to explain how good reward system motivates workers' productivity. Motivated individuals will have a job satisfaction; therefore, understanding the foundations of motivation requires first examining what job satisfaction entails [4]. An employee's impression of how well its work satisfies its needs and how well expectations are met or even exceeded determines how satisfied they are with their jobs [5].

According to the equity principle, workers will measure their contributions to a job against the results they get in return; the bigger the rewards, the more satisfied they are [6]. Job satisfaction is defined as the discrepancy between employee input and job output. According to this notion, employees would feel satisfied with their jobs if they believe they get more in return for their efforts than what they put into them. The job itself can have some effects on how an employee views it. Clarified tasks result in higher job satisfaction since a motivated workforce that is committed to their work is bred by clear roles.

Key job characteristics are identified including the range of skills required for a task, its identity and importance, autonomy, and feedback that have an impact on an employee's psychological state and affect their motivation and job satisfaction as well as their levels of absenteeism. Employees evaluate their input-output ratio in comparison to that of other employees, and if they believe it is equitable, they will be satisfied [7]. Employees become unhappy and less motivated if they believe that their input-output ratio is unfair when compared to that of other employees [4].

In reference to the perspectives of the equity theory, the implementation of the IPPIS as a payment platform by the government may lower workers morale and their expectations as well as affects service delivery in the university system. It will also affect the job satisfaction of university lecturers, which will as well affect their output in the university system. For Instance, a study conducted in Kogi State, Nigeria showed that while implementing an integrated personnel payroll and information system was a real support in establishing accountability, it also threatened job satisfaction because it was not domesticated to address the unique needs of the tertiary education sector [8].

## 3. Results and Discussion

**3.1. The meaning and history of the integrated payroll and personnel information system (IPPIS).** The integrated payroll and personnel information system is known by the abbreviation IPPIS. Office of the Accountant General of the Federation houses the IPPIS Secretariat (OAGF). The system was developed by the Federal Government in October 2006 as part of its reform program. Its goal was to increase the efficacy and efficiency of personnel data storage and payroll administration to increase budgetary and staff morale [9]. Additionally, it was intended for the System's implementation to follow the best practices seen in other regions of the world where Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is applied to enhance management reporting. After receiving permission from the Federal Executive Council (FEC), the World Bank's Pilot Phase implementation at the Bureau of Public Service Reforms (BPSR) began in February 2006 [9].

The Federal Inland Revenue Service, State Boards of Internal Revenue, National Health Insurance Scheme, National Housing Fund, Pension Fund Administrator, Cooperative Societies, Trade Union Dues, Association Dues, and Bank Loans are some of the third-party deduction channels. IPPIS is a government initiative designed to improve the public and civil services' declining performance. It was based on the importance of the platform that the Federal Executive Council approved on Wednesday, December 1, 2010, the enrolment of all MDAs that deduct their personnel costs from the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) into the IPPIS after seeing the advantages of the scheme, particularly in the area of savings to the government [9].

Initially, the Federal Government conducted Public Service Reform (PSR) research in 1999, following Nigeria's return to democratic governance, which resulted in the development of the National Strategy for Public Service Reform (NSPSR) in 2003. The strategy was to be carried out through four cardinal programs known as the NSPSR's four pillars. To ensure strategic, efficient, and effective mobilization, allocation, and use of public resources; fiscal discipline; and transparency, integrity, and accountability through timely reporting. Pillar three, was one of the objectives that birthed the IPPIS. After its adoption, many agencies and extra-ministerial departments were adamant about implementing the IPPIS platform, especially in the universities. The issue came to a head when the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, emphasized that efforts would be made to reduce personnel costs and directed that the salary of any federal government staff not captured on the IPPIS platform by the end of October 2019 be stopped. He also added that before commencing on any new recruitment, all agencies must secure the relevant approvals and warned

that any infractions of these guidelines would be met with harsh consequences [10]. That declaration marked the beginning of one of the major issues affecting the development of university education in Nigeria.

### **3.2. The strength of the IPPIS payment platform**

**3.2.1. Accurate budgeting and estimation.** Estimates are employed in the national budget and MDAs' recurrent spending budgeting because of the file-based system [10]. Base on the grounds that the precise number of the workforce is unknown and because the cost of labour is frequently overstated, the budget amounts are based on estimates. Additionally, it was difficult or impossible to prepare in a timely, accurate, and dependable manner using reliable data and information. However, IPPIS' unified payment system would assist the government in knowing the wage costs of its workers and so enable proper budgeting and estimation [9]. Additionally, it provides a framework for estimating the number and total of future personnel costs, enabling forecasting and workforce planning.

**3.2.2. Accurate personnel information.** Government lack of knowledge about the exact number of its staff was one of the main issues with the manual payment system. As a result, some dishonest employees were getting wages from several pay points for fictional employees, and of course, individuals were collecting salaries while they were employed elsewhere or were not working for the government [10]. The file-based system was characterized by a lack of precise and trustworthy information, which led to excessive overhead costs, double pay, and other shady tactics. The government's inability to count the country's workforce due to accuracy and reliability issues makes budgeting and estimating challenges even more difficult. By removing fraud and non-existent persons, IPPIS ensures the accuracy and reliability of the number of employees on government payrolls [10]. These is so that employees can be added to the payroll via IPPIS, which requires that they be physically present, have all necessary paperwork on hand at the designated time, and have their faces and fingerprints taken and saved in a database. When IPPIS is fully established and integrated, the government will always be aware of the number of employees.

**3.3. Limitations of the IPPIS Technology.** Payroll administration in Nigeria has become more rational thanks to the FGN Integrated Personnel Payroll Information System (IPPIS). IPPIS, however, was rejected by ASUU since it led to inaccuracies in the salaries of academics at federal universities. ASUU has a point on the unique characteristics of universities, and this may be handled without much contention. Unfortunately, despite approval from the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), neither this reality of changing IPPIS nor the solution proposed by ASUU through the deployment of the updated University Transparency and Accountability Solution (UTAS) have been accepted by the government [3]. The payment platform has not been favourably received by the university lecturers under the aegis of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), which sees the implementation of the IPPIS as a violation of the university's autonomy. The union, through its President, Professor Emmanuel Osodeke, labelled IPPIS a «scam» and a «national security concern» [11]. IPPIS will not

allow deductions from employee salaries for legally sanctioned union and cooperative society activities, he added. «This will immediately impede employees' constitutionally protected right to form unions».

The Nigerian government's attempt to prevent fraud in the payment of salaries and allowances may have failed. The unified platform for paying salaries and benefits, IPPIS, underwent an audit, which found that its operators were abusing it. Numerous flaws were found, according to the former Auditor General of the Federation, Ukura Tyonongo, during the audit [12].

The major problems with the payment technology include the following:

1. *The Violation of University Autonomy.* IPPIS specifically violates university autonomy by transferring powers from their various governing councils to the office of the Accountant General of the Federation. With the current arrangement under IPPIS, universities cannot recruit and control the budgeting process of the universities they are by law supposed to govern.

2. *Localization of Nigerian Universities.* IPPIS does not support or account for sabbatical pay, external examiners, external assessors, or earned academic allowances. It does not address staff mobility, such as visiting, adjunct, part-time, and consultancy services that academics provide across Nigerian universities. As a result, Nigerian universities are typically run as if they are main stream or regular civil servants. It is becoming increasingly difficult to hire or replace staff for a short-term purpose, such as serving or taking specialized courses. However, there has been a promise by the federal government to include the peculiarities of universities on the platform, but that has not been achieved at the moment. The Nigerian university lecturers' union (ASUU) argued that the deployment of IPPIS in Nigerian universities will further localize their operations and perspectives, lowering their international academic rating.

IPPIS is a scam from a technical standpoint. It causes more issues than it purports to solve. Only employees on permanent and pensionable appointments are recognized by the IPPIS system.

The IPPIS limits colleges' capacity to hire critical staff on short notice. When such personnel are hired, they may not be paid until the Office of the Accountant General of the Federation (OAGF) has cleared them, which opens the door to corruption. With the implementation of IPPIS, the dynamics connected with worker recruiting will become onerous.

3. *Promotions and Assessment.* Promotion in the professional cadre that is subject to an external assessment that may last several months; if the outcome is positive, the recipient is paid in arrears from the start of the assessment procedure. However, IPPIS is incapable of capturing this. ASUU President Emmanuel Osodeke stated that academics in the professorial cadre have a retirement age of 70 years, while those in the non-professorial cadre have a retirement age of 65 years, compared to 60 years in the civil service [11]. As a result, it is clear that using a platform specifically designed for civil service employees with a retirement age of 60 years cannot be used in the university system.

**3.4. The impact of the integrated payroll and personnel information system (IPPIS) and industrial unrest in the Nigerian universities.** Since the introduction of IPPIS



and the subsequent opposition by ASUU, there has been no stability in the academic calendar of universities in Nigeria. For instance, ASUU declared an indefinite and comprehensive strike on March 9, 2020, when the salaries of university lecturers were stopped for their refusal to register on the IPPIS platform. The strike, which lasted for nine months, was called off in December 2020. The strike led to a total disruption of the academic calendar for the entire year. Some of the students who were expected to spend three or four years in the university will now spend at least five years or more due to the disruption of the academic calendar in the university system in Nigeria as a result of the incessant strikes by ASUU.

The inability of the government to honour agreements arising from collective bargaining with the university union has been one of the major issues that accounts for the industrial unrest in the academic system in Nigeria. For example, after a series of negotiations between the government and the university union, it was agreed that ASUU would opt for an alternative payment system known as the University Transparency and Accountability Solution (UTAS), a system developed by ASUU, as a replacement for the IPPIS.

After the platform was fully developed by ASUU, the Federal Government team became reluctant to accept it, stating that employees cannot dictate to their employer how their salaries and wages should be paid. After much pressure, the government agreed to subject the platform to an integrity test, which the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) reported it passed with 97.3 percent [13]. The agency, in another report, revised itself to say that UTAS has failed the integrity test, a position that was considered by ASUU to be controversial and unacceptable [14]. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) claims that the National Information Technology and Development Agency (NITDA) misled Nigerians into believing that the Federal Government had rejected the union's University Transparency and Accountability Solution (UTAS) because the payroll software had failed an integrity test. None of the problems that led to the current stand-off have been overcome, according to the academic union, which stated that its members would continue to reject enrollment in the IPPIS [13, 14].

Another contentious issue was a 2009 agreement between the federal government and ASUU, which included, among other things, the revitalization of Nigeria's public universities, improved staff welfare, and university autonomy. IPPIS specifically violates university autonomy by transferring powers from their various governing councils to the office of the Accountant General of the Federation.

Again, the government has been unwilling to implement this agreement because it is not implementable, a position the union has vehemently refuted, citing a lack of political will and poor attention to university education in Nigeria. On February 14, 2022, ASUU embarked on another total and comprehensive strike in Nigeria. The strike was later suspended, but it is unclear whether the union will resume the strike action based on the government's stance of a no work, no pay policy and the constant opposition to it that ASUU members pointed out, as well as the fact that all workload lost will be revered. Academic activities in universities were paralyzed for a long time as a result of the forceful implementation of IPPIS, among other issues. Negotiations between the federal government and all the university unions are still ongoing to resolve the issues.

However, it is argued that the government and ASUU must work together and cooperatively to address the current issues facing the university system. The newly formed committee is mandated to renegotiate in realistic and workable terms the 2009 agreements with other university-based unions; negotiate and recommend any other issue the Committee deems relevant to repositioning the Nigerian University System for global competitiveness; and submit proposed draft agreements within three (3) months from the date of inauguration. Considering that urgent action on the part of the government is required to prevent making matters worse, the committee should work non-stop and finish before the deadline.

The demands of ASUU must be reasonable and feasible in view of Nigeria's economic conditions. Without a doubt, the FGN and States are unable to sustainably fund the ASUU's demand. In order to fund higher education sustainably, the government and universities must develop options. In Nigeria, some state universities already operate on a self-supporting model; this may be a viable strategy. The demand for money from the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) has increased, leading to new investment projects, new fund allocation mechanisms, and new funding objectives [3]. A new model that focuses on the demands and realities of universities today, taking into account their ages and developmental stages, is required. Additionally, a sound project management system that provides the best possible value for money must be developed.

Stakeholders recommended that both parties present workable, strategic answers to the problems brought forth by ASUU. Moreover, there is a shared interest in the expansion of the university system. Due to the ineffectiveness of the administration and the ASUU strike, students should not suffer. ASUU and other unions must be ready to face reality and come up with realistic solutions to address the issues honestly if they want to take advantage of the opportunity to re-establish trust. In the end, everyone will gain from a win-win situation [3].

**3.5. Limitations of research.** The study was carried out through a desk research using only secondary sources of information. However, the research has given an insight in the workability or otherwise of IPPIS and its impact on the university system in Nigeria. The study will serve as a guiding document to resolve the crisis in the Nigeria university system as it relates to IPPIS, though policy makers in the educational sector may be adamant at implementing the recommendations that may not be favourable to the IPPIS. For further research, the key areas of focus should be on primary data using survey instruments to obtain first-hand and more detail information from both the university workers and the government agencies handling the IPPIS.

## 4. Conclusions

Based on the foregoing, the study concluded that IPPIS is not an appropriate platform for the university system in Nigeria based on the fact that the university system cannot be subject to the mainstream civil service rules if it is meant to meet the global best practices of university systems in the world. The platform is also characterised by many irregularities with respect to the remuneration of academic staff, which is counter-productive to the development of university education in Nigeria.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The federal government should show some level of sincerity in the testing of UTAS, the alternative payment platform provided by ASUU to build confidence among disputing members. This will also encourage the development of local content.

2. The government should honour its agreements with ASUU. These agreements were reached through collective bargaining in reference to international labour laws and should be respected.

3. ASUU and the federal government should take a critical look at the two payment platforms, i. e., IPPIS and UTAS with the aim of harmonizing the payment systems.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest in relation to this research, whether financial, personal, authorship or otherwise, that could affect the research and its results presented in this paper.

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✉ **Aondowase Targba**, PhD, Senior Lecturer, Department of Sociology, Federal University Gusau, Gusau, Nigeria, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6831-4407>, e-mail: [aondowasetargba@fugusau.edu.ng](mailto:aondowasetargba@fugusau.edu.ng)

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**Celestina Osuji**, PhD, Senior Lecturer, Department of Educational Foundation, Federal University Gusau, Gusau, Nigeria, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5924-5198>

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✉ *Corresponding author*