Strategic management and academic performance of selected private universities in Southwest, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the impact of strategic management on academic performance of selected private universities in the south-western part of Nigeria. It specifically investigated the influence of (a) university commitment to strategic planning, (b) inclusion of members of staff in strategic planning process; and (c) rewards and incentives during strategic plan implementation on academic performance of Nigerian private universities. The research work adopted a survey design with a well-structured questionnaire. The emerging data were analyzed using an ordinary least square (OLS) regression technique. The study showed that one unit increase in the level of: (a) commitment to strategic planning enhanced the academic performance by 0.235; (b) inclusiveness in strategic plans formulation and the implementation process (INCLS) increased the academic performance by 0.184; also (c) rewards and incentives during strategic plan implementation (IMPL) enhanced academic performance of private universities by 0.748. The study therefore, concluded that strategic management impacted positively on academic performance of private universities in Nigeria. Based on the findings, the study recommends that for Nigerian private universities to obtain an optimum academic performance, they should ensure a continuous improvement in the levels of their commitment to, inclusiveness of, and incentives to strategic formulation and implementation.

Keywords: Strategy, Strategic Management, Academic Performance

Background of the Study

Strategic Management is a notion that has contributed adversely to the success of any given organization. However, for any organizations to thrive well in this modern contemporary age there is need for such organization to embrace strategic management in its fullness. The era of business environment in which we are in presently is such a one that we can refer to as “The Age of Discontinuity” (Drucker, 1969). That is the era in which changes are very rapid due to the effect of globalization, internationalization, increased uncertainty, cutthroat competition, financial crises, digital-based business models, emerging countries and increasing technological advancement. Hence, firms need to respond faster, control costs better, embrace technological changes and be more proactive in its approach to strategic management. (Aremu and Oyinloye, 2014).

Broadly in the business world, strategic management involves seeking a desired alignment between the organizational product and the increasingly changing markets. In the face of a changing market, an organization is faced with various strategic options including continuity in producing the old product for the old market; repackaging the old product for a new
market; developing a new product for the old market; or developing a new product for a new market. These managerial responses might lead to some painful reforms within the organization as a result of expansion, contraction, diversification or divestment. In turn, these internal structural reforms often lead to changes in staffing, skilling and systems (Ansoff, 1970; Schendel, 1978 as cited in Robert and Peter (2012). To alleviate the worries that usually accompany the announcement of a possible internal change in an organization, it has been widely suggested that strategic management should be driven not only by high managerial commitment but it should be participatory or inclusive in nature and the package should incorporate a performance-related rewards and incentive regime to cushion possible adverse effects of internal changes in the process of strategic formulation and implementation. Thus, this study is based on the assumption that if an organization employs the right levels of top-level commitment, staff participation and incentive regime in the process of strategic reforms, organizational performance is likely to improve.

Contrary to what operates in a business enterprise, some researchers argued that the university, due to its nature as a service-oriented entity, requires formulating a strategic management plan which is different from the usual business-oriented strategic plans of the business world (Birinci and Eren, 2013). In relation to this, Luhanga et al. (2003) stated that business-oriented strategic management models show differences in terms of time frame, consensus, value system, customers, conditions and organizational structure when compared to university-based strategic management models. In contrast, Keller (1983); Rowley et al. (1997) in Birinci and Eren, (2013) disclosed that strategic management in the academy was not different from the one in a business enterprise and emphasized the common features such as managerial commitment, introduction of structural, staffing and system reforms as well as staff participation or inclusiveness in formulation and implementation of strategies. An academic plan, as suggested by Anketell as cited in Birinci and Eren (2013) functions primarily for an integrative planning process and then each of the administrative and academic planners can start to make plans in their own fields of responsibility as their planning processes. Thus, the final plan comes out plausibly and with a well-adapted agreement of both administrative and academic staff (Rowley and Sherman, 2004).

Notwithstanding the commonalities between the business plan and the university strategy, there is a marked difference between a university and the business enterprise in respect of performance measurement. University performance cannot be easily determined due to its nature of service as a multi-input and multi-output organization and based on the fact that the traditional measure of performance (return on asset, asset quality, return on investment, return on capital employed, profitability and soon) are partial productivity measures which are not suitable in the context of a university.

Consequently, there is the need to use the key performance indicator or KPI (which is the academic performance in this study) for assessing the university’s corporate performance.

In the Nigerian context, Abdul Kareem and Oyeniran (2011) in Owolabi and Makinde (2012) suggested the following parameters for measuring performances in Nigerian universities – the input indicator or the number of students, the teaching indicators (graduation or number of recipients of bachelor, master and doctoral granted by the university, teaching load of teachers), research outputs (number of publications i.e. books, book chapters, journal articles, conference papers and other scholarly articles, quality of research publication, total grant received), community service (social assistance, scientific meetings, consultant activities, seminars and symposia for the local communities, and technical services rendered). The study used teaching indicators to measure the performance of the selected universities. Although one of the mandates of every university is the community service, it is a well-known fact that this aspect is still intractable to objective measurement and inclusion in reward system in Nigerian universities. For instance, teaching is rewarded through payments of salaries while research is rewarded through promotion; but the reward of consultancy often comes from outside the university making it a subjective measure. Thus, being an ‘elusive’ variable, this study has therefore, excluded community service in measuring university corporate performance. It has become obvious that lack of measurability is no longer acceptable for exclusion of any aspect of a university mandates in performance measurement. To this end, the global ranking has started to build into its methodology measurable indicators of research such as volume, income, reputation and citations per scholar. In Nigeria, the emphasis in this aspect is still on research volume, making it doubtful for a study of this nature to include a grossly underestimated measure of corporate performance using research volume as a surrogate of research. Thus, this study has used teaching performance as logically measured by the academic performance of students since it is generally believed that teaching is expected to translate to learning outcomes exemplified by student performances.

Strategic management can help universities to clearly define the purpose of the institution in a mission statement, provide a framework for decision making throughout the institution, reveal and clarify future opportunities and threats, provide a basis for measuring performance and increase productivity from increased efficiency and effectiveness (Uvah, 2005). Moreover, inadequacy of strategic plan as regards all aspect of university community is mainly responsible for the
challenges such as distorted academic calendar, industrial disputes, inadequate water supply, decayed facilities-hostel accommodation, laboratories, classrooms facilities, unhealthy rivalry among staff, shortage of qualified teachers, challenges of accreditation, deteriorating quality of graduates faced the tertiary education in Nigeria which in turn leads to poor academic performance (Owolabi and Makinde, 2012). Based on this logic, this study investigated the influence of strategic-plan formulation and implementation on the academic performance of private universities in Nigeria.

Statement of problem

Organizations, either private or public, are increasingly embracing the practice of strategic management in anticipation that this would translate to improved performance. However, challenges facing the effective strategic management are the implementation of the strategy relating to the unpredictable nature of policy agendas, shifting attention of some actors involved in the strategic management, lack of commitment to strategic management, lack of rewards and incentives during and after the implementation of strategic management practices, constraints in funding and partnership management etc. (Ongonge, 2013; Babalola, 2008, 2009; Aremu, 2010 and Danso, 2005). However, the degree of these stated limitations to effective implementation of strategic management practices is of greater concern to any given tertiary institution that desire to achieve an optimum academic performance and hence the ability of any given tertiary institution especially the private institutions to be able to effectively cope with and minimize these limitations in the internal and external environments as they present themselves and still achieve the expected levels of performance is the big challenge. This therefore becomes the entry point for strategic management in every tertiary institutions and hence, the issue underlying this study. The objective of this study is to critically examine the impact of strategic management on academic performance of some selected private universities in Nigeria

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this research work is to examine the impact of strategic management on academic performance of private universities in Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

i. investigate the influence of commitment to strategic management on academic performance;

ii. determine the impact of inclusion of members of staff in strategic management process on academic performance;

iii. examine the influence of rewards and incentive on performance of private universities

iv. proffer useful recommendations that policy makers in the tertiary education sub-sector will find beneficial when implemented

Research Questions

Based on the above, the following questions were raised to pilot the study:

i. To what extent does the level of commitment to strategic management impact academic performance in private universities in Nigeria?

ii. Does inclusion of members of staff in strategic management process impact academic performance?

iii. To what extent do reward and incentives during strategic formulation and implementation influence academic performance of private university?

v. What useful recommendations will this study provide the policy makers in the tertiary education sub-sector?

Research Hypotheses

In other to proffer answers to the stated research questions and to achieve the objectives of the study the following hypotheses stated in null form ($H_0$) were tested.

$H_0$ Commitment to strategic management does not influence academic performance.

$H_0$ Inclusion of members of staff in strategic management process does not impact academic performance.

$H_0$ there is no relationship between rewards and incentives in the process of strategic plans implementation and performance and academic performance of private universities.

Scope of the study

The study mainly focused on the management and academic staff of some selected Nigerian Private Universities accredited by National University Commission (NUC) that has since existed for up to 10 years and situated in the southwest zone of Nigeria, namely: Babcock, Bells, Crawford, Covenant and CETEP University.

Operationalization of research variables

For this study, the operationalized function is as follows
Y=f (X)
When Y= the dependent variable i.e. Optimum Academic Performance (OAP)
X = the independent variable i.e. Effective Strategic Management (ESM)
Hence, OAP = f (ESM)

While X 1, X 2, ..., X n  are the independent sub-variables
X 1 = Compensation Plans (COMMP)
X 2 = Inclusive Planning (INCLS)
X 3 = Commitments of stakeholders (IMPL)
X n = other dependent variables

Hence,

OAP = f (COMMP, INCLS, IMPL)

Conceptual Framework

Strategic management

In the 1980s, strategic planning started to be replaced by 'strategic management' - a more refined form that incorporates the strategic planning function, but extends it much further. The difference between strategic planning and strategic management is that the former is focused on making optimal strategy decisions, while the latter is focused on producing strategic results: new markets, new products and/or new technologies.

Strategic management, therefore, is more comprehensive and rather than merely drawing up a plan, it aims at integrating planning with all the other parts of the organization. In fact, Hax and Majluf (1984) argue that: Strategic management has, as an ultimate objective, the development of corporate values, managerial capabilities, organizational responsibilities, and administrative systems which link strategic and operational decision-making, at all hierarchical levels, and across all businesses and functional lines of authority in a firm. Institutions which have reached this stage of management development have eliminated the conflicts between long-term development and short-term profitability. Strategies and operations are not in conflict with one another, but they are inherently coupled defining the managerial tasks at each level in the organization. This form of conducting a firm is deeply anchored in managerial style, beliefs, values, ethics, and accepted forms of behavior in the organization, which make strategic thinking congruent with the organization culture.

Conceptually, therefore, strategic management aims to extend the strategic vision throughout all units of the organization, encompassing every administrative system. Instead of being mechanistic, it recognizes the central role played by individuals and groups and the influence of corporate culture. (Toft, 1989:6-7). Furthermore, strategic management also aims to integrate the planning function with the overall management task. Strategic planning involves analyzing the environment for opportunities or threats, and formulating strategic plans to exploit these opportunities or cope with threats. Strategic management includes these two aspects of strategic planning and extends strategy development to include strategy implementation and strategy control.

Eadie (1989) notes that strategic management includes the following: 1) An action orientation - an action orientation is to make sure that any document has built-in processes of implementation, including detailed action plans, schedules, accountabilities, and specified costs; 2) recognizes the importance of design - design involves matching desired outcomes with the processes to achieve them so that what an organization accomplishes through the strategic management process and how quickly these accomplishments are to be achieved are obviously tied to its capability, including human and financial resources; and 3) Recognizes the importance of the human factor - management takes place within a human setting. Therefore, every member of the organization should be brought on board for the organization to achieve its goals and objectives.

Viewed from a university perspective, university managers, and, indeed, the Vice Chancellor, play a crucial role in strategic management. In fact, the functions of the university administrators include achieving the institution's goals and objectives, developing programmes, establishing and coordinating the organization, managing resources, making representation to community groups, and appraising both the processes and the outcomes (Campbell et al., 1983).

Strategy and strategic planning

Strategy is viewed from different perspectives and angles. The perspectives vary from individual authors to organizations and as a result of this there is no generally accepted uniform definition of the concept. Nevertheless, it will be discussed holistically, strategy is a grand plan that originated from the military in which arrangement is made in combat, such that adversary might not take them by surprise. Similarly, in the context of this research work, the administrator is at combat because he or she has to formulate and implement strategy with the effective utilization of resources to meet core educational objectives. Nnamani et al. (2015) conceptualized that it is a concept used to denote the adoption of general program of actions and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out these goals. It is a unified, comprehensive and integrated plan designed to ensure that the basic objectives of the organization is achieved. Chandler (1962) as cited in Nnamani et al. (2015) is the determination of basic long term goals and objectives of
an enterprise and the adoption of course of action and allocation of resources necessary to carry out these goals, from the foregoing strategy can be viewed as rational planning aimed at adequate allocation of organizational resources (technology, people, and finances) for the purpose of achieving organizational objectives in a competitive environment.

Drucker (1954) as cited in Robert and Peter (2012) opined that strategic planning is management by plans, an analytical process and is focused in making optimal strategic decisions. Strategic planning is the process of seeking a better match between an organization’s output and its increasingly changing market and an evolution of managerial response to environmental change in a focus moving from internal structure and production efficiency, to the integration of strategy and structure and production innovation, multinational expansion and diversification (Ansoff, 1970; Schendel, 1978 as cited in Robert and Peter, 2012). strategic planning is the process of selecting organizational goals and strategies, determining the necessary programs to achieve specific objectives and goals, and establishing the methods necessary to ensure that the policies and programs are implemented (Robert and Peter, 2012).

Universities performance

Performance of universities cannot be easily determined due to its nature of service as a multi-input and multi-output organization and based on the fact that usual measure of performance (return on asset, asset quality, return on investment, return on capital employed, profitability and so on) are partial productivity measures which are not suitable in context of universities, hence the need for the KPI method of assessing performance (which is the academic performance in this study). In Nigerian Context, Abdulkareem and Oyeniran (2011) in Owolabi and Makinde (2012) suggested the following parameters for measuring performances in Nigerian universities - Number of Students, the teaching indicators (graduation number of recipients of bachelor, master and doctoral granted by the university, teaching load of teachers), research outputs (number of publications i.e. books, book chapters, journal articles, conference papers and other scholarly articles, quality of research publication, total grant received), community service/social assistance, scientific meetings, consultant activities, seminars and symposia for the local communities, technical services rendered. This study has used teaching performance as logically measured by the academic performance of students.

Academic performance

Academic performance is the dependent variable of this study and it is of different definitions. Academic performance at university level is considered up to the mark if the student has persistently maintained his GPA. Academic performance is a multidimensional construct consisting of three dimensions: student’s characteristics, teacher/lecturer’s competencies and academic environment. The student’s characteristics dimension of the academic performance concerns how students deal with their studies and how they cope with or accomplish different tasks given to them by their teachers help define the extent of performance (Loo and Choy, 2013). The determinants of this dimension are student’s intelligence, personality and the socio economic status. Within the academic context, for example, student’s ability to study and remember facts and being able to communicate their knowledge verbally or down on paper enhances academic performance. Teacher’s competencies dimension of academic performance, on the other hand, concerns how well teachers can impart knowledge on students. Accurately measuring academic performance is a vital component in planning for student’s education. Measuring performance determines how well students have achieved desired educational goals. It is commonly measured by examinations or continuous assessment (Quenemoen et al., 2003).

However, the number of non-human elements in the academic environment and their functionality help define the academic performance of students. Within the academic environment, for example, the amount and quality of facilities such as library, laboratory, suitable classrooms, social media, decent hostels and other teaching aids could enhance or suppress academic performance

Link between strategic management and corporate performance

It is conceptualized that firms that have effectively embraced strategic planning record better performance as compared to those that have not. To this end, Hofer and Schendel (1978), argue that a firm records improved performance once it effectively embraces strategic planning. Nevertheless, effect strategic planning requires that an organization carries out the various steps in the strategic planning process to facilitate the realization of organizational effectiveness. By defining a company’s purpose and goals, strategic planning provides direction to the organization and enhances coordination and control of organization activities. Howe (1988) and Kotter (1996) argue that the primary goal of strategic planning is to guide the organization in setting out its strategic intent and priorities and refocus itself towards realizing the same.

Porter (1980) and Kotter (1996) note that the identification of strategic issues, carrying out a strategy analysis and making strategic selection facilitate the
achievement of efficient allocation of resources, sustainable competitive advantage, and improved innovation. It is also perceived that the development of implementation programme, evaluation and control systems facilitates smooth execution and implementation of the planned tasks.

**Theoretical foundations**

Strategic management is the process and approach of specifying an organization’s objectives, developing policies and plans to achieve and attain these objectives, and allocating resources so as to implement the policies and plans. In other words, strategic management can be seen as a combination of strategy formulation, implementation and evaluation (David, 2005; Haim, 2005; Mohd, 2005; Zainal, 2005).

Following David (2005); Mohd (2005), among the common strategic management theories noted and applicable are the profit-maximizing and competition-based theory, the resource-based theory, the survival-based theory, the human resource-based theory, the agency theory and the contingency theory.

The profit-maximizing and competition-based theory, which was based on the notion that business organization main objective is to maximize long term profit and developing sustainable competitive advantage over competitive rivals in the external market place. The industrial-organization (I/O) perspective is the basis of this theory as it views the organization external market positioning as the critical factor for attaining and sustaining competitive advantage, or in other words, the traditional I/O perspective offered strategic management a systematic model for assessing competition within an industry (Porter, 1981). On the other hand, the resource-based theory which stems from the principle that the source of firms competitive advantage lies in their internal resources, as opposed to their positioning in the external environment. That is rather than simply evaluating environmental opportunities and threats in conducting business, competitive advantage depends on the unique resources and capabilities that a firm possesses (Barney, 1995). The resource-based view of the firm predicts that certain types of resources owned and controlled by firms have the potential and promise to generate competitive advantage and eventually superior firm performance (Ainuddin et al., 2007).

However, the survival-based theory centers on the concept that organization need to continuously adapt to its competitive environment in order to survive. This differs to the human resource-based theory, which emphasizes the importance of the human element in the strategy development of organizations. In addition, the agency theory stresses the underlying important relationship between the shareholders or owners and the agents or managers in ensuring the success of the organizations. Finally, the contingency theory draws the idea that there is no one or single best way or approach to manage organizations. Organizations should then develop managerial strategy based on the situation and condition they are experiencing. In short, during the process of strategy formulation, implementation and evaluation, these main strategic management theories will be applicable to management of organization as tools to assist them in making strategic and guided managerial decision.

Therefore, in this paper, besides the systems perspective, contingency approach and the other main strategic management theories mentioned above, the resource-based theory or view (RBV) of the firm’s competitive advantage in particular will be the underlying theoretical foundation applied and fundamental basis of the variables and their ensuing relationships that are being studied. This is because this paper will focus especially on the internal attributes (i.e. compensation plan for those involved, inclusive planning and commitment level of stakeholders) of the organization towards attaining competitive advantage. Hence, this justifies the adoption of the RBV as the main research tenet. Figure 1.

**Empirical Review**

Studies have focused on the relationship between various stages of strategic management and performance in general terms in various countries and Nigeria is not barring. The results varied from one study to another. Nnamani, (2015) disclosed that a well-conceived and formulated strategy matched with appropriate structure increases productivity in the organization and secondly, that behavioral and systematic resistance to strategic changes renders formulation ineffective. Robert and Peter (2012) indicated that there is existence of a strong relationship between strategic planning and firm performance. The relationship between employee commitment and workers’ performance has been studied under various disguise. Khan, (2010) investigated the impact of employee commitment (Affective commitment, Continuance commitment and Normative commitment) on employee job performance from a sample of 153 public and private and public sector employees of oil and gas sector in Pakistan. The results revealed a positive relationship between employee commitment and employees’ job performance. Therefore, job performance emerged as a determinant of employee commitment. Thus, Khan, (2010) advised managers to pay special attention to antecedents of employee commitment and all the factors which foster employee commitment so as to increased employee performance and subsequently.
increase organizational productivity.

On the other hand, scholars have laid the groundwork for longitudinal studies by offering tools that could more accurately examine the effectiveness of inclusion on performance (Doran, 2003; Hogan-Burke et al., 2002; Selander, 2000); Palsha and Wesley (1998) explored improving the inclusive learning environment which will on the long run help to improve academic performance. Boudah et al. (1997); Tapasak and Walther-Thomas (1999); McDonnell et al. (2003) examined the impact of inclusion on self-perception and social interaction. Weiner (2003); McDonnell et al. (2003) positions were that academic scores would increase with the implementation of inclusion practices. Weiner (2003) suggested that teachers were morally obligated to commit academic achievement to all students if included in the planning process.

On the influence of compensation package on academic performance, Osinbanjo et al. (2014) found out that there is strong correlation between compensation packages (salary, bonus, incentives, allowances, and fringe benefits) and employee’s performance and retention in relation to university, Owolabi and Makinde (2012) revealed that there is a significant positive correlation between strategic planning and corporate performance in Nigeria. In a study conducted outside Nigeria, Jackline and John (2014) found out that school managers used various strategies to improve students' academic performance in Kenya. Birinci and Eren (2013) concluded that universities in Turkey did not pay enough attention to the competitive conditions and use strategic management practice adequately. Pamphil et al. (2014) revealed that there was a weak positive correlation between strategic management and excellent performance in Kenya. Kinyanjui and Juma (2014) discovered that strategic financial allocation, strategic expansion, strategic collaboration and strategic alliances respectively influenced the performance of public universities in Kenya.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

The study adopted the survey strategy as its research design based on the fact that it has the ability to view comprehensively the question raised in the study which is in accordance with Denscombe (2003) and consonance with the study of Birinci and Eren (2013); Owolabi and Makinde (2012); Jackline and John (2014). The population of the study comprised the management and academic staff of private universities in Nigeria. The sample size of the study comprised some selected management and academic staff of the following universities: Babcock, Bells, Crawford, Covenant and CETEP University. This was selected due to the fact that these universities are privately owned in Nigeria, accredited by National University Commission (NUC), existed for up to 10 years which is enough to implement various formulated strategic plans and situated in the southwest zone of Nigeria. The purposive sampling technique was employed in this study and sample size of three hundred (300) respondents was randomly sampled such that 60 respondents comprising 4 members of management and 56 members of the academic staff were selected from each of the 5 universities. A well-structured questionnaire was designed to capture personnel perspective with respect to the research questions in order to achieve the objectives and testing of the research hypothesis. A Closed ended and four point Likert scale (With Strongly Agreed (SA-4), Agreed (A-3), Strongly Disagreed (SD-2) and Disagreed (D-1). The responses were coded and later analyzed with the use of regression analysis.
Table 1. Regression Model Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>F. change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>9.980</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Predictors: COMMP, INCLS and IMPL
b Dependent Variable OAP

Table 2. ANOVA Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Regression</td>
<td>30.735</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.245</td>
<td>9.980</td>
<td>.000(a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>427.977</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>1.441</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>458.712</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Summary of Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>1.251</td>
<td>0.704</td>
<td>.247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>COMMP</td>
<td>0.235</td>
<td>0.157</td>
<td>.262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>INCLS</td>
<td>0.184</td>
<td>0.209</td>
<td>.085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IMPL</td>
<td>0.0748</td>
<td>0.132</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable OAP

PRESENTATION OF RESULT

Table 1 shows the regression of the ordinary least square results conducted on the specified model with statistical package for social science (SPSS). The OLS results reveal the relationship that exists between the dependent variable (OAP) and each of the independent variable (COMMP, INCLS, IMPL).

From table 2, the relationship between the dependent variable, Optimum Academic Performance (OAP), and the independent variables which are; Commitment to Strategic Planning (COMMP), Inclusive Planning (INCLS) and Implementation of Strategic Plans (IMPL) can be expressed mathematically as in:

\[ \text{ACAP} = 1.251 + 0.235 \text{COMMP} + 0.184 \text{INCLS} + 0.0748 \text{IMPL} + \beta \]  \hspace{1cm} (4)

Interpretation of result

From the result on table 2 it is inferred that if all the explanatory variables are held constant, the endogenous variable showed a direct relationship with the dependent variable at a coefficient of 1.251. In the same vein, commitment to planning process, which includes stakeholders understanding of institutional policies, goals and objectives and the practical efforts of the stakeholders towards effective implementation of the strategic plan determines the academic performance by 23.5 percent. Also, Inclusiveness in strategic plans formulation and implementation process (INCLS) showed a positive regression of 0.184 on the performance of private universities. This means a unit increase in any of the variables: Inclusion of professionals, highly qualified lecturers, Managerial Behavior, will influence the academic achievement of the private universities by 18 percent. This is in support of Keller (1983); Rowley et al. (1997) in Birinci and Eren, (2013) which stated vividly that strategic planning in the academy was not different from the one in a business enterprise and emphasized the need for participation by all and sundry. The use of rewards and incentives during implementation, environmental conduciveness and the rate of resources allocation to the implementation of strategic plans determine academic performance (IMPL) improves the image of private universities by 7.48 percent.

CONCLUSION

The research work as so far examined the impact of strategic plans formulation and implementation process on academic performance of private universities in Nigeria and based on the analysis and discussion above the study concisely conclude that strategic plans formulation and implementation process impacted positively on academic performance of private universities in Nigeria. Thus, towards improved academic performance of the private there should be a continuous improvement in the levels of their commitment to, stakeholder’s inclusiveness in, and incentives to strategic planning and implementation.
Policy Recommendations

In this study, it has been established that effective strategic management indeed has a positive impact on academic performance of private universities in Nigeria. Although formal planning only will not bring about better performance, but when this plan is effectively implemented, performance is inevitable. Strategic management practices in tertiary institutions is vital for ensuring continued good academic performance and only those organizations that practice some form of strategic planning will survive. Running a successful university is a challenge considering economic situation in the country and the general economic meltdown. University authorities in their quest to maintain standard and meet the expectations of their constituencies need to devise new and improved ways of running their activities in order to stay on course and provide a relief to the university educational industry in the country. By adopting strategic planning as a tool for improvement, universities would have chosen a path that will bring progress.

To this end thereafter the study recommended that;

1. The University should not waver in its resolve to entrench strategic planning as a means to sustainable management reform in its operations. The result of this study revealed that the university is also a part of the global economy and is not exempted from what is happening and therefore should not feel it is not important to embark on strategic planning process

2. The government should provide a friendly environment for the educational sector and for corporate organizations in Nigeria. Autonomy should be encouraged so that Federal, State as well as private higher institutions can formulate and implement strategies without undue interference in order to ensure greater performance.

3. It was established that the extent of commitment to strategic management practices, the categories of workers involved and the ways and manner at which involvement is rewarded are variables that affect the achievement of optimum academic performance at the universities and this process should not be ignored by the management of various institutions at the point of strategic formulation and implementation.

4. Any organization that desires high output performance (financially and non-financial wise) should endeavor to embrace the principles of strategic planning which is embedded in strategic management.

5. The strategic plans should not be too many or cumbersome for implementing; rather, it should be realistic, simple to understand and to act upon. Employees should be made accountable for various aspects of the plan assigned to them. There should be a standard or benchmark for tracking the progress of the plan as it is being implemented. Resources needed for implementing the strategies should be made available at the right time, to the right people in the right quantity and quality. There should be mechanism for feedback to ensure that actual output is not deviating from the planned output. Feedback mechanism is a very important aspect of strategic management that should not be neglected.

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