

## ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF RATING OF ADEQUACY OF FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN YOBE STATE

ANIOKE PEGGY ONYEFURUCHI

Office Technology and Management,  
The Federal Polytechnic, Damaturu, Yobe State, Nigeria

### Abstract

The need to ascertain the adequacy of facilities provided in the offices of administrative staff of tertiary institutions prompted this study. The study ascertained the administrative staff rating of the adequacy of furniture and equipment of tertiary institutions in Yobe State. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The design of the study was descriptive survey. Population of the study was 1,032 administrative staff of federal and state tertiary institutions in the study area. A proportionate sampling was used to select a sample size of 310 administrative staff. A structured questionnaire containing 14 items validated by three experts was used for data collection. Cronbach alpha method was used to establish the internal consistency of the instrument. Correlation coefficients of 0.82 and 0.92 for six clusters (B1 and B2) with an overall coefficient of 0.87 were obtained. Two hundred and ninety eight duly completed copies of the instrument were retrieved and used for data analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions and to determine the homogeneity of the respondents' ratings while the t-test was used to test the hypotheses. Findings revealed that administrative staff of tertiary institutions in Yobe State rated furniture and equipment provided in their offices as lowly adequate. The findings also showed that ownership of tertiary institution was not a significant factor on the mean ratings of administrative staff on the adequacy of furniture while ownership of tertiary institution significantly influenced their mean ratings on the adequacy of equipment provided in their offices. Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that there is need to improve the provision of furniture and equipment in tertiary institutions in Yobe State. It was recommended among others that, the Federal and State governments should increase the funding of federal and state tertiary institutions to improve furniture and equipment in the tertiary institutions.

**Key Words: Administrator, Adequacy, Furniture and Equipment**

## Introduction

The furniture is very vital to workers in any form of organization all over the world including tertiary educational institutions. This is why professionals and educationists continue to clamour for the need to provide employees with quality furniture if optimum performance is to be achieved in their numerous tasks. Furniture is a part of the physical work condition which is a branch of office education that teaches students the importance of conducive physical work condition in office layout.

Office education is a vocational education programme that prepares recipients for office careers through initial, refresher and upgrading education leading to employability and advancement in office occupation. Office education is a branch of business education taught at different levels of education that assists individuals to acquire skills which they can apply to solve problems in business and office occupations. Business education according to Okoro (2015), is a programme of which involves teaching students the fundamentals, theories and processes of business. Education at this stage occurs at several levels including secondary education and higher education with the greatest activity occurring in the higher education.

Every tertiary institution that wishes to get the best out of its employees therefore, must do all in its power to ensure that the employees' places of work are safe and provided with appropriate work tools and furniture. All these are geared towards employee effectiveness and avoiding a situation where employees would be compelled to absent themselves from work due to unsatisfactory working conditions. Good physical work conditions in tertiary institutions ensure the wellbeing of employees which enables them exert themselves to their roles with all forces that may translate to higher productivity (Akinyele, 2010). Providing good physical work conditions does no harm to the administrative staff and every other employee is an obligation and a general duty for every institution.

According to the Offices Act as cited in Agbo, Ishiaku and Anikene (2007), the presence of good furniture and equipment would make the office an ideal place to work in. The contentment of the employees is achieved not only by providing for their physical comfort but also by doing everything possible to ensure that they are satisfied. The provision of furniture and equipment has a positive and strong force on the worker's morale, interests and above all productivity, which is the prime motive of any viable tertiary institution. Quality furniture and equipment is capable of making a big difference to the workplace dynamism, individual service, well being, and job satisfaction. Quality furniture and equipment can also help to improve not only the quality of employees' interactions with one another but also their level of happiness. Therefore the periodic assessment of the furniture and equipment by employer is a duty they owe to their employees so that appropriate intervention measures can be put in place as the need arises.

It is on this understanding that Haynes (2008) pointed out that the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the Health and Safety Regulation 1992, the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and Occupational Health and Safety Administrators (OSHA), among others have developed frameworks, regulations, policies and guidelines to protect workers' health in their work environment. However, it is important to note that despite all these legislations, frameworks and regulations, furniture and equipment improvement in the work place is not very significant in offices in tertiary institutions especially in Nigeria. As laudable as the attempt to establish the Occupational Safety and Health bill of 2012 by Nigeria government, lack of improvement on furniture and equipment could be probably due to non-compliance or the ineffective implementation of the provisions of the legislations to the latter.

Furniture is often the part of an office design that creates the biggest impact on employees. The colour, design and materials can communicate the essence of a brand leaving a lasting impression on employees and visitors. Modern and attractive furniture affect the volume and efficiency of work and also boost the morale of employees (Akpala, 2001). Office furniture is necessary for the efficient performance of services. A look at most offices especially in some of the establishments in Nigeria show that office furnishing a major area that has been treated with utter disdain. Ile and Ndinechi (1993) stated that aesthetic furniture is one aspect of physical work environment that appeals to workers differently. How comfortable the table and chairs given to an office workers is dependent largely on the worker's status in the tertiary institution. As a status symbol, top administrators prefer and desire executive tables and revolving chairs while the junior staff is made to contend with wooden desks and chairs. Ile and Ndinechi stated that in most cases, the juniors (may be for moral reasons) refuse to sit behind executive tables and/or using chairs.

Furniture such as standing desks, sit-stand workstations, comfy sofas, bean bags can affect the volume and efficiency of work and also boost the morale of employees (Akpala, 2001). Office equipment include: fan, air conditions, refrigerator, computers photocopier which can enhance the productivity of employees. Koroye (2016) found that aesthetic beauty of the school and infrastructural facilities significantly influence students' academic performance. Koroye also found that there was a significant influence of school equipment and instructional materials and school location on students' academic performance. Issah, Abdul-Razak, and Wuptiga (2016) in their study discovered a significant relationship of variable for status of school facilities and teacher academic stress sources, and that status of school facilities influence teacher job stress significantly. Umar and Ma'aji (2010) revealed that administrators, teachers, and workshop personnel shared similar views on inadequacy of facilities in Technical College workshops. Ubulom and Enyekit (2017) noted that the school plants in business education departments fall below the required minimum academic standards level of the programme. Furthermore, Onyesom and Okolocha (2013)

revealed that lecturers and physical facilities available for business education programmes are adequate in some of the colleges and not adequate in others. Equipment and supplies in the typing laboratories, shorthand studios and model offices were found to be grossly inadequate in all the colleges studied.

A cursory look at most office environment in tertiary institutions in Nigeria reveals that they seem to lack adequate office furniture and equipment. In addition, furniture and equipment its related issues are significantly neglected. Akinyele (2010) stated that employers pay less attention to office furniture and assisting facilities. The situation is that employees cannot even complain about their plight. Fabiyi and Uzoka (2013) regretted that in Nigerian tertiary institutions, there are poor furniture and equipment which does not encourage staff productivity. Specifically, Fabiyi and Uzoka stated that offices found in tertiary institutions do not have fans, air conditioners, computers and work spaces. The authors regretted that there are no chairs, tables and sofas which affect the performances of university staff. The resultant effects of these situations are incidents of sabotage and retaliation by employees against the institution, absenteeism and employee turnover (Leblebici, 2012).

In tertiary institutions, the duties of the administrative staff apart from managing and distributing information within the institution includes keeping records of students admission, registrations, examination results issuance, manning of data base equipment. The importance of adequate furniture and equipment in tertiary institutions of learning cannot be over-emphasized. Furniture and equipment, equipment constitute strategic factors in tertiary institution's functioning and determine to a very large extent their smooth functioning (Owoeye & Yara, 2011). Furthermore, ownership of institution may influence administrative staff rating of adequacy of furniture and equipment in tertiary institutions. Tertiary institutions in Nigeria can be federal owned or state owned. Federal owned institutions are those managed and funded by Federal government while state ones are managed and funded by state government. It could be that administrative staff in both Federal and State tertiary institutions has different views about the adequacy of furniture and equipment in their institutions. This could be as a result of furniture and equipment being more adequate in Federal owned institutions as compared to state owned due to better funding and infrastructures on ground.

When furniture and equipment are adequate, it can promote effective job performance of administrative staff of tertiary institutions while their inadequacy and/or unavailability may negatively affect their job performance. However, the furniture and equipment of administrative staff in the tertiary institutions in the Yobe State seems not to be adequate for the staff performance of their duties. Therefore, the objectives of this study was carried out to determine as rated by administrative staff (1) adequacy of furniture provided in offices of tertiary institutions in Yobe State, (2) adequacy of furniture provided in offices of tertiary institutions in Yobe State Nigeria.

## **Statement of the Problem**

The health and safety of administrative staff are essential in the achievement of set goals of tertiary institutions. In the offices where the administrative staff performs their works, furniture and equipment available and their location are recognized to be the main physical elements which directly relate to staff morale and willingness to discharge their duties effectively and efficiently. Despite the identified benefits of furniture and equipment, it appears that they are not adequate in tertiary institutions for administrative staff. This could be as a result of the existence of bad furniture, and obsolete technology. Inadequacy of furniture and equipment in tertiary institutions offices makes it difficult for workers to perform optimally in their offices and leads to absenteeism, sickness, low morale, high staff turnover, low productivity and inability of the tertiary institutions to attain their set goals and objectives. Therefore, this study sought to determine through the rating of administrative staff in tertiary institution in Yobe State, the adequacy of office furniture and equipment that are provided for administrative staff with a view to recommend appropriate intervention measures.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How adequate is furniture provided in offices of tertiary institutions in Yobe State?
2. How adequate is equipment provided in offices of tertiary institutions in Yobe State?

## **Null Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0;05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of federal and state administrative staff on the adequacy of furniture provided in their offices in tertiary institutions in Yobe State.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of federal and state administrative staff on the adequacy of equipment provided in their offices in tertiary institutions in Yobe State.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **Adequacy of Furniture/equipment provided in the Offices of Tertiary Institutions**

Furniture is often the part of an office design that creates the biggest impact on employees. The colour, design and materials can communicate the essence of a brand leaving a lasting impression on employees and visitors. The type of furniture not only reflects the style of a business organization, but can also offer a variety of work settings for employees (Dooley, 2017). Dooley further stated that the furniture can play a role in alleviating employees' health concerns. A footstool can allow an employee to create the right angle for the legs, and adjustable stands for the computer monitor can ensure that the head and neck do not tilt

downwards when working. According to Alan (2009), companies have been working for years to encourage employees to sit with perfect posture. Furniture companies have also responded with standing desks, sit-stand workstations and even treadmill options. Some of these are aesthetically encouraging but for many companies the cost of implementing such furniture, particularly on a wide scale, is prohibitive. Comfy sofas, benches, stools or even bean bags are increasing in popularity as alternatives to the posture-conscious desk.

Modern and attractive furniture affect the volume and efficiency of work and also boost the morale of employees (Akpala, 2001). Office furniture is necessary for the efficient performance of services. A look at most offices especially in some of the establishments in Nigeria shows that office furnishing is one major area that has been treated with utter disdain. Ile and Ndinechi (1993) stated that aesthetic furniture is one aspect of physical work environment that appeals to workers differently. How comfortable the table and chairs given to an office workers is dependent largely on the worker's status in the organization. Gyekye (2006) opined that while ergonomic environment is important in increasing employee productivity, adjustable office furniture, such as desks and chairs, which can support employees in generating their work is recommended, to allow the work comfortably throughout the days. Moran (2010) stated that whether an organization is equipping its first office or just re-stocking its current one, the organization needs furniture to help its business run more smoothly. These office furniture include desk, comfortable chair, file cabinets, overhead and work lighting, client seating, fireproof safe, desktop and pocket calculators, bookcases, postage meter, worktable(s) and office decorations. The organizations should ensure that the office furniture is of the right colours, fabrics and style (Gyekye, 2006). O'Neil (2011) pointed out that aesthetic furniture tends to be used for long periods in performing work efficiently. It plays an important role in keeping good people on the job and in controlling costs. Suitable aesthetic furniture influences morale favourably and facilitates the work to be done by encouraging the physical exertion required and facilitating speed on the necessary operations.

### **Methodology**

The design adopted for this study was the descriptive survey design. The population for this study consisted of 1,032 (564 federal and 486 state) administrative staff of tertiary institutions in Yobe State. A sample size of 310 administrative staff of tertiary institutions was selected for this study using 30% of the population in each tertiary institution covered. The instrument for data collection was a 14-item structured questionnaire titled "Adequacy of Furniture and Equipment in Tertiary Institutions (AFETI). The instrument was structured on a five point rating scale of Highly Adequate – 4, Adequate - 3, Lowly Adequate – 2, and Not Adequate – 1.



The face validity of the instrument was ascertained using the opinions of two experts in Business (office) Education and one in Measurement and Evaluation in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the instrument was established through trial-testing and data collected were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha which yielded correlation values 0.82 and 0.92 for clusters B<sub>1</sub> to B<sub>2</sub> respectively with an overall reliability index of 0.87 obtained. The researcher and four research assistants distributed copies of the questionnaire to the administrative staff in the study area in their offices. Out of 310 copies of the questionnaire administered, 298 were correctly filled and returned giving a percentage return rate of 82.8. Mean scores and standard deviation were used to analyze data relating to the two research questions and to determine the homogeneity of the respondents' ratings while the t-test was used to test the hypotheses. A null hypothesis was accepted where the p-value is equal to or greater than the 0.05 alpha level; otherwise, the null hypothesis was rejected. The analysis was carried out using SPSS version 23.0.

## Results

### Research Question 1

How adequate is furniture provided in offices of tertiary institutions in Yobe State?

**Table 1: Mean ratings and standard deviation on adequacy of furniture provided in offices in tertiary institutions in Yobe State** N = 298

S/N	Office Furniture	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
1.	Comfortable chairs and tables	2.91	.82	Adequate
2.	Adjustable stands for computer monitor	2.57	.93	Adequate
3.	Footstool for creating the right angle for the legs	2.30	.89	Lowly Adequate
4.	Book cases	2.41	.89	Lowly Adequate
5.	File cabinets	2.71	.89	Adequate
6.	Visitors seats	2.64	.91	Adequate
7.	Standing desks and sit-stand workstations	2.41	.93	Lowly Adequate
8.	Drop desk, typist desk, convertible desk	2.37	.90	Lowly Adequate
9.	Demonstration stand	2.00	.87	Lowly Adequate
<b>Cluster Mean</b>		<b>2.48</b>		<b>Lowly Adequate</b>

The item by item analysis in Table 1 shows that Items 1, 2, 5 and 6 with mean scores ranging from 2.57 to 2.91 indicate that furniture provided in offices in tertiary institutions in Yobe State are adequate. Items 3, 4, 7, 8 and 9 are rated lowly adequate. The cluster mean score of 2.48 reveals that on the whole, furniture provided in offices of tertiary institutions in Yobe State are lowly adequate. There is homogeneity among responses indicating a greater consensus of opinion.

### Research Question 2

How adequate is equipment provided in offices of tertiary institutions in Yobe State?

**Table 2: Mean ratings and standard deviation on adequacy of equipment provided in offices in tertiary institutions in Yobe State** N = 298

S/N	Office Equipment	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
10.	Fireproof safe for office documents	2.39	.87	Lowly Adequate
11.	Cooling devices (fan, air condition, refrigerator)	2.63	.85	Adequate
12.	Computers	2.75	.86	Adequate
13.	Photocopiers	2.61	.94	Adequate
14.	Stapling remover	2.43	.94	Lowly Adequate
<b>Cluster Mean</b>		<b>2.49</b>		<b>Lowly Adequate</b>

Table 2 shows that items 11, 12 and 13 with mean scores ranging from 2.61 to 2.75 reveal that equipment provided in offices in tertiary institutions in Yobe State are adequate, while items 10 and 14 are rated lowly adequate. The cluster mean score of 2.49 shows that on the whole, equipment provided in offices in tertiary institutions in Yobe State are lowly adequate. The standard deviation shows that there was homogeneity in respondents' responses.

### Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of federal and state administrative staff on the adequacy of furniture provided in their offices in tertiary institutions in Yobe State.



**Table 3: Summary of t-test analysis of mean ratings of federal and state administrative staff on the adequacy of furniture provided in their offices in tertiary institutions**

Office Furniture	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	P-value	Decision
Federal	159	2.39	0.62	296	1.00	Not significant
State	139	2.58	0.66			

Table 3 shows that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of federal and state administrative staff on the adequacy of furniture provided in their offices in tertiary institutions in Yobe State. This is shown by the p-value of 1.00, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05. The null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups is therefore rejected.

**Hypothesis 2**

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of federal and state administrative staff on the adequacy of equipment provided in their offices in tertiary institutions in Yobe State.

**Table 4: Summary of t-test analysis of mean ratings of federal and state administrative staff on the adequacy of equipment provided in their offices in tertiary institutions**

Office Equipment	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	P-value	Decision
Federal	159	2.52	0.63	296	0.03	Significant
State	139	2.60	0.70			

Table 4 shows that there is significant difference in the mean ratings of federal and state administrative staff on the adequacy of equipment provided in their offices in tertiary institutions in Yobe State. This is shown by the p-value of 0.03, which is less than the significance level of 0.05. The null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups is therefore rejected.

## Discussion

Findings of the study showed that furniture provided in offices of tertiary institutions in Yobe State are lowly adequate. This finding is in line with the study of Parveen et al. (2012) which revealed that facilities in tertiary institutions are highly inadequate despite the fact they are vital for optimum performance of administrative staff in tertiary institutions. In support, Issah et al. (2016) reported that facilities provided in the offices in tertiary institutions were not adequate. This is not surprising considering the fact that researchers such as Fabiyi and Uzoka (2013) have earlier pointed out that one of the major challenges facing tertiary institutions in Nigeria as a whole is dearth of physical work environment which hinders effective performance of both administrative and non-administrative staff. This corroborates the earlier findings of Umar and Ma'aji (2010) who disclosed that administrative staff shared similar views on the inadequacy of facilities in the offices of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The findings also showed that ownership of institution did not influence administrative staff ratings on the adequacy of furniture in the offices of tertiary institutions. This agrees with Umar and Ma'aji (2010) who revealed that administrators and lecturers in tertiary institutions regardless of their institutions shared the same view on the inadequate facilities in their offices.

Findings of the study disclosed that equipment provided in offices of tertiary institutions in Yobe State are lowly adequate. This finding corroborates with the study of Ubulom and Enyekit (2017) who revealed that equipments in offices in tertiary institutions fall below the required number. Ubulom and Enyekit further stated that the inadequacy of office equipment makes it impossible for administrative staff to carry out their office functions effectively. This is supported by earlier the findings of Amiaya (2013) who reported that equipment in offices of polytechnics were grossly inadequate. Okolocha and Ihionkhan (2013) in support, affirmed that equipment in offices in polytechnics were highly inadequate. Onyesom and Okolocha (2013) who reported that equipment in offices were found to be grossly inadequate in all the colleges studied. The findings also showed that there was a significant difference in the mean ratings of federal and state administrative staff on the adequacy of furniture provided in their offices in tertiary institutions in Yobe State. This finding contrasts with the findings of Alabi (2000) which showed administrative staff in both federal and state universities rated equipment in their offices inadequate. Alabi further revealed that equipment is slightly higher in adequacy in federal universities than state ones.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study showed that all furniture and equipment factors covered in this study are lowly inadequate in tertiary institutions in Yobe State, Nigeria. Based on the findings of this study, the researcher concludes that there is need to improve the furniture and equipment in tertiary institutions in Yobe State, Nigeria.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made.

1. The federal and state governments should increase the funding of federal tertiary institutions to improve furniture and equipment in the institutions. This will enable the administrative staff of the universities to perform better in their jobs.
2. Administrators of tertiary institutions should ensure that funds provided for the upgrade of furniture and equipment are judiciously utilized. This will improve the availability and adequacy of these facilities in the universities which will lead to better service delivery by the administrative staff.
3. Administrators of tertiary institutions in Yobe State should collaborate more with private sectors in the areas of furniture and equipment development. This will encourage the private sectors to support the universities by providing some of these furniture and equipment to the institutions.

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