



## Elitism and Educational Development in Nigeria: The nexus of elite theories

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### Abstract

*This study investigates the role of elites in the distribution of resources, dividend of democracy, good governance and basic development in Nigeria with specific analogy drawn from elite theories (the ruling class, elite circulation and power elites). Elites are the few privileged individuals, both military and civil, technocrats, business tycoons, merchants and professional who control the levers of power, influence and the political landscapes. They constitute and determine the helms of affairs. The research is succinctly descriptive and analytic. It adopted critical phenomenology for data collection using secondary methods. The specific objective is to analyze elite practices in Nigeria, the citing of projects and especially public universities. The study found out that irrespective of political affiliations, political elites are of the same characterization. Therefore, the study recommended strict adherence to rule of law, good governance, equal political patronage, and fair distribution of resources and a development commission.*

**Keywords:** *Elites, public universities, development, politics and equity.*

## INTRODUCTION

The term elite connote social classism and the superior ranking of people who possess certain fundamental features of life, capacity, personality, skills and aristocracy (Zeidan, 2023). It is derived from Aristotle's nobility, Plato's aristocratic rationality and superior groups in medieval period (Yawa, 2020). But since the advent of liberal democratic institutions in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the term has come to be associated with development, democratic elements and how they assert control and dominance in society generally. Weber (1922) cited in Yawa (2020), viewed the elite through the prism of power just the same way Reis & Moore (2005), sees elites as people in possession of power, material and symbolic resources. Citing Pareto (1935) and the Machiavelli's philosophy, Akanle et al (2012) drew a typical analogy of elite but in terms of material conditions, intellectualism and moral superiority. Given that political relationship between elites and the masses dictate development outcomes, delivering development involves working with the power dynamics that has citizens' welfare as focal focus because government have the wherewithal to direct the tenets of development. But contrarily, the power dynamics of Nigeria have endangered educational development and increased the cycle of poverty among the populace, sustained fragile economy relationship and stagnated the general wellbeing of the people. Elitist culture in Nigeria with its multiplier effect have thrown development to the bottomless pit (Osuji et al, 2022). This collapology solicited the November 1, 2025

president Donald Trump threat to invade Nigeria. Nigeria was once designated as a country of particular concern in December 2020, removed by Joe Biden in November, 2021, and on October 31, 2025, President Donald Trump re-designated Nigeria as CPC citing years of Christian Persecution, rising insecurity and government tolerance of violence. Historically, Nigeria elites have been a faulted bourgeoisies shaped by colonialism. Specifically in Nigerian parlance, the elites are the president, Vice President, State Governors, Deputy Governors, Local Government Chairman and Vice Chairman, Federal and State Legislators, Judges, Officers, Federal Ministers, State Commissioners, Chairmen of Boards of Parastatals and Permanent Secretaries (Ogbeide & Aghahowa, 2005). Furthermore, Nyewusira (2014), opine that politics is the determinant factor and plays significant role in the establishment of public universities in Nigeria.

Elitism and development discourse have been a contenting academic topic in Nigeria. Scholars such as Ogbeide and Aghahowa (2005), Cambell (2014), Nyewusira (2014) Julius (2014), Okoli et al (2016) and Harbor and Ololube (2025) have all expressed their views through pen on paper analyzing the implication of elitism on the contemporary Nigeria but none suggested the need for a legal framework that spell equitable distribution of resources. Okoli et al (2016) discussed the history and development of public universities in Nigeria since 1914.

Nyewusira (2014), in politics and the establishment of public universities in Nigeria: Implications for university education,

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emphasized the role of politics in establishing public universities in Nigeria and recommended a consolidation, and that university establishment be devoid of political interest. Furthermore Harbor and Olorube (2025), sees the existence of power elites in course allocation. This according to them affect service delivery outcomes in public universities.

Hence, the gap in knowledge which this research wish to fill. The Nigeria elites are more of politicians whose chronicles from independence revealed failure, lack of social contract and inability to live up to expectation in service delivery (Idowu & Etinosa, 2013). Succinctly, it is imperative to state that the involvement of politics in education affected our service delivery and productivity same way the paradox of Nigerian economy and the living standard of the people. Education the bedrock of sustainable development in Nigeria is led by politics, no wonder citizens wallow in poverty. Earlier between 2018 and 2019, 40.1% of Nigerians were poor according to National Monetary Poverty line before the 2022 National Multidimensional Poverty Index Report indicated that 63% of the population (133 million people) were multi-dimensionally poor which Iyeshim (2022), traced to the 1986-1998 Structural Adjustment Programme of the then military government.

The plethora for establishing public universities in Nigeria, are more of politics than needs. In most cases, one must be a member of a majority tribe, a particular political party or have a god father or lack basic development. Based on the statement of the problems, the researchers raised the underlisted questions and objectives. Are developments equitably distributed and spread round the states?, Do Nigerian elites adhere to rule of law and public interest while setting up public universities and other tertiary institutions?, Is there need for a legal framework that spell out equitable distribution of development and or a development commission? In lieu to the above, the research objective is to: Analyze Nigerian elitism in relation to rule of law and the setting of public universities, suggest the need for a legal framework that spell equitable distribution of development and or a development commission to anchor development strive.

## Theoretical Framework

Hence the research nexus elite theories, it is imperative to synthesizes the ruling class, elite circulation and power elite theories:

**The Ruling Class Theory:** This theory was propounded by Gaetano Mosca, an Italian sociologist and political theorist in his book “Elementi di Scienza”, Elements of political science in 1896. His position was that the ruling class or those who hold and exercise the public power, will always be a minority, and below them a numerous class of persons who do never, in any real sense participate in government but merely submit. They are the ruled. Mosca’s work was a theory of political power and societal structure based on the dynamics of elite rule and how they dominated the rest of the society. The book layed the groundwork for the ruling class theory which emphasized that all societies are divided into two classes; the

ruling class (the minority) and the ruled class (subjects and majority). Ruling class theory presented a sociological and historical analysis of political power and how the ruling class maintained its dominance through organization, control of resources and the use of ideologies. Regardless of any form of government, Mosca believed that elite rule is inevitable.

The assertion of the ruling class theory that of a group of individuals or classes who exercises control over social structures. They shape policies and norms to maintain their interest at the expense of the larger society. In Nigeria, the context is rooted in Nigeria’s colonial past when Britain established systems favourable to the minority white, marginalized the indigenous populations and or in the words of Rodney (1990), how Europe under develop Africa. This pattern of elite dominance has manifested and persisted through many historical epochs. After independence, a network of influential dominant indigenous bourgeoisie emerged. They occupied all important political and positions and circulate it among themselves using their apparatus, clienteles and patronage to perpetuate dependency among the populace. The hegemony is also manifested economically. The ruling class typically exerts control over the natural resources. Economic policies and divides are crafted to favour a certain class against the generality of the populace.

From the forgone, it is clear that theories are written to address or explain certain phenomenon, they lead to each other and are either similar or dissimilar. This relationship can be noticed between Gianfranco Mosca and Vilfredo Pareto.

**The theory of elite circulation:** The theory of elite circulation is one of the profound theories on leadership, governance and the use of power either for general good of the people or selfish purposes of a few group by Vilfredo Pareto (Iyeshim, 2025). This theory assumes that leadership position in a nation is between the governing and non – governing elites. Pareto (1935) postulated that there is always a power tussle between the elites. He opines that elites are persons who dominate the decision making process and determine policy implementation and especially when the governing elite gain control of power in the power game (Julius, 2012). Elites just as in Nigeria occupy every available leadership and other advantageous positions in the society while the helpless masses take the role of followership and ever depending on the elites for survival. The elites uses every means to structurally subdue the majority masses (Odubajo, 2209). Therefore, elite theory accentuates the concentration of power in the hands of a small few (Bachrach, 2010). It is a cyclical hierarchical positioning, non – revolutionary power distribution and relationship that affect social behaviour and interaction (Pareto, 1935). No matter the idea of universal suffrage and the game of numbers, the will of the minority elite is superior. This assertion can further be juxtaposed using the Nigeria 2023 general election and the CBN cash crunch that resulted from the elite’s idea of currency change which succeeded in crumbling the helpless masses. After the display of power, the new notes are also not visible in banks for public usage. Pareto (1935) quoted in Akanle (2021) summatively maintained henceforth, that elites possess some

exclusive qualities that makes them exceptional. But these qualities did not improve the lot of people (Adams, 2005). To buttress the assertion of elitism in Nigeria Sahara Reporters (2021) similarly stated that all the electioneering campaigns promises of All Progressive Congress in 2015 were not kept, therefore the lots of Nigerians remained the same if not worst.

**C. Wright Mills Power Elite Theory:** The Power Elite Theory was developed by C. Wright Mills in his book “The power Elite” 1956. The book explained how America was dominated by a small group of businessmen, politicians and military leaders interconnected group of individuals who hold significant control over America key institution.

Power elite theory was influenced by post 2<sup>nd</sup> world war political and economic changes in the rise of corporations and big businesses. The big enterprises tremendously affected the smaller business negatively. Mill also saw an alliance between the military chiefs and captains of industry, and that large corporations profited from the military-Industrial relationship that result many time in contracts. As the political, economic and military spheres became more centralized so the average citizen had less influence over decision making the combination and subsequent emergence of these elite also resulted to the ineffectivity and the disillusionment of America democracy and the decline of political parties. Insofar, power elites refer to distinct groups in society that hold significant power and influence in their respective domains.

Relatedly, the concept of power elite in Nigeria underscores the complexities of Nigeria characterization. Distinct elite groups often collaborate and compete for control, shaping the policies and governance of the nation. The entrenched nature of elite networks significantly impact Nigeria’s democratic trajectory. Nigeria’s political landscape is a composition of complex interplay of ethnicity and ethnic affiliation and political parties dominantly People Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressive Congress (APC) as power elite instruments. Again, the role of military in Nigerian politics historically added a distinct dimension to the power elite. It started in military intervention in politics and Coup d’etat. The military-political nexus in Nigeria is such that even in the return to democracy in 1999, it was still retired military junta that became the president. As the country faces security challenges, military’s influence on governance remains paramount.

## METHODOLOGY

The research is succinctly descriptive and analytical in nature. It adopted critical phenomenology for data collection and eclectism for analysis. This qualitative research used secondary method of data collection like observation and analysis of tests to generate and gather data to make a social critique of power relations and structural oppression.

## The Chronicle of Nigeria Political Elite Formation

The period between October 1, 1960 to Jan 15, 1966 is generally referred to as the first republic in Nigeria. By

October 1, 1960, Nigeria became independent and by 1963 became a republic with a parliamentary democracy modeled along Britain. Sequel to the 1959 colonial election, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe became the Governor General, and President after the country became a republic in 1963 with Alh. Abubakar Tafawa Belewa as Prime Minister, Chief Obafemi Awolowo (Opposition Leader), Ahmedu Bello (Premier Northern Region), Samuel Akintola (Premier Western Region), Michael Okpara (Premier Eastern Region), Dennis Osadebey (Premier Mid – Western Region) History ville (2022). Though the major indices that collapsed the first republic Nigeria were the 1962 – 63 census, Western region crisis of 1963 and the 1964 first Nigerian general election. But given that Nigerian elites abinitio, lacked a material base for their aspirations and political culture to sustain democracy, play the game according to established rules, resorted to hijacking of state resources (U.S. Library of Congress, 2020).

However, the long agitated and anticipated joy of nationhood lasted for less than three years. Akanle et al (2021), further stated that the self-democratic government was cut short when by 15<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1966, the military took over power and Late Gen. Aguiyi Ironsi became the first military head of state. Six months after, July 15<sup>th</sup>, 1966 the newly independent state ran into another trouble and administrative truncation (Akanle et al, 2021). Given that Late Major Chukwuma Nezogwu the coupist who led the first coup was an Easterner and ushered in another Easterner as head of a state, Late Major Murtala Mohammed a northerner also in a reprisal, ousted the Ironsi’s administration and instituted Gen Yakubu Gowon as the new head of state till 1975. In a bloodless coup, Gen Murtala Mohammed whose effort was much in the last coup in same manner chased out the overstayed Gowon. But sequel to the assassination of Murtala, his deputy Gen Oleségún Obasanjo succeeded and handed over power to Late Alh. Shehu Shagari and Dr. Alex Ekweme to kick start the second republic of Nigeria October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1979 – December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1983 with presidential system of government (Adebanwir, 2023).

Again, the long expected democratic governance was toppled by another military takeover by late Gen. Mohammadu Buhari. Akanle et al, (2021) recorded that Gen Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida on Aug 27, 1985 cut short again the Buhari’s administration. The third republic, after an intense pressure started. The Nigerian third republic 1992 – 1993 according to Jibrin (2022) was an unsuccessful attempt to restore Nigeria to democracy. The popular June 12 when Gen Babangida allowed the elections of civilians in January 1993 and Late Chief M.K.O. Abiola won the presidency. By its annulment Late Gen Sani Abacha became the head of state. Because of Abacha’s death, Gen Abdulsalami Abubakar resumed as the head of state June 9, 1998. He returned the country to democracy and set up the Independent National Electoral Commission that conducted the 1999 general election (Campbell, 2010).

The fourth republic started in 29, May 1999 with Chief Oleségún Obasanjo as the president and Alh. Atiku Abubakar as vice president (Ojo, 2019). Chief Oleségún Obasanjo’s 1999 – 2007 administration witness the 1999 constitution,

recruitment of professionals, technocrat and bureaucrats from all works of life and the structural domination of the masses a new non-governing elite with new political hegemony of People Democratic Party PDP (Adesola & Ako – Nai, 2010). The fourth republic also demonstrated high propensity for elite's and the entrenching of some new sets of classes (Ibietan & Ajayi, 2015), who made caricature the basic tenets of equal political participation and accountability.

The chronicle of Nigeria transition is the origination of elitism and those sets of military and political power elites who formed the foundation of Nigeria. Elites in Nigeria wielded determinant power that resulted into these aged long elites and masses dichotomy, a bourgeoisie and proletarian relationship. In the fourth republic, election was reduced to a mere charade and mockery, a do or die affair, might for right, political assassination and desperate capturing of state power and resources to enrich themselves. This fourth republic also ushered in Umaru Yar'adua, Goodluck Jonathan, Muhammadu Buhari and Ahmed Bola Tinubu as presidents. Given that Dr. Goodluck declared for the 2015 presidential election, former vice president Atiku Abubakar leading five serving governors, serving senators and the members of federal House of Reps defected. The existing ACN and CPC members, formed the All Progressive Congress and won the 2015 general election and late Muhammadu Buhari became the 15<sup>th</sup> president of Nigeria (Yawa, 2020), thus amplifying the Vilfredo Pareto's elite circulation theory.

### The Reality of Elite Circulation in Nigeria

Pareto (1968) and Casstevens (1989) cited in Akanle et al (2021), defined elite circulation as the turnover in power of socio-economic classes. The process in which one elite replaces the other (Sakthi, 2023). In so far, all societies and civilization have the class of elites with similar distributor patterns. The chronicle of Nigeria's transition is the origination of Nigeria elitist pattern. The sets of military officers and politicians who formed the foundation of Nigerian elites wielded determinant power that resulted into the aged long elites-masses dichotomy. Power in Nigeria is concentrated in the hands of minority few who holds the reins of governance (Sanda, 1992).

From the foregoing, leadership in Nigeria has changed from the same sphere of elites majorly military and politicians. Ex-military head of state Gen Osegun Obasanjo that ruled Nigeria from 1976 – 1979, came back to power as civilian president between 1999 – 2007. He was both the 5<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> head of state. In continuation, Late President Umaru Musa Yar'adua was brother to Late Gen Shehu Musa Yar'adua, deputy head of state 1975 – 1979, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan alongside Late Diepreye Alamieyeseigha were governor and deputy governor of Bayelsa state (1999 – 2005) thereafter Jonathan became Vice President, acting president and president 2011 – 2015 (Mckenn, 2023). Atiku Abubakar a former Nigeria Custom Service deputy director 1969 – 1989 (Premium Times Nigeria Dec. 29 2018), was elected as governor of Adamawa State 1998, became the vice president of Nigeria 1999 – 2007, had ran unsuccessfully for president

of Nigeria six times 1993, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019 and 2023 consecutively (Tribune, 2023).

By the emergence of Muhammadu Buhari in 2015, a new set of elites sprung while the lots of the people remained the same. Dramaturgically, the same attitude of elite circulation was replicated in the build – up to the 2019 election when the same group of political elites that left PDP for APC earlier in 2014 were again led back to the same PDP they dumped to continue the game of state capture where the winner get it all. The return of Atiku Abubakar, Musa Kwakwaso, Bukola Saraki and Aminu Tambuwal among others to PDP is the affirmative confirmation that political elites in Nigeria are driven by inordinate selfish ambition and lack of decorum expected in public offices while national interest deteriorate. The sequence of cross carpeting in Nigeria demonstrate lack of morality, ideology and desire to serve but political survival and patronage (Ajayi, et al, 2014).

In Rivers State, Hon. Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi who started as speaker of Rivers State House of Assembly 1999 – 2007, became governor from 2007 – 2015, and Federal Minister of transportation 2015 – 2022 same way his successor E.N. Wike became Obio – Akpor L.G.A Chairman (1999- 2007), governor and FCT minister consecutively. Hon Henry Seriki Dickson was a member, Federal House of Representative governor of Bayelsa State and a serving senator Godswill Akpabio stated as a commissioner, Akwa Ibom state governor, minister of Niger Delta affairs and again senate president (INEC, 2023).

In Sokoto State, Aminu Tambuwal was a speaker in the Federal House of Reps, while his predecessor Aliyu Wammako upon leaving office as governor joined the house of senate and Tambuwal continued again as governor. In Kwara State, Abubakar Olusola Saraki family is a pattern. The progenitor was a second republic senator (1979 – 1983). His son Abubakar Bukola Saraki became a governor (2003 – 2011) and senate president 2015 – 2019 (News wire NGR, 2022). The daughter Gbemisola Saraki was first elected into the Federal House of Reps 1999 – 2003, and senate (2003 – 2011) and appointed minister of state for transportation and mines, steel development 2019 – 2023 (Nigeria Galleria. Com).

The Nigeria political drama is all about the circulation of elites staged by covetousness, same ideology and the underdevelopment of the masses. Before independence, the nationalist pledged to fight for freedom from the colonist overbearing administration. And when military took over power, they made the populace believed that they are out to bring relief to the sufferings experienced by the masses. Prior to the 2015 general elections, Campbell (2014) argued that Nigerian politics might as well become elitist politics because the players are still the elites and the no elites as speculators. The elites are the artists as in dramaturgical analysis and the non elites as audience engaged in recycling political gladiators (Adesola & Aka-Nai 2010). The cross-carpeting and or defecting of members of one political party to the other as seen in Nigeria is what Michels (1949) refers to as the



recurrent reorganization of old and new elites. What is sometimes obtainable in Nigeria is a mere merger or change of political party to get back to power. Pareto (1935) cited by Aregbesola (2013), argued that the elites in Nigeria get to power through force or electoral malpractice. This is reflected in both Nigeria's democratic and military era since independence. While the military uses coup to get to power, civilians use democratic forces of ballot box snatching, violence, crises, rigging and intimidation.

## Elites and the Establishment of the First and Second Generation Universities

The introduction of public university is remotely traceable to the 1926 Memorandum on Education Policy in British Tropical Africa, which historically set the stage for a co-ordinated colonial government's involvement in the development of higher education in British Tropical Africa (Kosemani and Okorosaye – Orubite, 1995). From the abinitio of schools in Nigeria, education was tied to the political dictates of British colonial elites just the same way it is tied to the present Nigerian elites. Prior to independence, the nationalists moved for the establishment of public universities in their territories (Okoli, 2003; and Aminigo, 2003). The colonial secretary, Oliver Stanley in 1943 set the establishment of university education. The elitist commissions like Asquith and Elliot commission 1945 according to Kosemani and Okorosaye-Orubite, (1995), splitted the colonist

themselves. The intrigues of British 1945 general election that brought in Clement Atlee as Prime Minister and Authur Creech Jones as the new secretary of state for colonies accepted the establishment of a University College Ibadan in 1984 (Fafunwa, 1971) cited in Nyewusira but (2014).

Succinctly it is incumbent to mention the establishment of Ashbly Commission (1959) on post-school certificate and High Education as it affects post-colonial university education in Nigeria. This well-intended commission was faced with intrigues and interests. While Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe championed the creation of University of Nigeria Nsukka for the Eastern region (Dike, 1988). Ahmadu Bello University 1962 was abinitio anchored on religio-political tradition to settle the northern tradition. Adamu (2005) cited in Nyewusira (2014), quoted the insistence of Sir Ahmadu Bello that the institution must be founded on the heritage of the north. Equally, there is no better reference to the bearing of petty regional politics on the establishment of a university than in the use of University of Ife 1962 for the then Action Group (Western region) because the East had got theirs (Anuna, 2009), same must be to the mid-west zonation, hence the University of Benin for the mid-west political warriors (Ukwu, 2002). Abdulrahman-Yusuf (2015) summarized the number of Universities established between 1948 – 1962 and 1974-1979 as First Generation Universities and second generation universities as:

## Federal and State Universities

List of Federal and State Universities in Nigeria

s/n	Federal Universities	Date	Location	State Universities	Date	Location
1	University of Ibadan	1948	Ibadan	Rivers State University	1979	Rivers State
2	University of Nigeria	1960	Nsukka	Enugu State University of Technology, Enugu	1980	Enugu State
3	University of Lagos	1962	Akoka	Abia State University (ABSU), Uturu	1981	Abia State
4	Ahmadu Bello University	1962	Zaria	Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye	1981	Ogun State
5	University of Ife (now OAU)	1962	Ile-Ife	Imo State University, Owerri	1981	Imo State
6	University of Benin	1970	Benin	Ambrose Alli University (AAU), Ekpoma	1981	Edo State
7	University of Calabar	1975	Calabar	Lagos State University, Ojo, Apapa	1983	Lagos State
8	University of Ilorin	1975	Ilorin	Ladoke Akintola University of Technology Ogbomosho	1988	Uyo State
9	University of Jos	1975	Jos	Kogi State University, Aiyigba	1988	Kogi State
1	Bayero University, Kano	1975	Kano	Ekiti State university, Ado-Ekiti	1988	Ekiti State
11	University of Maiduguri	1975	Maiduguri	Delta State University (DELSU) Abraka	1990	Delta State
12	University of Port Harcourt	1975	Rives State	Benue State University (BSU), Markudi	1995	Benue State
13	Usman Dan-Fodiyo University	1975	Sokoto	Eboyi State1998 University (EBSU),	1996	Ebonyi State

				Abakiliki		
14	Federal University of Technology, Owerri	1980	Owerri	Kano State University, Bagauda	1998	Kano State
15	Federal University of Technology Yola	1980	Yola	Adekunle Ajasin University of Technology, Akungba-Akoko	1999	Ondo State
16	Federal University of Akure	1981	Akure	Anambra State University (ANSU), Uli	2000	Anambra State
17	Federal University of University of, Minna	1982	Minna	Kano State University of Technology, Wudil	2000	Kano State
18	Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA) Zaria	1985	Zaria	Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island	2000	Bayelsa State
19	University of Abuja	1988	FCT, Abuja	Adamawa State University (ADSU) Mubi	2002	Adamawa State
20	Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi	1988	Bauchi	Cross River State University of Technology (CRUTECH), Calabar	2002	Cross River
21	University of Agriculture, Makurdi	1988	Makurdi	Nasarawa State University, Keffi	2002	Nasarawa State
22	University of Agriculture, Abeokuta	1988	Abeokuta	North-East University, Kano	2002	Kano State
23	University of Uyo, Uyo	1991	Uyo	Kaduna State University, Kaduna	2002	Kaduna State
24	Michael Okpara University of Agriculture (MOUAAU) Umudike	1992	Umudike	Gombe State University	2012	Gombe State
25	Nnamdi Azikiwe University	1992	Awka	Plateau State University, Bokkos	2004	Plateau State
26	National Open University of Nigeria, Lagos	2002	Lagos State	Ibrahim Babangida University, Lapai	2004	Niger State
27	Federal University of Petroleum Resources Efur	2007	Delta State	Kebbi State University, Aliero	2005	Kogi State
28	Federal University, Dutse	2011	Jigawa state	Bukar Abba Ibrahim University, Damaturu	2005	Yobe State
28	Federal University, Dutsin-Ma	2011	Katsina State	Umaru Musa Yar'Adua University, Katsina	2006	Katsina State
30	Federal University, Kashere	2011	Gomba	Osun State University, Osogbo	2006	Osun State
31	Federal University, Lafia	2011	Nasarawa	Ondo State University of science and technology, Okitiputa	2008	Ondo State
32	Federal University, Lokoja	2011	Kogi	Tai-Solari University of Education, Ijebu-Ode	2008	Ogun State
33	Federal University, Ndufu-Aliko Ikwo	2011	Ebonyi	Taraba State University, Jalingo	2008	Taraba State
34	Federal University, Otuoke	2011	Bayelsa	Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt	2009	Rivers State
35	Federal University, Oye-Ekiti	2011	Ekiti State	Kwara State University	2009	Kwara State
36	Federal University, Wukari	2011	Taraba State	Sokoto state University, Sokoto	2009	Sokoto State
37	The Police Academy	2012	Kano	Akwa Ibom State University of	2010	Akwa Ibom

				Science & Technology (AKUTECH), Uyo		State
38	Federal University, Birnin-Kebbi	2013	Kebbi	Bauchi State University, Gadau	2011	Bauchi State
39	Federal University, Gusau	2013	Zamfara	Technical University, Ibadan	2012	Uyo State
40	Federal University, Gasua	2013	Yobe State	Jigawa State University, Kassim-Hamsa	2013	Jigawa State

#### Field work 2025.

From the foregoing, the effect of federal, state and local government area elites as seen are consequential and determinant in the establishment of institutions round Nigeria. It is those that have successful politicians that have higher institutions built in their places (Nwideeduh, 2003) cited in Nyewusira (2014).

By 1972, the Third Development Plan (1975 – 1980), government made proposal for the establishment of geopolitical distributed universities (okoh et al, 2011). Federal Universities of Petroleum Resources 2007, Effurun, Delta State was established. When Yar adua became president, he proposed to relocate it to his Katsina state (Ojameruaye, 2009). In a single swoop and quite unprecedented in this chronicle, President Jonathan in 2010 announced the creation of more 12 federal universities. But the politicization that beclouded the location of these sets of universities made Ukachukwu Awuzie, (Asuu president) to call the university citation a consistency projects. President Jonathan cited one in his Otuoke village alongside the cabinet members each (Spur Magazine, 2011).

Aonyekakeyah (2010) submitted that throughout the 80s and 90s, it only became fashionable for every state to own a university for political considerations. Citation of schools are seen as political ventures and a status symbol. In Kogi State Abubakar Audu of Kogi State, christened the state university after himself Abubakar Audu University and when Abubakar Idris became governor in 2003, he renamed it Kogi State University. Moreso Late Gov. Diepreye Alamiesiegha established Niger Delta University in his home town Amassoma Wilberforce island (Anuna, 2008). Furthermore, late Gov. Ambrose Ali built the state university in his own town Ekpoma town and named it after himself Ambrose Ali University (Nwagwu, 2003). Others are Adams Oshiomole who established Edo state university in his Iyambo home town. All the proceeding historical chronicles portrays the hands of elites and political expedience as overwhelming factor in the founding of universities. And more of these are at the nativity irrespective of difficulties in geographical topography of the said elite's home town.

The political nature of course allocation extends beyond individual departments to influence larger institutional dynamics. To Nweke and Ihejirika (2022), departmental politics around course allocation often escalate into faculty-wide or even university-wide conflicts when perceived inequities become systemic. These conflicts can undermine institutional cohesion and academic quality when teaching

assignments are determined by political considerations rather than educational objectives. However, understanding these political dimensions is essential for developing more equitable and effective approaches to course allocation that prioritizes educational quality while acknowledging the inevitability of political processes in university administration. However, Olanakanmi and Musa (2020) admitted that reforms to course allocation systems must address not only technical aspects but also the underlying political realities that shape how academic resources are distributed.

#### Political Interference in Public Universities

There has been political interference in the establishment of universities in Nigeria. With the return of civil rule in 1999, the spate of government's establishment of federal universities continued, beginning in 2002 when the Obasanjo administration resuscitated the National Open University, Lagos which was suspended in 1984. The administration also established the Federal University of Petroleum Resources (FUPRE), Effurun in 2007. The political crises that surrounded the establishment of this university in particular began to manifest when the Yar'Adua's regime attempted to relocate the university to Kaduna State. This attempt was met with brick walls as it was vehemently opposed by the people of the Niger Delta region through students' protests, and threats from South-South Governors' Forum. Thus, Ojameruaye (2009:10) writes: the governors of the South-South geo-political zone met in Asaba, Delta State to express their indignation over the purported movement of the University of Petroleum Resources from Effurun to Kaduna. At the end of their meeting, the governors threatened to withdraw from the amnesty deal of the Federal Government if the contentious issue was not resolved. It was after the Asaba meeting, that the Presidency sent the Minister of State for the Niger Delta, Mr. Orubebe, to re-assure the Governors that the FG did not intend to relocate neither the PTI nor the FUPRE from Effurun to Kaduna as alleged.

Similarly, in 2007, there was a proposed plan by Governor Rotimi Amaechi to relocate the Rivers State University of Science and Technology from its present site in Nkpolu to a permanent site in Ikwerre Local Government Area, as part of the Greater Port Harcourt City Project (The Port Harcourt Telegraph, 2012 in Nyewusira, 2014). It is pertinent to note here that Governor Amaechi hails from Ikwerre Local Government Area.

#### Politics of Course Allocation in Nigerian Universities

For Harbor and Ololube (2025). The politics of course allocation in Nigerian universities represents a complex interplay of power dynamics, competing interests, and institutional factors that significantly influence academic decision-making processes. Beyond the technical and administrative dimensions of course distribution lies a political landscape shaped by various stakeholders with divergent interests and objectives. Oyediji (2018) writing in Harbor and Ololube (2025), conceptualized the politics of course allocation as an inevitable outcome of resource competition within academic institutions. In his study of three federal universities in southwestern Nigeria, he argued that course allocation has evolved beyond a mere administrative exercise into a political process where influence, status, and relationships determine outcomes as much as expertise and qualifications. His research revealed that departmental politics frequently manifest in preferential treatment for certain faculty members, with senior professors often securing preferred courses while junior academics receive less desirable teaching assignments regardless of their specialization or competence.

The political dimension of course allocation is further emphasized by Nweke and Ihejirika (2022) examined how power relations shape departmental decision-making. Their qualitative study across five Nigerian universities identifies several political factors that influence course allocation, including patronage networks, factional alignments, and proximity to administrative power centers. They observe that department heads often use course allocation as a tool for rewarding loyalty or punishing perceived opposition, creating an environment where academic considerations are sometimes subordinated to political calculations. This perspective highlights how course allocation becomes an instrument for exercising and maintaining power within academic departments.

Olasunkanmi and Musa (2020) approached the politics of course allocation through the lens of institutional culture, arguing that universities develop distinct political traditions that govern resource distribution. Their comparative analysis of public and private universities in Nigeria reveals significant differences in how course allocation politics manifest across institutional types. They noted that while public universities exhibit more overt political contestation over course allocation, private institutions tend to mask political processes beneath administrative directives, though political considerations remain influential in both contexts. Particularly insightful is their observation that the politics of course allocation often reflects broader societal patterns of patronage and influence-peddling that permeate Nigerian institutions, suggesting that these practices are embedded in wider cultural and political contexts.

Adebayo and Ogundipe (2023) examined the gender dimension of course allocation politics in Nigerian universities. They analyzed how gender dynamics influence teaching assignments. Using a mixed-methods approach across multiple institutions, their study revealed systematic disparities on how courses are allocated to male and female

academics. Their findings indicated that female academics are disproportionately allocated introductory level courses and heavier teaching loads while male academics more frequently receive advanced career enhancing courses. Adebayo and Ogundipe argued that this pattern reflects subtle but persistent forms of gender based discrimination, which have implications for career progression, visibility and academic influence among female faculty.

## Effects of elites and development in Nigeria

The characteristics of elites toward national development are largely negative with the underlisted observations and findings:

- **Political office holder's pension and recurrent expenditure:**

The elites legislate and pass obnoxious pension laws for every political office holder even though some of them as retirees of public sectors enjoy pension from government (Yawa, 2022). In addition, Sahara Reporters (2017) mentioned that 21 states of Nigeria spent 37.4 billion on pension and other entitlements such as house allowance, staff and three years vehicle replacement for life for about 47 ex-governors. This means that money that could have been for development is used for serving the already rich ex-governors. This has increased the recurrent expenditure of government with few benefiting at the expenses of the majority. Overtime, the recurrent expenditure in the annual budget is always higher than the capital expenditure and annual budget performance often reflects higher percentages in execution of recurrent items (personal & overhead cost) than capital component (provision of infrastructure). The pension payment is irrespective of prescription of the Revenue Mobilization, Allocation and Fiscal Commission 300 percent severance for the governors as stated in the certain political office holders and Judicial Officers Remuneration Act. Under the Act, former governors are entitled to 300 percent of their basic salary as severance pay (Yawa 2020). Given that state governors enjoy this life opportunity, Kano and Bayelsa State Houses of Assembly passed into law speaker and deputy speakers pension rights (Sahara Reporter, 2019). Similarly, the Guardian (2019) reported same but for both current and past assembly members spontaneously.

- **Exploitation:** The research also found that Nigerian political office holders interest are to exploit the resources of the country. Corrupt tendencies such as budget padding, constituency projects and bogus allowances are their means of legitimizing corruption under official cover (Yawa, 2020).
- **Nepotism and favouritism:** Nepotism and favouritism had assumed, official status. Allegations are rife with secret employment and recruitment in universities and public parastatals with names of relations of prominent politicians as beneficiaries (Edeagu, 2021).
- **General discontentment:** This elitist behaviour in Nigeria is the major factor for the



hardship, dissatisfaction and discontentment among the youth. It has caused insecurity, insurgency and ethnic secession threat among other social vices. Added to this is the crisis of both human and physical development. The economy is nose diving and at a point adjudged as world capital of poverty. And in hunger level Nigeria ranked 103 out of 121 countries (The Guardian 17 October 2022).

- Another complicit attitude problem of the elite group is in the conduct of general elections. From abinitio, Nigeria elections are characterization of desperation, violence destruction, death, excessive militarization and the use of security forces as eloquent testimony of do-or-die affairs.
- Worth mentioning is education and politics. The elites use school project as constituency project to settle some selected personalities or group of persons. As already established in this research, these trends had contributed negatively to the endemic frustration in the system, university and staff autonomy and academic freedom. The visitors of school had supplanted the senate, highly politicized and centralized government agencies have replaced well informed, respected and pragmatist citizens and university lecturers and students, the victims are blamed for fallow standards. The town-gown relationship from abinitio shows the trampling of gown and criticism instead of turning out well rounded graduates and programmes, the schools hands are tied trying to incorporate and cope.

## SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Elite theories has been brought to bear within the rubric of the ruling class theory, elite circulation and power elite and every indices have shown that they are instrumental to the emergence of setting and establishment of public universities in Nigeria. Importantly, the application of elite theory in Nigeria needs to be checkmated and ensure a paradigm shift in the elites capitalize mentality. There is need to make legal base upon which development would be streamlined, directed and coordinated.

Governments should discourage ideas of allowing politics and the wishes of few individuals to single handedly determined the establishment and location of public universities. A development commission should instead be created to anchor infrastructure and basic development needs.

Politically motivated course allocation practices as a show of power and patronage relationship, and hierarchical privileges rather than pedagogical fit in the universities should be halted because these internal compromise are capable of being external manifesto and reputational damages. Instead of political considerations, students-centered approach and feedback system should be utilized to drive and make allocation decisions.

Nigerian public universities must reconsider and necessarily repeal obsolete by laws and constraints that are impediment to 21<sup>st</sup> century and the rapidly changing world especially the practice of not allowing vibrant young lecturers to innovate in book writing to bridge the gap of dearth of literature materials and the over bearing shortages of literature materials in the department and faculties through research and development. Instead of an outright ban, a certain committee can be set to assess and sell books.

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