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## **Prospects and Controversies of Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System In Nigeria Tertiary Institutions.**

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### **Abstract**

According to National Policy on Education (1981) tertiary education refers to post-secondary education received at Universities, Monotechnics, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education. The public service reform was carried out for implementing a public financial management reform to achieve strategic, efficient and effective mobilization, allocation and use of public resources, fiscal discipline, transparency, integrity and accountability through timely reporting. To achieve the above mentioned objectives, the Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System (IPPIS) were created. It is digital-based programmes aimed at Public Financial Management (PFM) and the Human Resource and Payroll issues at the federal level. IPPIS is designed to capture facial images, fingerprints of government employees, and stored in a digitalised data-based library which can be accessed with authorisation anywhere. IPPIS was a reform initiative conceived to position the public service for improved efficiency and productivity. Since the inception of the IPPIS project in April 2007, the department claims it has saved the Federal Government billions of Naira by eliminating thousands of ghost workers. The term 'ghost worker' was born in reference to employees who convert salaries through false means, or where a fictitious person or a real worker simply did not work but got paid. This, of course, is perpetrated almost exclusively by civil servants within the civil service. Accurate and reliable personnel information, reduction or elimination of corrupt and sharp practices, facilitation of modern scientific and accurate budgeting and forecasting are the major benefits of IPPIS. Transparency and Accountability remain essential to solving ghost worker challenges and curing the problem. The implementation of IPPIS has not been without challenges; Some of these challenges includes; Lack of sufficient skills transfer to government personnel which prolong consultants stay on the project, poor state of supporting infrastructure such as low internet penetration, technological barrier. Other barriers are problem associated with transfer of pay point due to the posting of employees from IPPIS MDA to non-IPPIS MDA, resistance from stakeholders which have prolonged implementation and corruption on the part of IPPIS official. Conclusions and recommendation were equally made.

**Keywords;** Tertiary Education, IPPIS, Ghost workers and BVN

### **1.0 Introduction**

Tertiary education which is referred to as third-level, third-stage or postsecondary education is the educational level following the completion of a school providing a secondary education. The World Bank noted that tertiary education includes universities, trade schools and colleges.

Tertiary Education includes undergraduate and postgraduate education. Tertiary education generally culminates in the receipt of certificates, diplomas and academic degrees. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) stated that tertiary education focuses on learning endeavors in specialized fields. It includes academic and higher vocational education. The World Bank's World Development Report (2019) on the future of work argues that given the future of work and the increasing role of technology in value chains, tertiary education becomes even more relevant for workers to compete in the labor market.

## **2.0 Tertiary Education in Nigeria**

According to National Policy on Education (1981) tertiary education refers to post-secondary education received at Universities, Monotechnics, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education. At completion of secondary education, students may enroll in a tertiary institution or acquire a vocational education. Students are required to sit for the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board Entrance Examination (JAMB) as well as the Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE) or General Certificate Examination (GCE) and meet varying cut-off marks to gain admission into a tertiary institution Pulse Nigeria (2018).

The Federal Government for long period had no accurate and reliable data on personnel in the Federal civil service and led to inaccurate budgeting for recurrent expenditures and other limitations. Federal Government in their bid to reduce and possibly eliminate these problems emanating from inaccurate budgeting introduced the Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System (IPPIS) which are been implemented in phases. Nigeria In 1999, returned to democratic rule, resulting in government embarking on Public Service Reform (PSR) which resulted in the development of the National Strategy for Public Service Reform (NSPSR) in 2003 (Chiejina, 2019).

The public service reform was to be carried out in four cardinal programmes described as four pillars of NSPSR. Out of the four pillars three was aimed at implementing a public financial management reform to achieve strategic, efficient and effective mobilization, allocation and use of public resources, fiscal discipline, transparency, integrity and accountability through timely reporting. Chiejina (2019) further stated that to achieve this pillar, the Government Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFFMIS) and the Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System (IPPIS) were created. They are digital-based programmes aimed at Public Financial Management (PFM) and the Human Resource and Payroll issues at the federal level.

Therefore, IPPIS is a type of identity system management geared towards providing a centralised database in supporting personal planning and decision making, automated storage of personnel records to aid staff enrolment, and monitoring against budgeting and prevention of wastages and leakages based on factual personnel records and information ([www.oagf.gov.ng/IPPIS](http://www.oagf.gov.ng/IPPIS)). IPPIS is designed to capture facial images, fingerprints of government employees, and stored in a digitalised data-based library which can be accessed with authorisation anywhere. IPPIS was a reform initiative conceived to position the public service for improved efficiency and productivity. It was deployed in 2007 with seven pilot Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDA) and had been expanded to cover 506 MDAs with total staff strength of 344,625 as at September 2018.

IPPIS Secretariat is a department domiciled at the Office of the Accountant-General of the Federation responsible for payment of salaries and wages directly to government employee's bank account with appropriate deductions and remittances of third parties such as the Federal Inland Revenue Service, State Boards of Internal Revenue, National Health Insurance Scheme, National Housing Fund, Pension Fund Administrator, Cooperative Societies, Trade Unions Dues, Association Dues and Bank Loans. The department is responsible for processing and payment of salary to over Three hundred thousand (300,000) Federal Government Employees across the 506 MDAs. IPPIS aims to enroll into the platform, all Federal Government MDAs that draws personnel cost fund from the Consolidated Revenue Fund. Since the inception of the IPPIS project in April 2007, the department claims it has saved the Federal Government billions of Naira by eliminating thousands of ghost workers IPPIS (2007). The term 'ghost worker' was born in reference to employees who convert salaries through false means, or where a fictitious person or a real worker simply did not work but got paid.

This, of course, is perpetrated almost exclusively by civil servants within the civil service. The ghost workers problem, which ought to be an aberration in any proper self-accounting and self-auditing bureaucratic system, is now a national scourge that warrants urgent remedial measures. According to Gbemre (2016) a ghost worker is a payroll personality, not actually employed by the paying public service institution. Ghost workers exist as a person or only in name. Ghost workers disenfranchise other Nigerians by collecting wages and entitlements not due to them. Some are double, triple and multiple dippers, who do one job but collect wages at two, three or multiple pay points. Without a doubt, high among the problems bedeviling the Nigeria's progressive development, especially in the area of its Public Service/Office, is the scourge of ghost workers. Though, the problem is evident across the country and actually a 'national crisis' and a huge drain on the national economy, its prevalence and adverse effect in the Niger Delta region, is far worse Gbemre (2016). It is surprising to discover that some people are ghost workers in close to eight or more different places without working for not even one hour or providing any service. These people earn salaries on a monthly basis in the number of government agencies/departments/parastatals where their names are listed as those under the government. For decades, payroll fraud has continued to drain incredible sums of money from the Nigerian civil service. Infamously known as 'ghost workers', various methods have been employed to check the syndrome, but those behind it continues to find new techniques. These officials are not clueless of the origins of ghost workers and how to plug the loopholes. Rather, they willfully embrace such loopholes or in the least, pretend such loopholes do not exist, because they and their cohorts are the beneficiaries. Ironically, the ghost workers problem is far more rampant in the public service bureaucracy and less so, in the organized private sector. This fact alone, affirms ghost worker proliferation as a public policy failure, which solution lies in the realm of hard-headed problem solving.

Various federal government agencies have recent weeks rolled out related hair-raising figures, of 'ghost workers' identified or removed from payrolls of organizations. The pmnewsalart(2016) revealed that the Bureau of Public Service Reforms stated that federal government saved over N185 billion by removing 65,000 ghost workers since the implementation of IPPIS. The Bureau also noted that 23,000 people that were collecting multiple salaries. The Guardian Newspaper (11 October, 2019) noted that the acting Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, (EFCC), Mr. Ibrahim Magu revealed the commission detected 37,395 ghost workers on the payroll of the federal civil service and that the federal government lost about N1 billion to ghost workers within a certain period. The revelation of Kemi Adeosun the then Minister of Finance came like a thunderbolt in March 2016 that the federal government was investigating an additional 11,000 'ghost workers' it discovered on its payroll.

Irrked by the scandal of phenomenal proportions, the Secretary-General, Association of Senior Civil Servants of Nigeria (ASCSN), Comrade Alade Bashir Lawal, demanded that the federal government set-up a joint government-labour panel to establish the authenticity of the claim of the 23,000 ghost workers in its fold.

Experts believe that Ghost workers exist because every bureaucracy creates its own weaknesses. This is not peculiar to Nigeria. Evidence points to high occurrence of ghost workers in Third World countries. In 2014, Kenya discovered 12,000 ghost workers on its payroll; mainly person who continued to receive salaries after leaving government service. In 2015, Cameroon identified 10,000 ghost workers within its 220,000 civil service cadre that cost the government \$12 million monthly. In Yemen using a biometric system, the government detected 5,875 ghost workers in a 485,818 work force. In Nigeria ghost workers run in the hundreds of thousands, because of willful and complicit phantom paymasters. What was once an aberration resulting from minor personnel or accounting errors is now a scam that exploits lax oversight and weak enforcement of extant public service rules and regulations. The implementation of Biometric Verification Number (BVN), the Treasury Single Account (TSA) and the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) are, among others, steps to check 'ghost workers'.

### **3.0 benefits Of Ippis In Tertiary Institutions In Niceria**

A study carried out by Enakirerhi and Temile (2017) revealed that accurate and reliable personnel information, reduction or elimination of corrupt and sharp practices, facilitation of modern scientific and accurate budgeting and forecasting are the major benefits of IPPIS. Transparency and Accountability remain essential to solving ghost worker challenges and caging the problem. Fraudulent acts by most ghost workers originate with payroll personnel.

Since ghost salaries results from manipulation of payroll technology, blocking such pilfering will require blocking prospective technological loopholes. Thus caging the ghost workers require a uniform and concerted personnel recruitment and civil service census policy that must be in tandem with the payroll data management.

Additional cluster of measures required include, automated mapping of payroll; disbursement of salary only to employees' accounts; use biometric attendance devices; opening accounts for new employees tied to their BVNs from the onset; Segregating duties related to payroll preparation, disbursement and distribution; and finally, ensuring that sequenced pay slips are prepared for the employees, during pay periods. These are not original ideas and are already being used piecemeal in some establishments. Yet to be maximally effective, a holistic approach is required.

Enakirerhi and Temile(2017) added that "the file-based system is marred with over-estimation of ministerial budgeting and thereby fuelling corruption in two ways, falsification of age and certificate of the local government of origin (indigeneship) due to ease of replacement of file records and other sharp practices. Introduction of IPPIS helps reduce these menace as pay rolling would be central and directly to employees' private accounts..

#### **4. Challenges Of Ippis**

The implementation of IPPIS has not been without challenges;  
Some of these challenges include

- Lack of sufficient skills transfer to government personnel which prolong consultants stay on the project- The programme has been hampered by the lack of sufficient skills on the part of government personnel to take over the handling of the scheme which had continuously remained in the hands of consultants.
- Poor state of supporting infrastructure such as low internet penetration- The poor state of supporting infrastructure such as insufficient internet connectivity or broadband in Nigeria has slowed down the implementation of the scheme. This is because most Government offices in Nigeria do not have free internet or WIFI connectivity or access within their office vicinity.
- Technological barrier- Lack of technological or insufficient technological advancement in the area of production of computer hardwares and softwares within the Nigeria territory has hampered the availability of necessary computer accessories that will ensure improved internet connectivity and enhanced Management Information System (MIS) within the Government parastatals and MDA's that will derive the smooth implementation of the programme.
- Problem associated with transfer of pay point due to the posting of employees from IPPIS MDA to non-IPPIS MDA .It takes a lot of time to affect the necessary transfer of personnel's information from non IPPIS MDA to IPPIS MDA. This will be ameliorated by deploying sophisticated Management Information System (MIS) that will integrate information within non IPPIS MDA's and IPPIS MDS's.
- Resistance from stakeholders which have prolonged implementation- Initially when the Federal Government of Nigeria announced that all personnel working under its payroll will be paid only through the IPPIS, notable trade unions such as Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASSU) and Academic Staff Union of Colleges of Education (COEASU) resisted that lectures in Federal Universities and Federal Colleges of Education will not enroll in such a scheme like IPPIS, that negates all the legislative laws establishing them respectively. The umbrella body of Colleges of Education in Nigeria (COEASU) later mandated it members to enroll in the IPPIS scheme saying that their peculiarities has been taken care of by the federal Government through the IPPIS scheme. The initial resistance by the COEASU delayed its implementation in the Colleges of Education in Nigeria which culminated to the non-implementation of newly approved minimum wage by the Federal Government in Colleges of Education in Nigeria up till February, 2020. The Academic Staff Union of Universities in Nigeria (ASUU) has in its entirety rejected the enrollment of the scheme in the Federal Universities in Nigeria mandating its members to embark on an indefinite strike once their salaries are not paid due to non-enrollment in IPPIS scheme.
- Government's lack of will and commitment to accelerate implementation of this project- There are insinuations that some top Government officials who are partners in sharing largess emanating from over bloated workforce (ghost workers) are fighting the implementation of IPPIS in some MDA's.
- Corruption on the part of IPPIS official- it was revealed that some officials of the Nigeria Police and Civil defense that corrected their short payment did so by visiting IPPIS through back door.

## 5.0 Solutions To The Problems Of Ghost Workers In Nigeria

In tackling this problem of ghost workers, it is imperative to address its source, which according to experts requires:

- Periodic review of hiring and firing policies and ensuring that they comply with establishment and appropriated recruitment figures.
- Periodic census of public service personnel and the maintenance of records of all official and natural personnel attrition, including sacks, retirements and deaths.
- Maintaining an organigram of every MDA that reflects approved staff strength
- Identifying the accounting officers, mostly in the Offices of the Heads of Service responsible for monitoring establishment quotas, and handling public service recruitment and separations and approving salary vouchers sent to banks.
- Installing fail-safe redundancies in electronic information technology platforms that check overrides and inputs into the system used for preparing payrolls.
- Ensuring that personnel and supernumeraries brought in by political appointees also depart with their principals.
- Strong internal controls that dispense with all forms of cash payment for emoluments.
- Adequate monitoring of banks and other financial institutions including micro-finance banks used for payment of salaries.
- Transparency and Accountability remain essential to solving ghost worker challenges and caging the problem. Without question, fraudulent acts by most ghost workers originate with payroll personnel. Since ghost salaries results from manipulation of payroll technology, blocking such pilfering will require blocking prospective technological loopholes. Thus caging the ghost workers require a uniform and concerted personnel recruitment and civil service census policy that must be in tandem with the payroll data management.
- Additional cluster of measures required include, automated mapping of payroll; disbursement of salary only to employees' accounts; use biometric attendance devices; opening accounts for new employees tied to their BVNs from the onset.
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## 6.0 Controversy Surrounding Ippis Implementation In Nigeria.

- **Inconsistent payment-** Police inspectors and rank and file under the AkwaIbom State Police Command including some personnel of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps raised alarm that authorities should investigate inconsistency in the payment of their salaries. They suspected the operation of the IPPIS had some fraud culminating to underpayment of their regular salary every month since 2018 when payment of police salaries and allowances was moved from Mechanised Salary Section (MSS) to the IPPIS. The officers complained at the MSS Uyo and the officers there blamed the IPPIS saying the problem emanated from IPPIS. Some affected officers travelled to IPPIS office in Abuja they were referred back to the MSS in Uyo and blamed the MSS for the short payments and non-payment in some months. It was revealed that some inspectors on same grade level 10 then was receiving N50, 000, N60, 000, some N40, 000 and in some situations, constables were receiving N250, 000 monthly, while sergeants, inspectors are paid N10, 000, N32, 000, and even N9, 000 as monthly salaries respectively. They demanded to know why officers in the same grade level are paid different salaries and why the amount paid each month is not consistent
- **FEDERAL GOVERNMENT VS ASUU IPPIS FACEOFF**  
Agbas (2019) noted that the faceoff between the Academic Staff Union of University (ASUU) the umbrella body of university lecturers in Nigeria threatening to down tools or embark on a strike over IPPIS after President Buhari's on October 8, 2019, as he presented the 2020 budget proposal before lawmakers, vowed that any federal employee not captured on the IPPIS should forget receiving a monthly salary, beginning from October 2019. President Buhari says no IPPIS, no pay for federal workers (Presidency)

*"We shall sustain our efforts in managing personnel costs," Buhari began.*

*"Accordingly, I have directed the stoppage of the salary of any federal government staff that is not captured on the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) platform by the end of October 2019.*

*"All agencies must obtain the necessary approvals before embarking on any fresh recruitment and any contraventions of these directives shall attract severe sanctions," the president warned.*

ASUU members and all federal university lecturers belong in the bracket of individuals on the federal government payroll. ASUU, led by **Prof BiodunOgunyemi** noted that enforcement of the IPPIS as it relates to lecturers, as an infringement on its autonomy called IPPIS a scam and a threat to national security. Ogunyemi further revealed while briefing The Senate President AhamedLawan and handful of law makers in late 2019 that;

*"The IPPIS is not a home-grown initiative, rather it is a prescription of the World Bank, which ultimate consequence is to create anarchy and therefore, retard the growth and development of Nigeria."*

*"The system does not, for example, capture the remuneration of staff on sabbatical, external examiners, external assessors, and Earned Academic Allowances. It does not address the movement of staff as in the case of visiting, adjunct, part-time, consultancy service, which academics offer across universities in Nigeria."*

ASUU contended that implementing the IPPIS would mean asking lecturers to make the trip to the capital city of Abuja for physical biometric data capture, should lecturers not be available when IPPIS personnel visit schools for the capture;

*"The implementation of IPPIS in Nigerian Universities will further localise their operations and perspectives, thus negatively impacting their ranking in the global academic community.*

*"For example, the promotion exercise in the Professional Cadre, which is subject to external assessment that may last for several months; in such cases, when the outcome of the exercise is returned positive, the beneficiary is paid arrears from the beginning of the assessment process. But this cannot be captured by IPPIS.*

*"The IPPIS does not recognise the 70 years retirement age of academics in the professorial cadre, and 65 years for those in the non-professorial cadre, as against the 60 years in the civil service.*

*"Technically speaking, IPPIS is a scam. It creates more problems than it pretends to solve. The IPPIS system only recognises staff members that are on permanent and pensionable appointments.*

*"The IPPIS restricts the ability of universities to employ much-needed staff at short notice. Such staff, when recruited, may not be paid until cleared by the Office of the Accountant General of the Federation (OAGF), thus creating avenues of corruption. The dynamism associated with staff recruitment will become cumbersome with the introduction of IPPIS,"*

## 7.0contrary View

Pulse news (2019) elicited information from two respondents which are two Assistant Lecturers that are excited about the IPPIS coming to the university payroll system. The two respondents noted that;

*"Those of us who are younger and junior lecturers love IPPIS and we want it. The university always makes funny deductions from our salaries and we have been grumbling about that for years. Now, with the IPPIS, they won't be able to do that because our salaries will hit our bank accounts straight from the federal account.*

*"ASUU is protesting because the association is made up of the big boys who steal from salaries of junior lecturers. We don't want the federal government to bow to their pressure, please."*

Pulse news (2019) also revealed that the Chairman Public Service Reforms, **Dr Joe Abah**, says ASUU's hardball over the implementation of the IPPIS makes no sense. He fumed that;

*"President Buhari is paid from IPPIS, as are judges. IPPIS hasn't fixed their retirement age at 60 years. The military is on IPPIS. They have allowances and foreign duty. But let's continue to be held hostage by ASUU and to prioritize political interest over national interest.*

*“The government should use the ASUU rejection of IPPIS as a starting point to the dismantling of the unworkable system of managing tertiary education in Nigeria. No employee should be able to dictate to their employer the payment system the employer should use. Enough is enough.”*

## 8.0 Conclusion

The paper concluded that the overhead cost of running agencies and MDA's would be reduced by over 75 per cent if IPPIS is properly implemented. Under the old manual and filing system, some unscrupulous workers were collecting multiple salaries from different government sources, or not working with the government. Inaccurate and unreliable information characterized the old manual and file-based system, resulting in padded overhead cost, double pay and other sharp practices. This meant that the government did not know the number of its workforce resulting in budgeting and estimation difficulties.

## 9.0 Recommendations

- Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) should partner with Office of the Auditor General, Office of the Accountant General and the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to monitor and execute corruption risks assessment on the various electronic-governance platforms.
- Unidentified software developers should not have unhindered access to the database of IPPIS and usually set up new users and change live data, from time to time.
- The managers should ensure that the password controls to IPPIS database should not be accessed remotely through the internet.
- Password to access the IPPIS database does not expire after 90 days, The situation, makes it possible for retired government officers to use their password even after leaving the office should be evaluated and stopped.

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