

## THE “BEGGING BOWL” AND UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN STUDENTS IN WARTIME, 1967-1970

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**Abstract:** The Nigerian Civil War, which lasted from 1967 to 1970, has been one of the most pivotal periods in Nigeria's history. It not only represents a challenging part of history but also presents an interesting basis from which to develop a sequential historical narrative that would enable to understand our direction as a nation. With the country's dwindling financial situation resulting from the war, the number of those who could not afford university tuition increased. This brought to the fore the university's inability to support indigent students, as was the usual practice before the war in Ibadan, when students were supported with a Special Loan Fund and scholarships from either their state of origin or the Federal Government of Nigeria. However, with the lack of funds, it became apparent that many brilliant minds would wither away due to a lack of financial support. This, to a large extent, led indigent students to source funds, prompting the University authorities to recommend students to the Federal Military Government for assistance, which ultimately led to the establishment of the Indigent Students' Scheme. This paper interrogates the plight of the students with reference to the University of Ibadan during the Nigerian Civil War. This paper, drawing on primary and secondary sources, cross-examines the letters of request for loans submitted to the University authority, the Federal Military Government, and their respective states of origin. This paper examines how the establishment of the Indigent Student Scheme alleviated the suffering of the indigent students during the war.

**Keywords:** Begging; Education; Indigent; University of Ibadan

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### Introduction

Although a British creation, Nigeria comprises three main ethnic groups: the Hausa in the northern region, the Igbo in the eastern region, and the Yoruba in the western region. However, there are a host of other ethnic groups like the Urohobo, Ijaw, Efik, Kanuri,<sup>1</sup> etc. Thus, Nigeria cannot be said

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<sup>1</sup> Dikshit, D. Ramesh. *The Political Geography of Federalism*. New Delhi: Macmillan, 1975. Quoted in Kunle Amuwo, “The Historical Roots of the Nigerian Civil War: An

to be a homogeneous country. However, the period 1914 – 1946 never really saw a practical unification of the Northern and Southern protectorates. Previously, each of these protectorates operated as a separate entity, except for the coordination provided by the central government. The individualistic development of the Northern and Southern protectorates left Nigeria a rich legacy of problems of integration for later generations. It was not surprising, therefore, that when Nigerians found themselves operating in the same legislative council under the Richards constitution for the first time, they saw themselves as strangers.<sup>2</sup>

In historicizing the Nigerian Civil War, the question that comes to mind is whether it is possible in Nigeria to engage in historical reconstruction within a national context that is free from geographical partisanship and primordial ethnic bias. The Nigerian Civil War, which began in 1967 and ended in 1970, is a clear case in point that represents not only a dark chapter in Nigeria's history but also offers an opportunity from which to develop a sequential historical narrative that will afford us a chance to understand the nation's direction. In the words of Slavoj Zizek, some ‘lost causes’ may have deserved our renewed attention. He opines that the failed revolutionary movements of the past, such as Jacobinism, Leninism, Stalinism, and Maoism, need to be revisited so that their ‘redemptive’ and ‘revolutionary’ kernels can be separated from their ‘totalitarian’ shells.<sup>3</sup> In defense of Zizek’s point of view, Daniel G. Williams suggested that

His aim is not to defend political terror- Zizek is fully aware of the atrocities perpetuated by Stalin and Mao- but is to question the easy, unthinking liberal dismissal of revolutionary movements.<sup>4</sup>

The position of Daniel provides the footing for our analysis. The objective of this research is not, therefore, to agree hook-line-sinker with the Igbo secessionist tendencies but to engage in a historical re-evaluation, as Daniel puts it, of the easy, unthinking dismissal of the factors, forces, and issues that created and nurtured the Biafra rebellion of 1967.

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Explanation,” in *Perspectives on the Nigerian Civil War*, ed. Siyan Oyeweso, O.A.P. Humanities Series (Ibadan: O.A.P., 1992), 4.

<sup>2</sup>Isawa Elaigwu, “Nigerian Federalism under Civilian and Military Regimes,” *Oxford Journals*, 18:1 (1988) 3

<sup>3</sup> Slavoj Zizek, 2008, “In Defense of the Lost Cause,” cited in Olutayo C. Adesina, *Selective Memory and Nostalgia Contemplation of History*, A Paper Presented at the IFRA Personality Lecture, Institute of African Studies, November 2012, 6

<sup>4</sup> Daniel G. Williams, “Introduction: Celticism and the Black Atlantic,” *Comparative American Studies*, 8:2, (2010), 81-16 cited in Olutayo C. Adesina, *Selective Memory and Nostalgia Contemplation of History*, A Paper Presented at the IFRA Personality Lecture, Institute of African Studies, November 2012, 6

It is in this vein that this paper examines the plight of students during the war, focusing on student welfareism and tuition challenges at the University of Ibadan during the same period.

Likewise, if Zizek is willing to condone, accommodate, and understand 'lost causes'. In that case, I am in the same vein as opining that the 'lost cause' that was the Biafra succession and its effects on the University of Ibadan indigent students deserved our renewed attention so that the 'redemptive' kernels can be separated from its rebellious shells.

### **Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970**

To most Nigerians, Saturday, January 15, 1966, began as a typical day; by midday, it became clear that significant and historic events were unfolding all over the country. Lagos, the Federal Capital, was in chaos due to the near-total breakdown of communication between the regional capitals, as Nigerian Army soldiers occupied strategic positions at radio stations, airports, and the Posts and Telegraph Department.<sup>5</sup> All telephone links with the outside world were at a standstill. By midday, top Army officers, including Major-General Aguiyi Ironsi and some leading members of the old government, were seen around the Force Headquarters in Ikoyi. For most of the day, Radio Nigeria played military music, and rumours about the kidnapping of two former Cabinet Ministers and other happenings in the region were widespread. There was great suspense everywhere. The Parliament did not sit as a quorum could not be formed. There was an announcement late in the afternoon, which among other things said that the Prime Minister and one of his Ministers had been kidnapped and taken to an unknown destination. It went further to say that "the ill-advised mutiny" would be brought to an end and that law and order in the few disturbed areas of the country would be restored.<sup>6</sup>

The event of January 15, 1966, went down in history as the first coup in Nigeria, led by a group of young army officers, mainly of the rank of Major, in an attempt to seize control of the country's government. The objective of the coup by the coup plotters was crystal clear- to sanitise the Nigerian government,<sup>7</sup> in which they guaranteed far-reaching change. Unfortunately, the mode of the victims sparked suspicion for the coup plotters<sup>8</sup> of the assassination of the January coup left a dangerous dent that its leaders, principally from the Igbo ethnic group, were out to put an end to the first government, controlled by the Northerners, thus paving the way for Igbo

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<sup>5</sup> "We Present Leaders of our New Nigeria," *New Nigeria*, February 1966, 1

<sup>6</sup> *New Nigeria*, February 1966, 4

<sup>7</sup> Ademoyega, A, *Why We Struck: The Story of the First Nigerian Coup*, (Ibadan: Evans Publishers, 1975), 5

<sup>8</sup> Fred Onyeoziri, "What Caused the Nigerian Civil War?" In Eghosa E. Osaghe (etals), *The Nigerian Civil War and its Aftermath*, (John Archers Publishers, Ibadan, 2002). 94

political ascendancy.<sup>9</sup> This brought to the forefront the resolution to abolish the regions and their powers of autonomy, therefore setting in motion a constitutional crisis about how Nigeria was to be governed, a crisis that continues to this day.

However, it is an apparent fact that a university, as an institution within society, cannot be isolated from the nation's general course of life. Thus, in Nigeria and other parts of the globe, universities have continued to serve as a fountain for the generation of ideas, which, when understood and accepted, can become acceptable norms that lead to large-scale development. They are also a social institution that reflects some of the ills and problems of the wider society. It is in this vein that this research seeks to examine the Nigerian Civil War and student indigency at the University of Ibadan.

### **Indigent Student and the “Begging Bowl”**

Begging is an age-old social problem in Nigeria. It is as old as man himself. Therefore, people beg for different reasons, ranging from necessities such as food, clothing, and shelter, to more personal needs. In categorizing beggars, Okediji broadly divides them into two categories. They include ritual beggars (mothers of twin babies, masquerades who solicit alms during festivals). The second category is compulsive beggars. These individuals do not make begging their business. They are clean, healthy, able-minded, and able-bodied who beg as a temporary solution to their problem or due to temporary hardship.<sup>10</sup> In the case of University College Ibadan students, they fall into the second category, as the majority of students cannot afford their fees. Peter Pan asks: “Whom do I consider eligible to beg? Whom do I consider special beggars? I term as special and necessary beggars anybody still acquiring education. Why, then, was there a need for students to beg for an education? During the early 1960s, the aspiration of Nigerian youth to receive a Western education took on an unprecedented dimension. It was at this point that people began to recognize the need to pursue Western education at all costs as a prerequisite for social mobility. It also coincided with the period when Nigerian Universities increasingly met the public and commercial demand for graduates. Hence, by 1962, there was a sharp decline in the incentives for scholarship from the Federal and state governments, which were intended to aid the aspirations of Nigerian youth in their quest for education.

Towards the end of 1962, a total of £45,000 was owed by six hundred undergraduate students of the University College, Ibadan. These students were sent off-campus for their inability to pay their fees. Recounting his experience,

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<sup>9</sup> Rapheal Chijoke Njoku, “An Endless Circle of Secessionism: Intellectual and Separatist Movement,” in *Nigeria in Secession, History and the Social Sciences*, eds. Bruno Coppieters and Michel Huyseune, (Brussels University Press, 2002), 251

<sup>10</sup> Tunji Adwuyi, *Street-Begging in Nigeria*, (Spectrum Books Limited, Ibadan, 2007), 16

one of the defaulters, whose father is a farmer, lent his voice to the reason why he defaulted. He stated:

“I admit it is wrong to be a defaulter, but my family had been hard hit by the reduction in cocoa price. If we cannot find the money and I have to leave, all my father’s plans for me will be ruined.”<sup>11</sup>

Commenting on the plight of the students and the position of the university and why they insisted that the students must either pay or leave, the Registrar of the University, Mr. Adamolekun observed that although the number appears large, it was difficult to find whether all the six hundred students involved were “genuinely in hardship”. He argues further that:

The university has never in the past taken a strong measure against students in regards to payment of fees because the university has always been conscious that it owes responsibility to the nation to keep the students it admits at all cost and to turn them out as graduates and not as debtors.<sup>12</sup>

He added:

But now that the numbers are increasing and universities also increased in number there seems to be no justifiable reason for continuing the past policy.<sup>13</sup>

In an appeal letter to the Military Governors, Mr. Afolabi Solaja, the Students Union Leader, also urged the Federal Government to review its policy on scholarship awards. He posited that many students who entered the university with the hope of gaining a scholarship at the end of the session have been sorrowfully disappointed, as scholarship awards went to people just seeking admission or from well-off homes.<sup>14</sup> Hence, a Student Relief Fund was established to support students who were in default.

In a swift response to the student body's request, the Western Nigeria Emergency Administration issued a license to the Student Union Body of the University College, Ibadan, under the Public Collections Ordinance. With the license issued, the union was enabled to collect money from the public for the relief fund that had been launched earlier to support the situation of the six hundred students in question. In addition to the license, the Western Nigeria Government awarded forty Bursaries to undergraduates of the University College, Ibadan. On the contrary, the Federal Government made its position known through the Federal Minister of Education, Mr. Aja Nwachukwu, stating that the Federal Government will not provide any loan to over five hundred

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<sup>11</sup> “Ray of Hope for UCI Students”, *Daily Times*, 13<sup>th</sup> December, 1962, 8.

<sup>12</sup> “Ray of Hope for UCI Students”, 8

<sup>13</sup> “Ray of Hope for UCI Students”, 8

<sup>14</sup> “Mass Dismissal at UCI? Student Appeal to Govts”, *Morning Post*, 11 December 1962, 16.

students at the university who face expulsion due to their inability to pay their fees.<sup>15</sup>

It was not only students of the University College, Ibadan, who were trapped in this quagmire of financial debt; students of the remaining universities at the time were also affected. This was contained in a communiqué issued by students of the University College Ibadan, who wrote to the President of the National Union of Nigerian Students (NUNS) requesting that their assistance not be restricted to the University College Ibadan alone, but also to the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.<sup>16</sup>

This outburst by a student of the University College, Ibadan, sparked a media war among undergraduates of the existing universities at the time, with sympathizers for each of them expressing their views. One such example was Dureke, who argues that it would be a connivance at or condonation of irresponsibility to support the appeal to the Government of the Federation to allocate a substantial amount of £45,000, which could be used to build a rural cottage hospital. Instead, he suggested that the defaulting students should be cleared out of the place since thousands of education-thirsty Nigerians are qualified and have the money, but cannot secure admission due to limited accommodation.<sup>17</sup>

Contrary to the views expressed by Dureke, Omoregie Idehen lent his voice when he opines that:

Over 90 per cent of them have the hope that they may win scholarship because of this, they continue to use the money meant for their fees in buying very costly shirts and suits and they spend a large part on their so-called girlfriends.<sup>18</sup>

He further expressed his primary concern:

If the Federal Government or any of our Nigerian Governments should give automatic scholarship to these UCI students, as they would want it done, what about those at Nsukka, Lagos, Ife and Zaria Universities?<sup>19</sup>

On a different platform, reacting to the position postulated by Dureke, Yemi Ogunbiyi, a Nigerian undergraduate, also, obviously a fee-paying student, lamented:

...to allow these students to miss university education at this time of our development is a national calamity. We need to recognize that this country

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<sup>15</sup> “UCI Students to Meet Ministers”, *Daily Times*, 15<sup>th</sup> December, 1962, 7.

<sup>16</sup> “UCI Students To Meet Ministers,” *Daily Times*, December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1962, 7.

<sup>17</sup> S.O. Dureke, “Govt. Can’t Help Defaulters,” *Morning Post*, January 8<sup>th</sup>, 1963, 17.

<sup>18</sup> S.O. Dureke, “Govt. Can’t Help Defaulters,” *Morning Post*, January 8<sup>th</sup>, 1963, 17

<sup>19</sup> Omoregie Idehen, “UCI Boys Deserves No Help,” *The Post*, 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1963, 9.

can remain great only if we have trained men who can lead the nation as we develop. To assist this student is to help our country.<sup>20</sup>

Before this time, 21.8 per cent of students gave the Federal Government as their principal source of financial support at University; 16.8 per cent mentioned regional or local governments; 25.2 per cent were supported by religious bodies, commercial firms or other state institutions; 10.4 per cent received help from private individuals or relatives other than parents; and only 0.3 per cent were mostly self-supporting. This was also indicative of the fact that parental poverty contributed to their financial state. The chart below indicates the abrupt decline.

**Percentage of University of Ibadan Students  
Receiving Various Sources of Financial Support (1948-1966)**

Source of Support	1948-52	1953-57	1958-62	1963-66	All Years
Government	45%	46.9%	42.9%	17%	38.6%
Private Institutions	35.3%	26.2%	27.6%	12.3%	25.2%
Friends and Relatives	19.8%	27%	29.6%	70.7%	36.2%
Total	100.1* (#536)	100.1* (#836)	100.1* (#961)	100.0 (#666)	100.0 (#999)*

The percentages do not add up to 100.0 due to rounding error.

**Percentages of Fathers and Mothers of the University of Ibadan in Various Occupational Categories**

Occupation	Father's Occupation (1948-66)	Mother's Occupation (1961-66)
Farmers	30.7%	11.7%
Traders	16.4%	35.7%
Traditional Chiefs	1.9%	0.0%
Unskilled Workers	0.7%	1.0%
Artisan	7.4%	3.7%
Clerical	6.3%	0.2%

<sup>20</sup> Yemi Ogunbiyi, "UCI Fee Problem," *Moring Post*, January 21, 1963, 12.

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and Sales		
Semi-Professional	22.5%	3.7%
Professional	11.1%	0.9%
Others	2.9%	43.1%
Total	99.9** (#2711)	100.0 (#980)

**\*\*Percentages do not add up to 100.0 because of rounding errors**

Pierre L. Van Den Berghe and Catherine M. Nuttney, *Some Social Characteristics of University of Ibadan Students*, an unpublished paper

Therefore, with the financial crisis affecting students, there was a need for a loan scheme to be implemented to replace the public support previously enjoyed by the majority of students. This became necessary because student fees covered only one-fifth or less of the total education cost. That fraction was high enough to create financial hardship for the greater majority of the students. This, to a large extent, will enable students to achieve their potential and not sacrifice their academic goals on the altar of financial troubles.

Addressing a Press Conference in Ibadan, S.O Oyedeki, the Students' Union Leader of the University of Ibadan, announced a three-point proposal for the urgent consideration of the Government of Nigeria to provide an annual grant of approximately £2000 to each university to assist the most vulnerable students. This was based on the fate of eighty other students from the University of Ibadan in 1964, who hung in the balance due to their failure to pay outstanding fees.<sup>21</sup> Earlier in 1963, over 1,000 non-scholarship students at the same university faced expulsion due to financial concerns.<sup>22</sup> This suggests that financial problems have continued to pose a significant obstacle for ambitious young men and women in pursuing Western education. However, one would expect students to first ascertain their financial capabilities before accepting admission to the university. However, it is not only a matter of trying to lose sight of the fact that many of the students who suffered this financial plight in 1963 were only just able to devise temporary solutions to their bitter experience, and the present situation is merely a continuation of the old one.

To provide a lasting solution to the student financial crisis, the University Council approved the disbursement of £15,000 in the form of loans to indigent students during the 1963/64 academic session. To carry out the scheme effectively, the Vice Chancellor approached a bank to operate the loan

<sup>21</sup> U.A.I/S.A.O 25.6.2/ *Daily Times*, January 27<sup>th</sup>, 1964/ “Students May Be Sent Out,” 1

<sup>22</sup> Editorial, “The Plight of our Student,” *Morning Post*, December, 16<sup>th</sup>, 1963, 1.



scheme in cooperation with the university, based on the university's recommendation to students. Thereafter, the accruing interest will increase the guaranteed sum of 15,000 available as Revolving Loan Fund.<sup>23</sup>

After the conditions of operation were finally agreed upon by both parties, that is, the University authority and the bank in question. The scheme was designated the Bank of West Africa Loan Scheme, and criteria for an eligible student were established. This includes the following:

- i. Only students who have spent more than one successful academic session - counting towards the award of a degree-in the university shall be entitled to the annual maximum loan of 150 pounds per students - a rough estimate of tuition, boarding and lodging fees. In exceptional cases, students studying science and other professional courses may be awarded £ 180.
- ii. No student shall be entitled to loans more than two times during the course of studies
- iii. Preference will be given to final year degree students over all others
- iv. In awarding loans, notes shall be taken of the fee paying habits of students through the knowledge gained from the Account Office and the Office of the Assistant Registrar (Students). An example of such indication shall be the extent of a student's indebtedness during a given session.
- v. The maximum loan of 150 pounds may be reduced by the following factors:
  - a. Year of study of student, that is as far as possible a final year student shall be given the maximum amount, whereas other student shall receive less; unless the available fund permits the award of the maximum sum.
  - b. Financial aids from other university sources e.g. ex-gratia awards from the Vice-Chancellor's Charity Fund.
  - c. Bursaries from humanitarian bodies and governmental sources and
  - d. Departmental scholarships.<sup>24</sup>

Despite these well-placed criteria by the University authority, it was also constrained by some challenges. One such condition was that a wealthy student would not be included in the scheme, and children of staff members, civil servants, and other well-known personalities in society, whose income was ascertainable, would not be considered unless there were overwhelming reasons to the contrary. This becomes impossible to enforce because the administrative ability to enforce this condition was limited by students' reluctance to declare

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<sup>23</sup> U.A.I/S.A.O 25. 7,1, "Establishment of Student Loan Scheme," Working Paper.1

<sup>24</sup> U.A.I/S.A.O 25. 7,1, "Establishment of Student Loan Scheme," Working Paper.1

their parents' actual income and status. Additionally, the preference given to sciences as indicated in the criteria for students reveals a pattern of discrimination against other faculties. This is indeed the result of a deliberate policy decision to encourage the “hard” science on the assumption that they make a greater contribution to national development. An editorial succinctly puts it:

While we do not hold that the arts and the humanities are not useful, we urge that bias should be shown for the sciences and technologies. Those wishing to read for theology, history or geography should seek appropriate sponsor. In fact if we had our way, we would restrict the application of the scheme to the fields of science and technology, for those armed with the highest-grades skills in these areas of learning are most likely to meet the immediate needs of this nation in a hurry.<sup>25</sup>

Similarly, students of Eastern Nigerian origin also benefited from a loan scheme known as the Eastern Loan Scheme. In this regard, the Eastern Government provided £3000 to the university, which was to be disbursed only to students from the eastern part of the country, as the name implies. The condition includes: loans will not be made to students during the first two years, and no loan shall exceed £100 in any one year.<sup>26</sup> In the same vein, students of Western Nigeria were previously awarded bursaries, but this was scrapped, and a Loan Scheme was instituted. Under the scheme, the Government of Western Nigeria made available £5000 to be disbursed to student who showed clear proof of indigence, good academic performance, and preferably in the last year of their respective courses of studies.<sup>27</sup> In a thankful manner, Razak Afolabi Solaja, in his presidential address at the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the National Union of Nigerian Students, appreciated the gesture of the Senate of the University of Ibadan for the support of the Relief Fund and further urged them to do more.<sup>28</sup>

It is worth noting that the majority of Ibadan students are older than their European counterparts. This could be attributed to inadequate schooling facilities, which have in turn led to delayed schooling. Pierre L. Van and Catherine M. Nuttney, providing statistical data on the age of entry among University of Ibadan students, opine that the age of entry into the university has steadily risen over time. For instance, from 1948 to 1955, 28.9 percent of the students were under 20 when they first matriculated. From 1956 to 1966, that

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<sup>25</sup> An Editorial, “Hip, Hip to Ibadan,” *Nigerian Pilot*, 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 1965, 2

<sup>26</sup> U.A.I, S.A.O 25. 7.2, “Establishment of Student Loan Scheme,” Working Paper, 2.

<sup>27</sup> U.A.I, S.A.O 25. 7.3, “Western Nigerian Govt. Proposal to Establish Loan Scheme for University of Western Nigeria Origin,” April 29<sup>th</sup>, 1966, 1

<sup>28</sup> Razak Afolabi Solaja, “We Decry Oppression,” Being Extract from a Presidential Address Delivered at the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the National Union of Nigerian Students held at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria from 16-21 September, 1964. *Nigerian Tribune*, 23<sup>rd</sup>, September, 1964, 7.

percentage had dropped to 6.7 percent, and 22.5 percent were 25 years old or more, leaving 64 percent in the 20-24 age group.<sup>29</sup> Apart from inadequate schooling facilities, another reason that could be adduced for this was the sudden decline in the percentage of students on scholarship. This factor prompted many of them to interrupt their schooling to earn money, enabling them to sponsor themselves. Fortunately for many of them, they had undergone teacher training, which provided them with the opportunity to earn money as teachers to cover their fees.

### **Impact of the Nigerian Civil War on Indigent Students**

With the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War, the university's finances were depleted.<sup>30</sup> This was openly lamented in the speech of the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Adeoye Lambo, during the University's Foundation Day celebration. He bemoaned:

The most crucial drawback has been that, for three and a half to nearly four years, we have been operating on standstill budgets at the university. This has had a most incapacitating and disturbing effect not only on the progress of the university but on the morale of the staff, intellectual quest and enquiries, the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, the training of young men and women, the inherent capacity for institutional growth may be incapacitated by lack of funds.<sup>31</sup>

The issue of funding was so critical that it significantly impacted the functioning of the university's postgraduate programmes and other developmental initiatives. This made the university to diversify its efforts to meet with its needs. Professor Adeoye Lambo, who had recently been appointed as the Vice-Chancellor of the University, sought funds from international agencies. While some provided financial support, others offered their assistance in the form of staffing to supplement the university's existing staff. The effect was so severe that at some point, existing vacancies had to be frozen in the quest to maintain other academic projects that earlier enjoyed the generous donations from foreign donors, but were no longer forthcoming.

Bolanle Awe, a staff member of the University of Ibadan, described the situation as pathetic. She stated that it became a challenge for the two universities, the University of Ibadan and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, to fulfill the mandate of their establishment, as to which was stronger and more visible over time.

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<sup>29</sup> S.A.O/U.A.I, 27.2., Pierre L. Van Den Berghe and Catherine M. Nuttney, "Some Social Characteristic of University of Ibadan Students," 3 -4

<sup>30</sup> Adegboyega A Adedire, Civil wars and African Universities: The University of Ibadan Example, 1967-1970, *Ufahamu: Journal of African Studies*, 40(2), 124

<sup>31</sup> Address by the Vice-Chancellor Professor T. Adeoye Lambo in Support of the Honorary Graduands at the Liberty Stadium, Ibadan on Foundation Day, 1970, 11.

Hence, it became challenging for staff members, as they had to shoulder unusually heavy teaching loads and other commitments, a situation that was not conducive to their research endeavors. Nevertheless, the University of Ibadan, in particular, survived.<sup>32</sup>

More importantly, the University of Ibadan was unable to support indigent students, as it had previously established a Special Loan Fund for financially destitute students.<sup>33</sup> However, with the lack of funds, it became increasingly apparent that many students would be unable to take their exams due to their financial situation.<sup>34</sup> As of March 1968, a total of forty-three students were listed by the University authority as indebted students who might not be allowed to write their forthcoming exams. This included all levels, from undergraduate to postgraduate students at the university.<sup>35</sup> The number subsequently rose to over five hundred students. Giving reasons why a good number of these financially handicapped students could no longer afford their fees, Olaleye Ajayi, President of the Students Body posited that most of the students has been badly hit by the war, loss of parent and or sponsors during the war, loss of contact with their parents and some of them believing that their little saving would carry them through or that they would get financial assistance from somewhere while at the university. Another set of students has, through sheer courage and willpower, escaped the battlefronts to continue their education.<sup>36</sup> However, the majority of the defaulters were from the Western and Eastern parts of the country. The reason alluded to this fact was that over six hundred students (from the Midwest and abroad) of state origin have been awarded scholarships since 1964.<sup>37</sup> This was contained in a communiqué from the Ministry of Education, Midwestern State, to all the concerned universities. Additionally, the northern state has already awarded scholarships to most of its indigenes who gained admission to institutions of higher learning.<sup>38</sup>

In response to the plight of students during this period of crisis, the Federal Military Government announced an Indigent Student Scheme to alleviate the suffering of indigent students. In the scheme, the FMG was willing

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<sup>32</sup> Personal Communication with Bolanle Awe 21/4/2014

<sup>33</sup> Comment, “Hip, Hip to Ibadan,” *West African Pilot*, 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 1965, 2.

<sup>34</sup> Adegboyega A Adedire, Civil Wars and African Universities: The University of Ibadan Example, 1967-1970, *Ufahamu: Journal of African Studies*, 40 (2), 125

<sup>35</sup> U.I.A, S.A.O 25.6.3, List of Indebted Student Students as at 14<sup>th</sup> March, 1968, “Non-Residential”

<sup>36</sup> Olaeye Ajayi, An Address presented to the Vice-Chancellor, Professor T. Adeoye Lambo at the End of the Term Session of the Student Representatives Council on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> of March 1968, 1

<sup>37</sup> Iziokhai, R.I, for Permanent Secretary, Student and Special Service Division, Ministry of Education, Benin City, Mid-Western, Nigeria, 1968. 1

<sup>38</sup> An editorial, “The same Old Thing,” *New Nigeria*, 16th Oct, 1969, 1.

to spend £1,000,000 for the scheme.<sup>39</sup> By implication, six thousand indigent students would benefit from the scheme in all the universities. This meant that, at the present number of existing universities, at least one thousand five hundred students could possibly benefit from the scheme in each university. The announcement raised the hopes and aspirations of the indigent students. Six months after the announcement of the scheme, the Federal Commissioner for Education announced that the Indigent Student Scheme had been scrapped and was immediately replaced with a new scholarship and bursaries scheme. Commenting on the scheme, an editorial reported:

“The decision has been a triumph for public opinion because the arrangement has attracted widespread criticism. The scheme provides a classical example of how an apparently sensible idea can be perverted to arrive at the exact opposite of the result envisaged. The scheme has only tended to magnify the educational gap that existed between the various parts of the country.”<sup>40</sup>

In quick succession, the University authority issued a notice informing all undergraduates to pay all outstanding fees within three weeks, and that it would provide a refund to those who are eventually declared genuinely indigent.<sup>41</sup> This meant that final-year students who had spent eight out of their nine terms in the university and could not pay would be faced with possible dismissal on the eve of their final degree examinations. Moreover, students who the FMG announcement had misled were also at risk of being thrown out on the eve of their various examinations. This further led the different student bodies in the University of Ibadan to meet with the Federal Commissioner for education, who in turn heap the blame on the students for “misunderstanding the information” and the commissioner stated categorically that no “student will be sent out on the grounds of inability to pay fees” and thus referred them back to the University who will communicate with them in due time.<sup>42</sup> Unfortunately for the students, the University authority still stood by its ‘no pay, no exams’ policy. In the true sense, the FMG was playing politics with the scheme at the expense of the students' future.

Hence, Professor Lambo Adeoye, the new Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ibadan, in his first meeting with the students in general, made matters worse when he stated the unbelievable:

... As far as possible, the University will do its best to assist needy students if the means are available. We regret that, at the moment, the university can do little except urge those who have not paid their fees to make

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<sup>39</sup> S.A.O 25.4.186, “National Union of Nigerian Students Mails,” March 30<sup>th</sup> 1968, 1.

<sup>40</sup> An editorial, “The same Old Thing,” *New Nigeria*, 16th Oct, 1969, 1

<sup>41</sup> S.A.O 25.4.186, “National Union of Nigerian Students Mails, 2

<sup>42</sup> S.A.O 25.4.186, “National Union of Nigerian Students Mails, 2

an effort until they are successful, so that they may be able to take their examinations.<sup>43</sup>

It is ironic, however, that while the school authority shouts “no money” in response to the poor condition of destitute students, it can afford £60,000 to educate sixty-six children of its professors and Senior Lecturers in the International School located on campus.<sup>44</sup> This is indeed a clear case in point of giving exclusive education to a certain section of the community. At the same time, the large percentage keeps basking in abject poverty, thus promoting the ‘haves’ as against the ‘have-nots’ in the university community. Regretting the state of affairs in the International School, Kehinde Akinsanya, stated:

The student of the International School are being groomed to be a super-class in this country, they have a western education bothering on cultural imperialism. They are not taught the history of their ancestors, but are made to learn about Uncle Sam and Winston Churchill. The entire curricula are directed to the main purpose of debasing the African look. This is a disservice to this great nation and nothing short of abuse of privilege.<sup>45</sup>

However, since no solution by the FMG was in sight regarding the Indigent Student Impasse, the student religious association took steps to provide support to their colleagues. One of these was the Nigerian Young Christian Students Association, which launched a Distressed Student Fund. In an address to fellow colleagues, they stated that the Distressed Student Fund aims to provide relief to fellow students in the country<sup>46</sup>. They further stated:

As the needs of these students are primarily financial, aimed at meeting the demand for schooling, this scheme, which seeks to meet all or part of this demand, calls for a contribution from all of us.

He added:

We may have to reduce our weekly rate of iced-cream consumption by one to make a whole contribution. We may need to remove an item from our cosmetic bag to accommodate it. We may have to give one or more meals. We may have to go out “begging” for money. We may need to stage a play, a concert, or a dance to raise money for the fund. We may have to embark on a funfair or a fashion parade. The list of possible activities is endless. The main point, however, must not be forgotten: that through these activities (whatever

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<sup>43</sup> U.A.I/S.A.O 25.6.2, “The Vice Chancellor to Address the Student Body in the Trenchard Hall,” April 16, 1968, 55.

<sup>44</sup> An Address by Councillor Kehinde Akinsanya, First Member for Tedder Hall, Delivered at the Formal Opening of the 1968/1969 session of the S.R.C on November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1968.p2

<sup>45</sup> An Address by Councillor, Kehinde Akinsanya, First Member for Tedder Hall, Delivered at the Formal Opening of the 1968/1969 session of the S.R.C on November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1968, 2-3.

<sup>46</sup> Micheal Femi Kehinde, Secretary, Nigeria Youth Christian Student, Distressed Student Fund Committee, September 1 1968. 2

be their form) we make sacrifices and reduce ourselves so that those others whom we love may grow: a growth in which we ultimately share.<sup>47</sup>

In a similar vein, the student body staged a violent protest on campus, as the FMG was not responding to their plight, with classrooms shut down to convey their messages. Asked why the protest was staged, Bada answered:

'The demonstration was held to win the sympathy of the Federal Military Government for the over 700 indigent students in the institution who had been refused registration for their courses and entry into their respective halls of residence by the university's authorities.'<sup>48</sup>

Giving credence to most of the actions taken by students, Sam Oyedeji posited that:

... undergraduates here and elsewhere are not just a pack of rebels who oppose things only for the sake of doing so. We undergraduates are not interested in opposing things only to be heard; we have the interest of the country at heart, and we therefore, from time to time, make constructive suggestions which most people, because of their prejudice against us, mistake for misbehavior.<sup>49</sup>

In the true sense of it, their message was heard clearly when the FMG, through its Federal Ministry of Education, dispatched an urgent telegraphic message to Vice-Chancellors of universities in Nigeria, urging them to allow all indigent students in their respective institutions to register for their courses and stay in their halls of residence.<sup>50</sup>

As a result of the financial dilemma, the prestige of Ibadan was no longer attractive to international donors, who had been a significant source of income for the university. This led the Vice-Chancellor to make frequent trips abroad to refine the institution's image and attract funding. The University was also said to be struggling to maintain its extensive buildings and other infrastructure. The proliferation of universities also led to a reduction in governmental allocations to universities during this period. While the Civil War retarded developmental agenda of the university, it was amazing to note that the university was credited with remarkable achievements in the area of capital project during the tenure of John Harris which was at the beginning of the war.

He affirmed thus:

Most evident to the outsider has been the building programmes, which have continued unabated. At the end of last month, there were no less than

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<sup>47</sup>Micheal Femi Kehinde, Nigeria Youth Christian Student, Distressed Student Fund Committee, 2-3

<sup>48</sup>Lekan Akinola, *Indigent Students now Allowed to Register their Different Courses*, New Nigerian, 31<sup>st</sup>, October, 1969,p1

<sup>49</sup>Sam Oyedeji , *UCI Defaulters Deserve Help* Express, 21<sup>st</sup> January, 1963

<sup>50</sup>Lekan Akinola, "Indigent Students now Allowed to Register their Different Courses," *New Nigerian*, 31<sup>st</sup>, October, 1969, 1.

sixteen major new buildings under construction on the campus, with a contract amounting to almost £ 1.5 million. This is equivalent to the entire original capital cost of the university. This building programme is already changing the whole appearance of the university. It is the beginning to be recognized as what we who work in it know it to be: the most impressive institution of higher education in Africa.

... In the pipeline and already approved are plans for a postgraduate hall of residence and additions to student facilities, including a union cafeteria, council hall, and swimming pool.<sup>51</sup>

The above is glaring because it was a clear-cut case of the university's propensity to survive amidst strife as a national institution. Most of these projects were approved during the challenging period between 1963 and 1968. It will not be an exaggeration to state that most of the foregoing could have been achieved earlier than this if not for the reason of poor funding. For real progress to be made within the university, adequate funding was necessary. In the words of Akinkugbe, 'it is in the atmosphere of wants that makes the devil find work for the idle student; it is in the climate of low morale and academic commitment that leads staff to disenchantment and divided loyalty'.<sup>52</sup>

It was a clear indication that from 1967 to 1971, it brought into focus the problems, weaknesses, and strengths of the University of Ibadan in its various undergraduate, postgraduate, research, and public programmes. The university Administration was viewed from a distance as a tottering, bureaucratized pyramid of power. Other areas, such as works, maintenance, transport, water, electricity, health, and the library, revealed growing strains arising from an inadequate supply of money and materials, in contrast to an oversupply of junior and intermediate personnel, which involved a gross misallocation of scarce resources.<sup>53</sup>

### Conclusion

This paper has examined how the Nigerian Civil War was indeed the hallmark of the period from 1967 to 1970. It thus represented a dark part of our history that has had a long-lasting impact on the country in general and the university system in particular. It also highlights that admission to universities was no longer the major handicap in this country, but rather a lack of sponsors.

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<sup>51</sup> John Harris, An Address by The Acting Vice-Chancellor, Given at the Trenchard Hall on Graduation Day, 30 June, 1967, 82.

<sup>52</sup> Akinkugbe, O.O, "University of Ibadan at 50: A Paradigm Shift," (Ibadan University Press), 14.

<sup>53</sup> Olajuwon Olajide, "Thoughts and Reminiscences of Ibadan University, 1967-1980," in *Ibadan Voices: Ibadan University in Transition*, ed T. N Tamuno, ( Ibadan University Press, 1981), 293



This has been attributed to the paucity of scholarships and bursaries awarded to students, the inability of the Federal Military Government and regional governments to provide for indigent students due to the crisis, and the loss of contact with family and relations who were previously responsible for their fees. As a result, students in great numbers became defaulters, thus begging for an education. In their case, it was a different condition entirely because the giver, the Federal Military Government, could not meet the demands of students in awarding adequate scholarships and bursaries. However, the country lost a lot of its potential, whose ambitions were eroded and thwarted by a lack of funds with which to pay their fees.

However, there are still many grey areas that need to be studied, such as the University of Nigeria, the University of Lagos, and Ahmadu Bello University, which were in existence during this period. This will enable scholars to fill the gap in the historiographical study of university education in Nigeria and understand the plights of indigent students, as well as how they managed to survive during the Nigerian Civil War period. Additionally, vital periods such as the SAP and the oil boom should also be examined to understand the dilemma of university students in attaining a university education, as education has traditionally been a key factor in achieving social status in Nigeria. This study has also concluded that “parental poverty” has been the bane of student indigency in the university. This is as a result of ‘an unequal structure’ which determines entry into the university because well-to-do children go to the best secondary schools, get admitted at a younger age, and matriculate in the faculties that offer the most scholarships and, after graduation, the highest rewards. Except that there is a change in the status quo of their parents, if not, they will continue to beg for an education to enjoy the privilege of Western education.