

Higher Education in Nigeria: ts Gain, its Burden

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Abstract

One of the most enduring legacies parents and the country can pass on to its youth is education. Indeed education is the fabric of any culture, with it, culture is transmitted thought are conceptualized and information transmitted. It is hardly inconceivable to imagine a learning process without education, in this case higher education. For instance, how and where would a professor transmit his knowledge to students? How can the innermost recesses of a teacher be tapped by students? Any serious response to these questions may probably x-ray the importance of higher education and its contributions to educational system in Nigeria. The challenges, politicking and benefits of higher education. This paper recognizes the benefits of higher education and the challenges faced in attempting to provide higher education. It notes that government alone cannot provide the resources needed to provide qualitative higher education, and advocates for other sources of dealing with these challenges.

Index terms—

1 Introduction

ducation is an experience, the sum total of a person's experience (Nduka, 1964). Some scholars see it as culture -a way of life and the process of transmitting, advancing and consolidating culture as the process of education (Jaja, 1996). The national education system transmits art, music, custom, tradition, the language and the skills of the society to the younger generation with a view of perpetuating and advancing the culture of the people. This paper therefore set to underscore the importance of higher education. The quality of knowledge impacted, the dysfunctional system and the challenges faced in an attempt to carryout this all important function and the politicking in the system.

2 II.

3 Education

Education is the process of acquiring knowledge, skills and other capabilities. Education could be formal with clearly intended consequences and informal with unintended consequences. It is a universal aspect of any culture. Although it is a universal feature of society, educational systems vary according to organizational structures, pedagogical practices, and philosophical and cultural organizations ??Kunle and Rotimi, 2006).

This may be readily observed when one examines educational systems in a variety of crosscultural settings, (and even among the myriad of public, private, parochial, and alternative educational networks). What is to be learned, how the learning is designed to a great extent, is a function of culture. For instance, in precolonial Africa, the pattern of learning was chiefly informal with the family playing the major role. It was not only the responsibility of the immediate nuclear family, but also that of the extended family and community at large to educate the younger generation (Jaja, 1996).

There were particularly no systems of organized educational training. The acquisition of skills and language was achieved through the simple process of observation and imitation with little or no overt instructions. However, there were also elements of deliberate learning in specialized occupations such as goldsmithing, weaving, carving

and specialized religious acts and functions. This was the result of prolonged training based primarily on decent i.e. the younger understanding the older ??Chuku, 2008).

4 III. Higher Education: A Concept

Higher Education Refer to the western type of education which is organized after college education. There are rules and regulations formulated and administered by the Ministries of Education. Policies are drawn up to guide and direct such institutions by Government. In the Higher Education laws are to be found rules and regulations guiding the type of buildings, facilities, equipments required in the institution, the entry qualifications of students, their ages, the curricula, the rules guiding the students movement, the qualifications of the teachers, their workloads, their conditions of service and the students certification and graduation. There is usually quality control mechanism, in the case of Nigeria it is the universities and the National Universities Commission (NUC) that is saddled with that responsibility. It became obvious that for Nigeria to effectively grow and develop it needed the universities, and in the observation of Curle (1970) for a country to develop, the citizens must be educated, he declared: ? in order to develop; a country must have a very considerable proportion of trained citizens, not only to act as doctors, engineers, teachers and agriculturists but also to establish its own values of justice, selection on merit, flexibility, empiricism and efficiency.

universities, colleges of education, polytechnics and monotechnics. Tertiary education is aimed at: The first institution of higher education was the Yaba Higher College, established in 1934. This became the nucleus of the first university college, established in 1948 at Ibadan. At independence in 1960 there was need for expansion, the university of Nigeria, Nsukka was established in 1960, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, University of Lagos, and the University of Ife (all in 1962) and much later, the University of Benin ??1970). These are known as the first generation universities. In 1975, with the twelve states structure, and the agitation for more universities by Nigerians, the Federal Government established seven additional universities at Jos, Maiduguri, Kano, Sokoto, Ilorin, Calabar and Port Harcourt. These universities became known as the second-generation universities (Olaniyan and Adedeji, 2007). Virtually, all states have either a higher institution or a Federal one located there.

The establishment of Higher Institutions was to train various crop of people. Nigeria now has a crop of well educated graduates despite the now popularly taunted falling standard. And are readily making contributions in all spheres of the country's development.

Nigeria has witnessed a phenomenal growth in the number of Universities from 2 at independence in 1960, to 55 as at November 2004, to 73 in 2012, and about 181 other tertiary institutions with student enrolment up to 24 million (Universities inclusive). In 2004/2005 session only 14.5% applicants were admitted into Nigerian Universities, while 2008/2009 18.9% applicants were admitted. (See Fig. ??). In 2005 the male/female admission profile stood at 780,001 and 1,014,337 in 2008/2009. Those of mono/polytechnics and colleges of education are also indicated in (Fig. ??). The factors leading to this explosion range from need to meet the goals of the national policy on education of the 1970's, which provided for equal educational opportunities for all citizens at all levels (primary, secondary and tertiary) Gboyega and Atoyebi, 2002), through establishment of specialized universities (of agriculture, education and technology) to the quest for private and state ownership of universities, to the need to meet the educational needs of qualified candidates who could not be admitted in the Federal Universities.

5 IV.

6 Dysfunctions in University

Education in Nigeria

The main reason for the heavy investment in university education is the belief that education can solve all our socio-economic and political problems. This is not however true, our experience so far show indiscipline in high places, examinations malpractice, corruption, laziness and immoral practices.

Unfortunately university education has not liberated Nigerians from the bondage of parochialism, ethnicity, tribalism, oppression and injustice. Disappointingly those who fan the embers of tribalism and ethnicity, and are dangerously corrupt are the educated class. Many have argued that education has not transformed Nigerians Development (Aghenta, 1983). The quality of university education in Nigerian appears elusive because the six inputs into learning are poor.

1) Proprietal responsibility 2) Marketability of products of the university 3) Subjects taught 4) The teacher capable of teaching the subjects 5) Strikes in Nigerian universities 6) Morality of the student And here lies the burden of Nigerian universities. These we will attempt to address.

V.

7 Proprietal Responsibility

Unfortunately, this rapid expansion in number of universities is not matched with available qualified lecturers and increased funding, either by federal or state governments, since most of the expansion took place at periods of economic decline in real terms. The level of funding of education thus declined over the years with attendant decay of infrastructure and low staff morale. It is governments statutory responsibility to bear the cost of higher

education in the country but the instability of the oil market and the monolithic nature of the Nigerian economy have conspired to make funding of universities and other higher education decline sharply. Some have argued that the failure syndrome is symptomatic of the general failure in all aspect in the Nation ??Adedeji, 1998).

The bulk of finance allocated to education largely comes from the performance of oil. Consequently, the management of public finance is the management of oil resources (Olaniyan and Adedeji, 2007). Higher institution in Nigeria are funded in a number of ways. The proportion of funding and modalities vary across institutions. Government believes, it has the responsibility of providing Nigerians with free and quality education. consequently, government through the National Universities Commission (NUC) makes it mandatory for all Federal Universities to generate 10% of their annual funds internally. The Education Tax Decree No. 7 of 1993 make it mandatory for limited liability companies registered in Nigeria to pay 2% tax on profits. This is disbursed according to the ratio: 50:40:10 to higher, primary and secondary levels of education respectively. The share of higher education is further re-distributed to universities, polytechnics and colleges of education according to the 2:1:1 ratio respectively.

So far the budgetary allocation to education is not in anyway encouraging. It falls far short of expectation in a country like Nigeria. The solution to these problems, which range from human to infrastructural, requires economic, social and psychological approaches (Jaji, 2004). This informed the decision of Government to set up the Education Tax Fund in 1993 under Act No. 7. This fund alone is incapable of solving the problem. Lack of adequate financing led to the establishment of the Education Tax Fund (ETF). It was established by Decree in 1993 (Amended by Act 40 of 1998) with the sole objective of using funds combined with project management to improve the quality of education in Nigeria. The act provides for all companies and organization registered in Nigeria and operating in Nigeria to contribute 2% of their annual assessable profits to the fund. This contribution compliment Federal and State budgets allocation to education. Between the period 1999 and 2005 the ETF released funds to different levels of Higher education as shown in table 2 below. The Federal Government has also realized the enormity of the problem and is now taking measures to improve the condition of the Universities. This issue of quality of higher education in Nigeria must be given priority, otherwise it will be difficult for the Nigerian educational system to play the crucial role of supporting knowledge driven economic transformation and the construction of a democratically and socially cohesive societies.

8 VI.

9 Marketability of Products of the Universities

Student are important in the transformation of the Nation. In Nigeria, many of the students are brilliant but lack the zeal to learn. They have side attractions and are negatively charged -they take to intimidation, blackmail, and examination malpractices. Many of them avoid classes and when there, do not pay attention to learning. The students are the catalyst of change and development and once they are not ready to study there can never be genuine transformation. Student's capacity and zeal to learn are determined by their state of health, nutrition and parental advice/background.

The result is the product of our universities are not marketable and cannot compare favourably with counterparts in other parts of the world. This is translated into the many unemployable graduates roaming the streets of Nigeria. Moreover, its time our universities begin to train products on skills they can use rather than waiting for government employment.

10 VII.

11 The Subjects Taught

The culture of the people -the ways of living, their values, skills, language, guide the drawing up of courses and define the subjects taught and how they are taught including the frequency and duration of instruction. From the course, syllabus each subject area are closely linked to performance standard and measures of learning outcome. In Nigeria, this had been adequately done for all programme. The only problem here is the effective implementation so that the student can meet the standard of contemporaries outside the country. The course outline are never adequately covered nor are they thoroughly taught because of many constraints including teachers' lack of dedication, lack of adequate knowledge and training, lack of equipment long periods of strikes, lack of tools and so on. Moreover courses taught does not prepare the student for life outside the campus. They are not taught how to be self employed. For sometime now, not more than 40 percent of the normal period for teaching during the academic year has been used for actual teaching.

12 VIII. Teachers Capable of Teaching the Subjects

Quality teachers have never been in good supply in our universities. The 2006 audit showed that there are even more senior non-academic staff than very senior academic staff. Fig. ?? is quite instructive and could explain why adjunct staff of various categories are used in tertiary institutions. As at 2006 50,000 academic staff was required as against the current figure of 30,450 then, showing a short fall of 39.1%. The poly/monotechnics require 30,016 academics as against the 2006 figure of 12,938 showing a short fell of 56.9% (Fig. ??). In the

colleges of education the 2006 faculty staff was 11,256, the number of staff required was 26,114 showing a shortfall of 56.9%. In the National Teachers Institute, staff required was 7000 the 2006 figure was 6,526 showing a short fall of 0.6.8% (See fig. ??). Nigerians graduate from one level to the other up to the doctorate programmes in the universities, they have graduated without proper and indept foundation or grounding, but have continued to contribute to the development and transformation of nation.

Outside the university system, Nigerians contribute in agriculture and quarrying, mining, building and construction, manufacturing, commerce and trade, public utilities, transport and communication, health, civil service, defence, police, prisons, judiciary and the political system. University give literacy enlightenment and skills to many Nigerians, but still many university graduates lack professional training. The new generation of university teachers know their subjects but cannot impart knowledge because teaching is not their calling. They are just passing through and are not patient to learn lessons about teaching. The only authority they rely on, to teach the students is that they stand in front of the class. Consequently their teaching is ineffective and dangerous. In the present dispensation, there are two categories of this generation of teachers: a) Contact staff These are those who after their degree programme and usually after trial and error decide on a career outside the ivory tower. But with a good masters degree in related field, though unwilling to go through the ranks from graduate assistant, assistant lecturer etc in the ivory tower. On retirement from their chosen career, look for jobs in the universities. They may be good materials if they had started a career in academics. There are, however, problems with this group of teachers. They are a spent force, old, weak, not capable of research, since there is no motivation for upward mobility, encumbered by family and social responsibilities, age and more important having no experience in the classrooms, they just float through. A growing and expanding profession like university teaching cannot rely on such a group for the teaching of all the subjects. Besides, experience has shown that most of those in this category do so, not out of love for teaching or students welfare but to shore up their dwindling finances on retirement or out of want of what to do. A good profession cannot rely on such teachers.

13 b) Conversion by Administrative Personnel

Today more than ever before is a growing group of administrative personnel in the senior staff cadre desiring to become teaching staff. This is a great cause for concern as most of them had little knowledge of what teaching is all about. First of all they are not professionally sound the bright ones amongst them didn't see teaching as a first calling or profession but rather as an option to fall back on only after they reach the barr/peak of the administrative career where there are no more avenue for promotion or upward mobility. Conversion becomes their next option. Because they were not properly trained, many things were left undone and these non professional teachers cannot provide the much needed quality education, to the detriment of the system and the nation.

14 IX.

15 Strikes in Nigerian Universities

Students of Nigerian tertiary institutions, especially the university have been more out of school than in school since 1986. This is a result of incessant strikes by either the teaching or administrative staff or both". It is time for us as teachers of these students to address squarely the problem of strikes (warning, impending, solidarity). The beauty of the ivory tower is in the supremacy of superior argument unlike democracy where majority viewpoint hold sway, it is the nation that has everything to loose on the long run.

Government is being called upon to fund universities adequately. In 2009 226,676,000,000 being 7% of the total budget was allocated to education out of 3,445,410,000.00 trillion naira. In 2010, out of N4,206,465,684.00 trillion N271,196,102,115.00 billion representing 6.45% was allocated to education. (See Fig. ??). The so called autonomy should be seriously adhered to and governing councils should be composed of technocrats who know and understands how a university system operates. Better still retired Professors/Vice Chancellors should be made chairman of councils and not politicians. University councils are not a place for political job seekers and should not be used for political patronage. Some councils have become a thorn in the flesh of some Vice Chancellors and the Academic Staff Union (ASSU), causing unnecessary friction in university campuses. It is time to ensure that all arms and unions on campus work in synergy to achieve desired goals.

Moreover, the unions must learn the value of dialogue and that strike should only be used as a last resort. Vice Chancellors are members of the academic union and should deal with the union and other unions as colleagues and not play God. It is only when these parameters are clearly understood and respected that meaningful academic pursuit can exist in our campuses.

Finally, universities must increase their sources of revenue generation as well as be more prudent in the use of available resources; and the lecturers on their part must be ready to live up to their responsibilities and the expectations of parents and students by being disciplined and more committed to their duties. The damage done to the psyche of lecturers in the recent past led to massive brain drain in our universities. It is not all about increasing salaries. There is the need for patience, understanding and continuing dialogue, not politicking, if we must transform our society (Jaja, 2005b).

16 X.

17 Morality of the Students

Students who eventually graduate are products of the university and carry with pride the certificate, the aura and personality of the university. It is therefore the burden of the university to produce graduates who will reflect positively on the image of the university. Not one that will attract second or third rating in the market place. How do lecturers inculcate that on the students? How do lecturers inculcate the habit and love to digest and bury ones (students) head in reading when emphasis is no longer in buying books to read? How can value of hard work be instilled on students when "everybody must pass" whether they study or attend classes or not? How would malpractice be taken as misconduct when sanctions are not meted out on those caught, for fear of cult reprisal attack? How can lecturers call students to order when students have direct access to the Vice Chancellor, making nonsense of the channels of administration? Or when some students are on the payroll of Vice Chancellors. When these happens, we find that products of universities have disdain and disrespect for channel of administration and authority, therefore diminishing the place of the lecturer as a role model.

18 XI.

19 Benefit of University Education

Students, parents, guardians, individuals, voluntary agencies, and Governments have invested and have continued to invest in university education because for society and government it is a tool for development. National resources committed to education is about 16 percent of annual budget. Private contribution to education is as high as the social contributions. The human resources committed to education in form of teachers and non-teaching in universities are tremendous. Facilities and equipment committed to education both publicly and privately as well as to formal and non-formal education are countless. This is because education performs many functions. XII.

20 Conclusion

The central theme in this paper is Higher Education as a tool in the transformation of graduands, with emphasis on the role of universities in the production of ambassadors and catalyst of change. The paper attempts at espousing the challenges confronting universities in their desire to meet the onerous responsibilities expected of them by government, parents and society.

It is worthy to note that, higher education should be better planned and controlled by quality, in terms of students in take and lecturers; emphasis should be more in science/technology and the professions. These are areas of great need for a country like Nigeria. Emphasis should also be in the acquisition of knowledge and skills in agriculture, mining, building, construction, manufacturing, industrialization, health, education among others. Less attention should be placed on politicking on campus as politicking is more, dangerous than politics itself. In politicking, set down laws and guidelines, rules are neglected, as naked power is exhibited. There is no doubt that if the university authorities could overcome the burden that seem to have held her captive, and faithfully purge itself, then the road to genuine transformation and development is indeed much brighter. Then the universities role of training of qualified professionals, inculcating, right attitude, norms and values as well as developing human and social capacity, which are the bedrock of societal and economic development will greatly be affected. Unless the issue of quality of Nigerian educational system in general and higher education in particular is addressed, the socioeconomic transformation of Nigeria is yet to be out of the woods.

Conclusively therefore, the continuous relevance of the university system is hinged on its ability to carry out its responsibility to society; only then can the continuous existence and relevance of the universities be appreciated by society.¹

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Figure 1:

1

show

Figure 2: Table 1

1

(1998 -2008) (%) Ratio of GDP (%) 8.27 9.12 8.36 7.00 6.82 7.20 6.68 6.80 7.28 7.68 7.82 Source: Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (Various Years). Years Ratio of Total Govt Exp. (%) 1998 5.1 1999 8.6 2000 7.1 2001 7.6 2002 6.4 2003 6.6 2004 6.4 2005 6.3 2006 6.6 2007 6.4 2008 6.8 This level of funding by the Nigerian government falls far below the 26% of government expenditure as recommended by UNESCO, and illustrates her poor priority index and poor commitment to education. ? Inadequate and outdated library books and journals; ? Inadequate scientific materials; ? Non-existent fund for conferences and exchange programme; ? Inadequate resources for recurrent expenditures; ? Inadequate capital resources, which have led to suspension and or non-completion of capital projects, leading to overcrowded and rundown facilities, lecture hall and hostels; ? Inadequate staffing and training, poor motivation and low staff morale; ? Instability in academic calendar caused by incessant strike actions by students and teachers; ? Deficiencies in the curriculum and its delivery; ? Cultism in student life; ? Examination malpractices; ? Mercenary attitude to teaching and research.

Figure 3: Table 1 :

2

Years/Institution
 Universities
 Polytechnics
 Monotechnics
 Colleges of Education
 problem and ways of assisting the Universities. One

Figure 4: Table 2 :

1) Politically, education brings about enlightenment among members in the country. Through political education, national unity can be achieved especially in a plural society like Nigeria. Although for Nigeria, our politically educated seem to be our problem. However, it makes one better informed to play better roles in society.

2) It confers permanent literacy, numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively. It provides sound citizenship as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life in the society. Education develops in the recipients, the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. It provides tools for further advancement and equips the recipients to live effectively in a modern society of science and technology, while at the same time develops and projects culture, art and languages.

3) Economically, the university provide skills and techniques competencies.

necessity human

Figure 5:

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