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TERTIARY EDUCATION: PANACEA FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

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ABSTRACT
This paper focused on tertiary education: panacea for sustainable national transformation. It highlighted the management of tertiary education in Nigeria, funding of tertiary institutions, education and national transformation, quality assurance in tertiary institutions and challenges confronting higher education. The paper concludes that, the quest for excellence in the tertiary institutions is very crucial for the achievement of economic progress, political stability, peace and sustainable national transformation. Recommendations were also made which include: Government should provide adequate funds for planning, implementing and coordinating tertiary education.Relevance of the curriculum to the society needs should be considered when it is being formulated by the curriculum designers. Educational administrator should ensure that those who are presented for admission into tertiary institutions meet the stipulated criteria for admission. Efforts should also be made by the government to ensure full implementation of the policies as they concern tertiary education.

Key words: Tertiary education, national, transformation, quality assurance.

Introduction
Education is concerned with the process of building, training and developing the inborn potentials and capabilities of the individual learner so as to make him useful member of society. Higher Education is a critical component in sustainable human and national development. It is axiomatic that no nation ever develops technologically and economically without first investing

heavily in its higher education. Tertiary education is of paramount importance for economic and social development of any nation. With the inculcation of relevant knowledge and advanced skills, tertiary education provides the human resources required for leadership, management, business and professional positions. Tertiary education system in the country is aimed at training leaders and professionals for effective management of the nation's available resources. It was also designed to create a quality workforce by growing, training, and attracting the finest talent, support current business and industry, improve learning and teaching from pre-school through graduate school, take strong and visible roles in regional initiatives, disseminate research and promoting technology (Aminigo, 2003). Several educational reform initiatives and transformation agenda have been proposed, implemented and reviewed but the outcome of education and the opportunities for quality tertiary education in Nigeria seem to be dwindling.

Government have established tertiary institutions to address the challenges of providing opportunities for tertiary education. Private agencies and individuals are investing in education at all levels and religious bodies have recently joined the league of proprietors of tertiary educational institutions with the hope that admission spaces can be increased and unemployment after school reduced. More scholars and professors have emerged in recent times and one should expect that the quantity of Professors would have led to the quality of education and needed quantity of opportunities for admission. It seems however that the professionals remain disconnected from each other in their efforts and wisdom (Tunji, 2002). The attachment of research to tertiary institution is so great that promotion of academic staff is based substantially on research and publication. The researches carried out by tertiary institution staff is usually reported in specialized journals. Presently, a lot of these specialize journals has become extinct as a result of lack of funds and those who survive print limited copies for contributors who are usually charged high publication fees.

The cost of financing tertiary institutions has been increasing every year and the federal government has been finding it very difficult to meet with such demands. Okorosaye-Orubite (2003) observes that, funding of tertiary institutions has been on the decrease since 1981 and the level of funding was based more on government's economic and political considerations than upon the existing number of programmes or

students. No greater danger confronts us today than increasing cases of corruption, poverty, selfishness, terrorism, unemployment, hunger, immorality among young and old people, all resulting from lack of access to quality education and the misuse of knowledge by certain individuals, religious and political groups. Tertiary education with its networks and linkages throughout the country and state is uniquely positioned to convene the necessary representatives from the diverse government, business, education, social, and civic groups and to serve as the third-party, neutral catalyst to create the collaborations needed to develop industry clusters (Olubadewo, 2007). However, as the world becomes interconnected and increasingly globalized, tertiary education is critical for the achievement of economic progress, political stability, peace and sustainable national transformation.

Management of tertiary education in Nigeria

Every form of management is hinged on the achievement of a specific goal. However, to effectively manage our tertiary education for national development, there has to be a complete restructuring of our tertiary institutions with the goal of national development in mind. These goals must run through the decision-making level to the implementation level. Ozochi (2009:36) notes that, education management is synonymous with strategizing, planning, organizing, running, governance and supervision of the entire process of teaching and learning that takes place at all level of our education system. In order to achieve national development through tertiary education, the management of these institutions must strategize and implement polices with the aim of national development as its focal point. The federal ministry of education serves all the states in advisory capacity and coordinates the educational activities of all the government of the federation by providing relevant legislation and guidelines.

In carrying out her functions to maintain standard and promote national objectives, the federal ministry of education established the Joint Consultative Committee on Education (JCCE) and the National Council on Education (NCE). These committees are made up of professional officers of the institute of education, the Nigerian Union of Teacher (NUT) and the national manpower board (Ozochi, 2009). The federal government also created agencies such as the National University Commission (NUC), National Commission for Colleges of education

(NCCE) and the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) to co-ordinate control and streamline education activities in the country both at the federal and state level. Nwideeduh (2003) notes that, the university system in Nigeria is run through the committee system and is premised on the fact that these institutions owe their existence to the British colonial heritage. Despite the existing management structures in our various tertiary institutions, they have failed to elevate the country in the area of national development because graduates of these tertiary institutions are accused at the labour market of being half-baked, having irrelevance of knowledge to work place, lack universal values and norms and are graduate unemployables.

Funding of tertiary institutions

Education is an expressive commodity and with limitless resources endless educational expansion would be possible.However, one thing is certain, there are basic requirements for the achievement of the goals in education which include infrastructure, equipment, instructional materials and personnel to implement educational programmes. The achievement of educational goals is dependent on adequate funding. The Nigerian government accepts that education is no longer a private enterprise but a huge government venture that demands her wholehearted intervention and active participation (Amaechina, 2011). There have been on-going debates in both developed and developing countries as to whether the educational sector is grossly underfunded, over-funded or if it has been having its fair share of financial resources from the government. The amount allocated to the education sector has been on the increase over the years but the percentage allocated to enrolment, dilapidated school buildings and the vital need to uphold standards among other variables has really been insufficient.

In the face of dwindling resources and rising costs, the large number of tertiary institutions exclusively financed by the federal government has adverse implications for adequate financing when viewed against the background that the federal government also shares the responsibility of financing primary and secondary education with other tiers of government as well as providing other social services. The cost of funding these institutions has been increasing every year and the federal government is finding it difficult to meet up with the demand (Okorosaye-Orubite, 2003). Closely connected with the issue of expansion is the demand for better funding. The financing of tertiary

institutions had been relatively haphazard in relation to the country's state of economy. Although the tertiary education funding had not been too bad on the average, this does not suggest that the funds made available to these institutions are enough for their commitments.

The budgetary allocation to education has been on the decline. In 1999, 11.2% of annual budget was allocated to education but was drastically reduced to 5.9% in 2002 and 1.83%in 2003 (Agburuga 2004). The minimum standard set for developing countries is allocation of 26% of her national budget to education. Instead of moving towards this minimum standard, the experience is a decrease, therefore making expansion to be difficult if not impossible. Poor funding also denied many university courses from being accredited by National University Commission (NUC) thereby reducing the access of many who could have been admitted. The obvious is that universities in Nigeria need to be better funded. The Education Tax Fund (ETF) is a welcome development and many infrastructural developments are carried out with the Education Tax Fund (Ochuba, 2009). The instability in financing these institutions had made meaningful planning very difficult in the system. This has negative implications for the quality of teaching and research going on in these institutions. The government should on their own part increase the budgetary allocation to meet the recommendation for developing countries.

Education and national transformation

In the history of education in Nigeria, communities, mission agencies, individuals and other accredited bodies participate and are still participating in the provision, supervision and management of education in Nigeria. The vision for education in Nigeria is to establish an enabling and sustainable environment for education to achieve the desired national reforms and human development objectives (Akinjide, 2002). Its mission is to reform and restructure the education sector to empower and develop the citizenry to acquire skills and knowledge that would prepare them for the world of work. The National Policy on Education is very categorical on the way this can be attained. The first National Development Plan (1966-1970) issued by the federal government emphasized modernization and technological training (Adaralegbe, 2002). In 1969, National Curriculum Conference was staged to overhaul the Nigerian education system. One of the goals of the National Policy on

education (2004) identified citizenship education as a basis for effective participation and contribution to the life of the society, character and moral training, development of sound attitudes, and developing in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment. In the second National Development Plan (1972-1974), the objectives of the plan became the foundation of the National Policy on Education. The aim of the NDP was to build a free and democratic society, a just and egalitarian society, a united, strong and self-reliant nation, a great and dynamic economy and a land bright and full of opportunity for her citizens. In 1966, a new curriculum for citizenship education was developed to reflect the transition to constitutional democracy and the new constitution in 1999.

The philosophy of the tertiary education hinges in part on the idea that Nigerian schools should not only train individuals to be just and competent but to function as contributing and participatory members of a free constitutional democratic nation (Anih, 1997). What this implies is that students must rely on the knowledge, skills and awareness of the rights of minority and majority groups to coexist and worship freely, respect for law and order, respect for public and private property of Nigerians and non-Nigerians. Education is a very important tool for socio-economic development both at National and individual levels (Zaria, 2001). The argument that education is a necessary condition for individual socio-economic development is clearly put forward by some great politicians like, Zik, Awolowo and Ahmadu Bello (Tunji, 2002). Late Awolowo's premise on education is that education prevents individual from remaining poor and part of his argument for right to education is based on the moral imperative of making every one richer than some. Zik on the other hand emphasized the acquisition of skills and willingness to be engaged in useful labour, lead to material and social benefits. However, some politicians are of the view that education is the means for tilting power and redistribution of income. Just as people thought that education is the surest guarantee to improve their economic fortunes in life, which results in the tremendous investment in it by many.

Tertiary education in Nigeria has been interrupted by regime changes since independence. However, the nation has made budgetary commitments and embarked on policies towards sustaining unity, transformation and economic growth. The policies on education since 1970 to date have been very promising (Olaoye, 1998). Educational policies and development can only be sustained in the

presence of a stable democratic set-up. It is imperative for government to put frantic effort to ensure that educational policies are implemented to the letter. The United Nations has recommended that African nations should allocate a minimum of about 26% of her national budget to education. With our National Domestic Product (GNP) and the petroleum sector in good shape, Nigeria can sustain a comprehensive educational plan. If this is done correctly, the future of the country will not only be secured, thus, quality education and national development will be enhanced.

The crucial importance of education as the key to genuine development and the enhancement of people's capacity and talents have led to the struggle for control of tertiary education by the federal government (Omolewa, 2001). This understanding of the place of education made the federal government of Nigeria to believe that the educational goals in terms of its benefits and relevance to the needs of the society in relation to the environment and the realities of the modern world should be clearly set out. Though education has witnessed a progressive evolution of government's complete and dynamic intervention and active participation but the adoption of education as an instrument for excellent for effecting national development has opened up wounds to be healed (Olubadewo, 2007). The economic and financial constrains placed on education in the recent past in Nigeria had adverse effects on qualitative as well as quantitative aspects of education and training in all forms.

Quality assurance in tertiary institutions

The quality of education received by the citizens determines the level of development of any nation. There has been a public outcry on the continual decline in the quality of education in the country especially in public examination and the performance of education outputs that are inadequate for employment. This is as a result of the alarming rate of examination malpractices, poor attitude to teaching and learning, poor infrastructure and attitude of government towards renewal of teaching and learning facilities. Since all other institutions of the society depend on the educational system for their survival, the need for the education sector to crave for excellence is very crucial. Ozochi (2009:46) asserts that, 'the question of standards in education need to be understood in the context of a number of factors such as curriculum, material, personnel, students, physical facilities, time, research findings, progress through school, immediate and

eventual outcomes and relationships of education to the society'.

The concern for quality has been the main motivating force for reforms in education. However, quality assurance encompasses attitudes, objectives, actions and procedures which through their existence and use, together with quality control activities ensure that appropriate academic standards are maintained in each programme (Abraham &Amaechina, 2011). Thus, education of high quality should have quality students, quality teachers, quality facilities, and quality school curriculum and quality government policies as inputs. The manner in which the inputs are processed from the beginning to the final years of an educational programme and the quality of assessment of the entire teaching-learning activities also constitutes important aspects of quality assurance (Ijaiya, 2001). However, at the entry point of educational system, the students are expected to be of high quality. They should meet the expected standard of the class in which they are to be enrolled. On the contrary, students of poor ability have been admitted and absorbed into our tertiary institutions.

The Federal Government of Nigeria introduced the quota system in an attempt to provide equity in the university but this has been grossly abused. What this implies is the lowering of the entry qualification of states considered disadvantaged as in the quota system of admission or what the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) call catchment area. It also comprises of elements such as academic merit determined by the University Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) score and 45% of the students admission is allotted to it. Educationally less developed or disadvantaged areas are given 20%, catchment areas 25%, and 10% to discretion of the Vice-Chancellor (Babalola, 2011). By this system, it means that a candidate in the southern states, considered to be educationally advantaged, who scores 250 out of 400, may not get admission into the university while his counterpart in the north who scores less would be admitted. Quality assurance demands that students should be of required standard before they are admitted into schools or promoted when in school. It is in the light of these that Ijaiya (2001) viewed admission of students with very poor academic standards into tertiary institutions as a way of laying the foundation for indiscipline and cheating in examinations.

Ijaiya further stated that examination malpractice indicates a declining quality of education; moreover, those who engage in cheating

at a lower level are likely to continue at higher level of education. When they graduate into the society, their previous attitudes can easily lead them into corrupt practices. In other word, students who possess certificates through cheating could use the certificates to secure jobs and they would not be able to perform, leading to poor productivity. Consequently, what children learn, retain and practice after leaving school has direct impact on the nation's competencies and skills. What is learnt formally and informally thus, determines the individual's ability to contribute to national development. Ochuba (2009) notes that goals of education can only be achieved with a well organized school system that would ensure that all aspects of school life are well articulated and effectively coordinated. Hence, for our tertiary institutions to carry out its functions of developing quality human capital and sustaining national transformation there is need for checks and balances by regular and effective supervision and inspection of schools by relevant authorities.

Challenges confronting higher education

Brain drain is a very serious issue in Nigeria. The reasons why some Nigerian academics run overseas have a lot to do with inadequate incentives for research and other conditions of service. The research agenda of advanced countries dominate world research. Many scientists and scholars from the developing countries are educated in the advanced industrialized nations and maintain ties with their metropolitan centres. Research and Development is useful only to the extent that the product has sufficient local contents that make it beneficial to the immediate society (Bacchus, 2001). For Research and Development to flourish, human resource is a very fundamental requirement. Many researchers in the diaspora sometimes serve as consultants in their home countries, since they constantly visit their homes. Therefore, plans on R&D must consider the interest of the scientists in the diaspora. Industrialized countries are in the habit of relaxing their immigration rules for the diaspora scientists, especially those that possess skills and qualifications that are in high demands in the countries where they have chosen to reside. These peripatetic professionals are an increasingly important part of the international flow of knowledge. Factors that determine the decisions of scientists to remain abroad include among others, professional opportunities, family ties, chances for high incomes, availability of scientific equipment and laboratories, political tensions and immigration rules

(Dore, 2006). The relevance of the discussions on these factors as they affect research and development is that it is capable of generating both advantages and disadvantages, depending on the context of reasoning. The positive side is realized from those who still keep touch with their colleagues at home and giving them the benefits of being in touch with latest happenings in global R&D, and contributing articles to local journals.

Foreign training is a necessary element for the creation of a pool of scientific personnel required for the sustenance of research and development activities in the Third World and will remain so for the foreseeable future. These countries have the infrastructure, the human resources and the capacity to train personnel to the highest international levels. Asia is by far the largest exporter of foreign students to the industrialized nations (Lewin, 2005). Indeed, Taiwan, Korea, and Malaysia are all among the top ten countries sending students to the United States and the numbers are still increasing. The impact of foreign training on the development of R&D is quite significant. Lewin (2005) reiterated that, as much as foreign training is desirable for production of high skilled manpower needed for scientific research, it is also capable of bringing along with it some undesirable consequences. On the positive side, it is an established fact that in almost all academic fields, the most advanced training facilities, the best libraries, and the most distinguished scholars are located in the major Western nations. Most of the high ranking researchers and administrators and policy makers in Asian countries are foreign trained. Although there are no empirical records to show that foreign trained professionals in science and technology in Nigeria perform better than their home trained counterparts, there are evidences however to show that they are exposed to better training facilities in foreign universities (Zaria,2001). Nigeria among other developing countries have to look overseas for students and training of their professionals because of the unavailability of such training opportunities at home and the kind of value that societies and the trainees themselves attach to overseas training. Foreign degree holders generally obtained the needed expertise and those who return home secure places in industry or in the tertiary institutions. Foreign training ties degree holders to an international scientific community, with both the positive and negative implications of those ties. Foreign-trained scientists and academics sometimes have problems of readjustment to the norms and values of

their societies and their home institutions. They come down with myriad of problems. They are likely going to find some academic culture or industrial policy strange to them. Some of the research topics they are made to carry out at home may not satisfy their aspirations. Some of the researches may not be at the cutting edge of international science and may not be publishable in reputable international journals (Tunji, 2002). The training that they receive abroad may not be entirely relevant to domestic concerns and may be partly dysfunctional in some ways.

Educated unemployment" in this discussion refers to unemployment among the educated population. Bacchus (2001) noted that 'relative to the working population as a whole, the unemployed as a group in some developing countries lend to be educated, especially where young and inexperienced unemployed are numerous. Educated unemployment is a direct result of an increased graduate from educational institutions who largely lack the requisite skills to be self-reliant or get absorbed into the organized private sector. Higher education institutions produce, on annual basis, graduates in large numbers that do not have access to employment, principally because of the nature of education they receive. The 'Diploma Disease Syndrome' was coined by Dore (2006) when she argued that schools in developing countries were dominated by the goals of certificates and qualifications as passports to the world of modern sector jobs. The consequence of this domination was an education of such low quality that even the successful products of the HEIs could not contribute effectively to economic productivity and innovation. Hence, Institutions remain essentially concerned with getting their students to pass examinations, which can lead to further education (Bacchus, 2001) or to the 'right' modern sector jobs (Lewin, 2005). A major result of this is the acquisition of certificates, which Dore (2006) posits, becomes the principal goal of schooling and neither students nor the institutions are concerned with the practical usefulness of what is learnt.

Relevance of the curriculum is judged in terms of its ability to help students pass the examinations, which gives the necessary 'papers' for job in the modern sector. It is striking that Dore's (2006) position is still extant in Nigeria, despite various curriculum reforms. The struggle for certificates has contributed considerably to unemployment among the graduates. Thus, learning is reduced to acquisition of certificates. This syndrome, by and large, leaves many students registering

courses that may not have practical value, especially if it is easier for them to secure admission to study such courses. The result is the educational institutions producing more graduates in those fields than the job markets could absorb. This, in itself, is a serious existential treat to Higher Education Institutions. With the large proliferation of students in the educational institutions occasioned by the Diploma Disease Syndrome, it becomes difficult to control the quality of the education system, especially given Nigeria's low-level income and daunting economic challenges. This is because fewer resources are being deployed for an unprecedented number of students. Lewin (2005) enunciates that quality is likely to be grossly affected if: few modern jobs are available each year for large quantities of school leavers.

Conclusion

It is glaring that Nigeria is lagging behind in preparing her workforce for the challenges of the rapidly changing global economy. Thus, the nation must invest copiously in education with particular attention given to tertiary education. Tertiary education has to constantly change and adjust to a wide variety of situations in the country in relation to knowledge and the demands of the social, economic and political situations that lie outside of its walls. As an instrument of hope, tertiary education must continue to be a centrepiece in the national capacity building, sustainable development and poverty reduction endeavours of any government and should fit into the need for developing high and new technology and improving enterprise management. It should in particular meet the needs for the development of tertiary industry, providing talents for different sectors and industries. Thus, since all other institutions of the society depend on the educational system for their survival, the quest for excellence in the tertiary institutions is very crucial for the achievement of economic progress, political stability, peace and sustainable national transformation.

Recommendations

1. Government should allocate more funds for planning, implementing and the co-ordination of tertiary education.
2. The curriculum designers should harmonize the relevance of the curriculum content to the societal needs in tertiary education programmes.
3. Educational administrator should ensure that those who are presented for admission into tertiary

institutions meet the stipulated criteria for admission.

4. Efforts should be made by the government to ensure full implementation of the policies as they concern tertiary education.

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