
Tertiary Education and Economic Development of African States: The Nigeria Example

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Abstract

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004: 3) states that “education in Nigeria is an instrument per excellence used for effecting national development” and that for the benefit of all citizens, the country’s educational goal shall be clearly set out in terms of their relevance of the need of the individuals and those of the society. There is therefore no doubt that the role of education, and tertiary education in particular, in human resource development and the overall economic, social and political development cannot be over-estimated. The role of higher education in the construction of knowledge economies and democratic society is more influential than ever. Higher education is central in the creation of intellectual capital on which knowledge production and utilization depend and to the promotion of life-long practices necessary to update individual knowledge and skills for the development of African states and Nigeria in particular. This paper therefore tries to look into tertiary education in Nigeria, its goals/organizational structure in the context of development strategy. The paper equally looks at knowledge economy as a propeller for economic development. Furthermore, it

explains what is expected of university education for economic development in the 21st century. The paper as well discusses some of the challenges facing tertiary education in Nigeria. It concludes on the way forward in making tertiary education in Nigeria more responsive for economic development. The way forward includes among others: (1) proper funding of the education sector. (2) Restructuring of the school curriculum especially at the tertiary level to make it more responsive for global best practices.

Keywords: Economic development, human resource development, social and political development, development strategy, knowledge economic, global best practices.

Tertiary education is critical to economic success and long-term development of Africa, a continent facing several challenges of growth and development in several areas. Tertiary education or higher education provides economic and social benefits both to the individual and the society, produces qualified human capital, adopts and generates knowledge, promotes international co-operation and improves competitiveness in the global knowledge based economy.

Generally, higher education refers to education above secondary education level. In Nigeria for example, it connotes post secondary education of the national education system which is given at the University, Polytechnics, Colleges of Technology, Colleges of Education, Advanced Teachers Training Colleges, Monotechnics, Correspondence Colleges, Outreach Programmes etc.

Higher educational institutions are created to satisfy specific or general educational needs and purposes of a nation through teaching of students, conducting research and dissemination of knowledge together with other community service activities.

The role of higher education in the construction of knowledge economies and democratic education as explained by Osaat (2011), is central to the creation of intellectual capital on which knowledge production and utilization depend, and to the promotion of the life-long learning practices necessary to update individual knowledge and skills.

Every where there is a realization that global competitiveness is the way for nations to fully belong to the new global village. Universities do realize that they too have to remain relevant in the world characterized by a proliferation of places where knowledge is generated'. That is why world's most forward-looking universities are continuously perfecting their areas of competitive advantage.

Africa must survive, Africa must rise, and Africa must belong. This implies that the region must get out of its current strangulating political and social-economic problems. Africa must accelerate the process of sustainable human development. Africa would have arrived at a stage where it can function as a full fledged member of today's global village. Tertiary education invariably is looked upon as a vehicle that will propel African nations to function and belong.

Tertiary Education in Nigeria and its Goals

Higher educational institutions are created to satisfy specific or general educational needs and purposes of a nation through teaching of students, conducting research, dissemination of knowledge together with other community service activities. The two core groups in higher education as explained by Okeke (2007) are the academic staff and students. The personnel of higher educational institutions include student personnel's, scholars, teachers, intellectuals, academic administrators and professionals.

Federal Republic of Nigeria in National Policy of Education (2004: 36) stated the following as the broad goals of tertiary education;

1. contribute to national development through high level relevant man power training;
2. develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of individual and society;
3. develop the intellectual capacity of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments;
4. acquired both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individual to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;
5. promote and encourage scholarship and community service, forge and cement national unity; and promote national and international understanding and interaction.

In this context, the term university is used as a synonym for higher education. The general objectives of university are to give public service, teach, conduct research in all branches of learning. The short term objectives include economic use of resources, hardwork, higher productivity in area of dwindling resources, promotion of self reliance, loyalty and esprit de corp in promoting good relationship for the university.

William Saint (1992) in Okeke (2007), introduced the concept of the "developmental university" and initiated the goal of universities in Africa to include;

1. to transform themselves into legitimate national institutions of higher learning
2. to produce the skilled human resources necessary to manage newly independent countries;
3. to generate developmentally relevant research; to provide community service; and
4. to constitute a diverse and representative student body.

Organizational Structure of University System in Nigeria

Higher education in Nigeria has gone through remarkable structural functional changes. The central business of the university which consists of teaching, learning, research, and community service calls for the development of organizational and administrative structure for the attainment.

The principal officers of the university encompasses; the Chancellor, Pro-Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor. Others include, Registrar, Bursar, Librarian or Director of works

The Chancellor

He is appointed by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. In relation to the university, the Chancellor takes precedence before all other members of the university. When present, he presides at all meetings of convocation held for conferring degrees.

The Pro-Chancellor

He is appointed or removed by the State/Federal Executive Council. In relation to the university, the Pro-Chancellor takes precedence before all other members of the university except the Chancellor when acting as Chairman of Congregation or Convocation. He chairmans all meetings of the council when present.

The Council (Governing Council)

This is the governing body invested with the most powerful authority for the management and control of the affairs of the university. The Council assures that proper accounts of the university are audited annually by independent approved firm of auditors. The Council meets as and when necessary for the performance of the functions and meet for at least three times in every year. The council consists of:

- i) The Pro-Chancellor;
- ii) The Vice-Chancellor;
- iii) Six representatives of the whole Federal/States appointed by the Federal/State Executive Council;
- iv) Four persons appointed by the Senate from the members;
- v) One person appointed by the Congregation from among the members;
- vi) One person appointed by the Convocation from among the members of that body;
- vii) Permanent Secretary-Federal/State Ministry of Education or a member of his ministry representing him;
- viii) One person representing the Armed Forces of Nigeria and Police.

The Senate

The Senate consists of the Vice-Chancellor (Chairman) Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Deans of Faculties, all Professors, Directors of Institutes, Head of Academic Departments, Librarian, Academic Staff representative of the Faculties, persons holding such appointment on the staff of the university as may be specified by the Vice-Chancellor.

Vice-Chancellor/Rector/Provost

The Vice-Chancellor is designated as the chief executive of the institution and sometimes expressly referred to as the Chief Academic Officer as well as the Chief Administrative Officer with full authority to run the affairs of the institutions. He takes precedence before all other principal officers of the university except the Chancellor, the Pro-Chancellor and any other person acting as chairman of the council. He is charged with the responsibility of maintenance of the efficiency and good order of the university.

The Faculty and Faculty Board

The Faculty is the hub for operations of academic work of the University. The Faculty is divided into a number of branches- departments, institutes, academic Units. Each faculty has a faculty board (Academic Board in Colleges of Education) consisting of the Dean (Chairman), all teachers assigned to the faculty and having prescribed qualifications.

The Dean of Faculty

The position is elective and usually a professor is elected by the faculty board to serve for two years duration. The Dean is the chairman of all meetings of the faculty board when he is present.

Academic Departments and Heads of Departments

On recommendation by the Senate to the council, departments are established subject to approval by the National University Commission. The head of department is responsible to the Vice-Chancellor through the Dean of Faculty. Statutorily, he is a member of the Senate.

The Registry

The Registry is responsible to the Vice-Chancellor through the Registrar for staff matters. He is the chief administrative officer responsible to the Vice-Chancellor for the day-to-day administrative work of the university.

Congregation

The congregation consists of;

- a) the Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor ;
 - b) the full time members of the academic staff;
 - c) the Registrar;
 - d) the bursar; and
 - e) every member of the Administrative Staff who holds a degree of any University.
- The Vice-Chancellor shall be the chairman of all meetings of the congregation when he is present

Convocation

This is a statutory organ of the university whose membership is restricted to the dully qualified and registered staff of the university graduate standing.

The Visitor

For the Federal Universities in Nigeria, the Head of State and Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces is the Visitor, while the State Universities have the State Governors as the visitor. By the laws of the Nigeria Universities, the visitor is endowed with the overriding power of calling the university to order when things are going wrong.

His functions include:

1. Appointment of Council
2. Appointment of the Vice-Chancellors on recommendation of the University Governing Council. Source: Okeke 2007: 282-296

Knowledge Economy as a Propeller for Economic Development

The emergence of knowledge economy as explained by Obanya (2012) has abolished the distinction between intermediate, lower and higher level manpower. Brainpower has become society's major asset and every operator of national economic system would have to be a knowledge worker. Knowledge-based economy relies primarily *on the use of ideas rather than physical abilities and the applications of technology rather than the transformation of raw materials or the exploitation of cheap labor. It is an economy in which knowledge is created, acquired, transmitted and used more effectively by individuals, enterprises, organizations and communities to promote economic and social development.*

Seven major characteristics of the knowledge economy as put by Obanya (2009) are:

1. Unlike physical goods, information is non-rival, not destroyed in consumption. Its value in consumption can be enjoyed again and again.
2. Bridges are being built between various areas of competence, as codification tends to reduce knowledge dispersion.
3. Learning is increasingly becoming central to both people and organizations.

4. Learning involves both education and learning-by-doing, learning-by-using, and learning-by-interacting.
5. Initiative, creativity, problem-solving and openness to change are increasingly important skill.
6. Flexible organizations are becoming the norm. They integrate ‘thinking’ and ‘doing’ and avoid excessive specialization and compartmentalization, by emphasizing multi-task job responsibilities.
7. Whereas machines replaced labour in the industrial era, information technology has become the source of codified knowledge in the knowledge economy, Obanya gives a futuristic views on higher education in Nigeria as thus

Domain	Discipline-based (Prevailing Practice)	Broad-based, general (Futuristic View)
Assumption	Higher education for in-depth studies of specialization, as well as preparation for a career	Broad-based, general knowledge and personality development for adaptability.
Student Entry Profile	Secondary level foundation knowledge in chosen subject area, with emphasis on high IQ (mental intelligence quotient)	Life learning skills, greater emphasis on EQ (emotional intelligent quotient)
Organization of Programmes	Department and colleges organized around related areas of study	Flexible organization with enhanced possibilities for integration of disciplines along ‘issues’ lines.
Teaching learning	Lecture (predominantly), laboratories and workshops	Group and task-oriented, with a focus on team play, analysis, communication, field exposure, project work etc.
The teacher	Knowledgeable specialist researcher	Knowledgeable, but also field-oriented, highly creative, and multi-disciplinary compliant.

Graduate profile	Subject or professional area specialist	A combination of life-skills; able learner with appropriate intra-personal and inter-personal capabilities. Horizontally skilled.
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Source: (Obanya 2009: 196)

Invariably, this is to say knowledge based economy will compel university or tertiary education to be broad-based, with due emphasis on personality development to facilitate adoptability to rapidly changing and highly unpredictable conditions. Thus:

1. Students are now expected to enter into universities equipped with learning-to-learn skills, and not mere encyclopedic knowledge, while emotional intelligence will be accorded equal attention as mental (cognitive knowledge)
2. Curriculum content is to be organized in a more flexible manner, with greater integration of disciplines.
3. Academics are required to be more field-oriented, with a multi-disciplinary orientation.
4. Graduate of universities are expected to be life-skilled, with certification based not simply *on how much we know but also on how well we have learnt to learn.*

What is Expected of Tertiary Education for Economic Development in Africa

The changing global economic trends and the demand for highly skilled human capital for the knowledge-based economy have placed an unparalleled pressure on tertiary education institutions across the globe, particularly in sub-Sahara African countries like Nigeria. For instance:

1. Economic Expectations

Economically, higher education is expected to facilitate employment, increase salaries and savings, improve working conditions and mobility for the individual and bring about greater productivity, national development, increase consumption and transformation of low skills industry to knowledge based economics for the public. Tertiary education is expected to exercise a direct influence on national productivity, which largely determines levels of living for any of the country's ability to compete in a global economy.

2. Social and Political Expectation

Higher education is expected to improve quality of life for self and family, better decision making, increased personal status and opportunity for the individual and developed leadership. Higher education is expected to enhance the political context by contributing to building civil society, enlighten citizenship, self-reliance, equal opportunities and skills.

3. Human Capital and Professional Development

Higher education is expected to build human capital (for example, accountants, doctors, engineers, lawyers, teachers, leaders, administrators, entrepreneurs etc) that will in turn build the very institutions that will be regarded as an indispensable factor for development. Teshome (2008) agrees that highly educated human capital is necessary to compete in an increasingly knowledge based global economy.

4. Knowledge Generation and Adaptation through Research and Innovation.

Tertiary education institutions are expected to support knowledge driving economic growth strategies and poverty reduction in generating new knowledge, building the capacity to access existing stores of global knowledge and adapt that knowledge for local use.

5. Equitable Opportunity and Access Provision

Access to tertiary education is expected to open better employment and income opportunities to underprivileged students, thereby decreasing inequality.

6. Promote Linkage to the World of Work

Higher education institutions are expected to be a country's skill base, knowledge source, and public space facilitating exchange of information and transforming the economy through university industry linkage. Through their curriculum, research and community services, higher education institutions are expected to serve as a platform to integrate the demand from industry or the world of work. It is expected to provide educated workforce with relevant training and meaningful contribution to progress and development.

7. Support other Levels of Education

Tertiary education is expected to support the rest of the education system. There is no doubt if any developing country could make significant progress towards achieving Millennium Development Goal (MDGS) and poverty alleviation, without strong tertiary systems. Tertiary education is necessary for sustainable progress in basic and secondary education, through the training of teachers, school leaders and administrators, and through research providing direction for policies and strategies for a country's education.

8. Promote International Cooperation

In an increasingly knowledge based global economy, linkage and cooperation between nations and institutions has become indispensable. The most relevant and plausible points of entry for such exchange towards knowledge adaptation, generation and dissemination as explained by Teffara and Altbach (2013) are the

higher education institutions. Thus higher education is expected to promote cooperation and collaborative works with development partners, regional counterparts and communities, as well as teaching and research institutions locally, regionally and globally.

Challenges of Tertiary Education in Nigeria

Higher education in Nigeria and Africa in general faces several challenges. Such challenges include:

1. Shallow/Narrow Curricula

It has been observed that educational contents are becoming extremely narrow and restrictive in outlook with curriculum and syllabi centralized and controlled under what has come to be known as “the minimum academic standard” imposed and supervised by a regulatory body-the National University Commission (NUC). This imposition allows for very small latitude for universities to revise and regularly upgrade and view the contents of their courses and subjects. It restricts universities from defining and pursuing their areas of excellence, their mission and vision in a global competitive environment. As explained by World Bank (2000) same ideas are being recycled and produced for universities which have to comply in order to scale through accreditation of courses.

2. Outdated Curricula

Still on curricula challenge, it has been discovered that there is a wild spread of concern in the relevance of curricula. Obioma (2010) frowned at the university and polytechnic curricula for essentially all the programmes have remained stagnant. He informs that programmes offerings in universities and polytechnics do not prepare the graduates for the world of work and industry. Obioma (2010) and Obanya (2008) lament that Nigerian graduates have remained unemployed not necessarily because the jobs are not there but simply because majority lack the skills that meets modern job challenges. Alkali (2008) wants us to accept the fact that educating students is not the same thing as training them in the professions and making them fit into the job market and enabling them to develop some sense of creativity when they are forced to create jobs for themselves and society. He postulates that the greatest challenges before us therefore is how to undertake a comprehensive review and refine our educational system program, especially at the tertiary level that will enable us produce graduates with deeper and thorough knowledge of what they have chosen to study.

3. Anomalies and Distortions over our Current Educational System

Our present educational system is characterized by some anomalies and distortions. For instance, the initial restructuring of our educational system along the 6-3-3-4 arrangement was expected to provide avenues for determining who goes to the

university and who goes for vocational and technical training. What is happening at the moment is that at that transitional stage, a bottle neck is created in such a way that every one prefers to go to the university. Even for those who may be considered more suitable probably after UTME for vocational and technical education because their cutoff was not up to university admission cutoff.

4. Parity between holders of the Higher National Diploma and Bachelor's Degree Holders

It has been observed that graduates of Higher National Diploma (HND) face a lot of discriminations in their places of work especially in terms of promotion. A situation where you find younger university degree holder especially in firms get accelerated promotion and some times are made to supervise his senior just because he possesses HND. In fact many firms prefer recruiting university graduates to those who hold diplomas from polytechnics. The government in fact has not shown strong commitment to ending the inequality, they have never mustered enough political will to address and resolve the issue. Agreeing with Abah (2013), this issue of disparity is affecting the psyche of polytechnic graduates negatively and discouraging youths from enrolling in technical programmes.

5. Poor or Inadequate Funding of Higher Education

Higher education institutions in Sub-Sahara Africa, Nigeria as a typical example are critically constrained by lack of adequate finance. Inadequate funding of higher education have led to poor learning and research facilities and resources. Relatively, funding remains the number one critical problem facing higher education in Nigeria. The massification and inadequate public and government support for higher education had impacted on the quality and relevance of academic programmes needed for human capacity and economic development in Nigeria.

6. Poor Physical Facilities and Infrastructure

Higher education institutions in Nigeria have seen little or no infrastructure improvements for the last few decades. Learning infrastructure is widely deficient due to insufficient budget. Infrastructure such as internet access, library, text books, laboratories, class rooms/office spaces, student hostels, lecturers' quarters etc are critically bottlenecks resulting in deterioration of quality of education and learning. The poor state of facilities also affect the quality of research and its ability to contribute to social, economic development and progress. Ossat (2011) agrees that in the face of this poor availability of infrastructure, there is no way functional education for economic development can be achieved.

7. Effects of Unionism

The influence of unionism on the academic programme of our tertiary education in Nigeria can not be over-emphasized. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP) have often embarked on indefinite strikes due to the Federal Government insensitivity to their demands. The face out between them and the Federal Government often leads to prolong strike actions keeping the students away from campus for a long period of time. The incessant strikes by ASUU have a lot of implications on the quality of graduates produced from our institutions for economic development.

8. Enrolment Explosion

Tertiary education has been regarded as a better preparation ground for better human capacity development, jobs and economic development. This has led to a greater increase in the demand for higher education/youth enrolment in the university education. According to UNESCO report on 2000, the multi-causes of the world wild expansion in the enrolment for education are population growth, economic development and increase in human knowledge, social transformation and psychological motives. Thus, in the last few decades, Nigeria has witnessed an unprecedented enrolment in the university education without corresponding expansion in the education facilities and infrastructure on ground. The academic implication of this anomaly is very devastating. Williams and Anekwe (2010) agree that this will obviously affect the efficiency of the lecturers and the quality of the graduates produced.

9. Politicization in the Appointment of VC/Rectors

Appointment of Vice-Chancellors/Rectors in the University System and Polytechnics have been characterized by politics rather than merits. In view of this, some of the Vice-Chancellors/Rectors appointed by either Federal or State Executives have failed in their responsibilities due to incompetency and inexperience. Omotayo (2008) asserted that some of the students on rest and ASUU strike are often generated by the poor management styles of some Vice-Chancellors. Infact the present crippled academic activities in UST, Rivers State is linked to imposition of Vice-Chancellor to the university.

Conclusion

The importance and linkage of education especially at the tertiary level for the development of any society is well known and cannot be overemphasized. Development as put by Nafisatu (2008) simply means the taping and utilization of potential human and material resources of any community or nation to increase its productivity as well as equitable distribution of products in order to improve the quality of life of the people. Therefore the planned strategy for restructuring the education

sector through the presidential summit on education should not be a lip-service issue. The efficacy of TVET in driving the social and economic blue-print of countries have been shown. Technology and entrepreneurship education have contributed to economic development of other countries of the world. Therefore it is very optimistic that here in Nigeria, it will provide great opportunities in meeting local and international needs as well as for the development of appropriate human capacity and economic development.

The Way Forward

For Nigeria as a nation to provide qualitative education especially at the tertiary level for economic development, the following suggestions must be considered as a way forward:

1. There should be a proper implementation and sustenance of a functional technical/vocational education which has been linked to the rapid development of countries of the world. It should therefore take into cognizance of the following;
 - a. establishment of entrepreneurship development education.
 - b. infusion of ICT into the various knowledge matter.
 - c. linking training to meet the needs of the industry.
 - d. including learning experiences that will develop inquiry minds, technical thinking, spatial imagination, intellectual, creative, communicative management skills. Because Technical/Vocational Education Technology (TVET) has been seen as a veritable programme that grows appropriate human capital for economic development. Alkali (2008) suggests that the idea of training students in practical skills such as wood work, metal work, technical drawing etc. should start at an early stage so that they could continue to look forward for training in these practical skills at some higher levels. Catching them young and training them to a higher level will enable them CREATE JOBS for themselves and others. This invariably calls for restructuring of curricula at all levels of education especially at the tertiary level.
2. There is therefore need for the Federal Government to address and harmonize the diploma and bachelor's degree certificates from both universities and polytechnics to boost the interest of our youths for vocational/technical education programmes.
3. Government should stop playing lip-service and impunity as regards funding the education sector. No meaningful achievement will be done in the sector without adequate funding. After all, the Bible tells us that “money answereth all things”.
4. Government at all levels should tackle as a matter of urgency the issue of dearth infrastructure and facilities in our tertiary institutions. Quality education that will enhance economic development cannot be achieved with poor physical infrastructure.

5. Education problems that ignite incessant strikes by academic unions should be looked into critically by government and be resolved once and for all.
6. Government undue interference in university matters should be minimized. It is difficult for economic development to thrive in a university environment where there is rancor.

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