

# GLOBAL CHALLENGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

*Higher Education plays a vital role in global education and development. Nigeria like other countries of the World recognizes education as the major instrument for effecting national development. Education is a critical, social, economic and political development of Nigeria. These goals of education can be fully attained if quality delivery and research are rendered in higher education in Nigeria. Functional higher education of good quality is critical for Nigeria to become globally competitive. This paper advocated and discussed the global challenges of Higher Education in Nigeria in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century such as frequent labour dispute and closure of higher institutions, school insecurity, lack of vibrant staff development programme cultism and lack of functional library. However, the paper recommended that the federal government should meet up with the 26<sup>th</sup> percent education budget as recommended by UNESCO as well as collaborative efforts between the government and other sectors of Nigerian economy in innovation and reforms in Higher Education institutions in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Global challenges, Higher Education, Funding, Innovation and Nigeria.

Higher Education is generally accepted as a major instrument for promoting socio-economic, political and cultural development of any nation and Nigeria is not an exception. Higher Education educates future leaders, develops high-level human resources and human per capital for socio-economic growth and development. The major issues militating against the effective development of Higher Education are lack of planning continuity, contradictory policies and underfunding. In order to salvage Nigerian higher education proper planning and administration are needed.

## **Historical Development of Higher Education in Nigeria**

The history of higher education in Nigeria dates back to 1932 when Yaba College of technology was established as the first higher educational in Nigeria and

then followed by University of Ibadan in 1948 as an affiliate of University of London. In April 1959, the Federal Government commissioned an inquiry (Ashby commission) to advise it on the higher education needs of the country. Okojie (2007) posited that the National University Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) activities in improving quality of higher education should include:

- Accreditation of courses
- Approval of courses and programme
- Maintenance of minimum academic standards
- Monitoring of higher institutions
- Giving guidelines for setting higher institutions
- Prevention of the establishment of illegal campus
- Determine the teacher student ratio and length of academic session
- Rationalize all degree programmes in all federal universities
- Approve guidelines and setting out criteria for accreditation of all Colleges of Education.
- Determine the general programme to be pursued by polytechnics and colleges of technology in order to maximize the uses of available facilities and avoid unnecessary duplication while ensuring that they are adequate to the manpower needs of the country.

#### **Global Challenges in Higher Education**

There are challenges in higher education policy implementation globally. The challenges are:

- **Corruption and misappropriation of funds:** As a result of corruption and misappropriation of funds in higher institutions of learning by government officials full implementation of Educational policies on higher education are hindered.
- **Lack of clear definition of responsibility and co-ordination:** The government of Nigeria and some countries establish new agencies and organizations on top of existing ones. The new organizations so established, have clearly defined area of responsibility and authority. In actual functioning, these organizations run into conflicts with one another largely because of role duplication, over-lapping functions and lack of co-ordination. At the end the price for all these weaknesses is paid during implementation.
- **Lack of continuity in commitment to policy:** As regime changes in the country priorities of government also change rapidly. When a regime changes, a new one introduces new attention in priorities. This situation tends to make

implementation difficult in terms of the “switch over” to entirely different priorities and objectives.

- **Inadequate definition of goals:** Most policy goals of Higher Education often lack clarity, internal consistency and compatibility with other policy goals. All these affect the chances of successful implementation of policies especially where too many goals are pursued, implementation of goals becomes complicated.
- Lack of well defined programme for achievement of goals coupled with lack of social acceptability and political attractiveness of programme. Specific actions aimed at achieving policy goals and objectives were often not well articulated and made explicit. Hence implementation often takes the form of “trial” and error”. This accounts for difficulty in evaluating ahead of time, the effectiveness of policy instrument chosen to achieve a given policy goals as well as the consistency of such policy tool with goal and objectives sought. This impede the smooth implementation of Higher Education policies globally.

#### **Challenges of Higher Education in Nigeria**

- **School insecurity:** Nigerian Educational institutions are beset by many kinds of cancerous problems such as cultism, abduction, kidnapping and bombing. Ikelegbe (2005) observed that insecurity has indeed assumed an epidemic dimension in Nigeria. There is no single Nigeria Higher Institutions of learning that has not experienced the menace of cultism for some time now. According to Adewale (2006), more than one thousand students and teachers have died in Nigeria Higher Institutions as a result of cult-related violent clashes. The re-current cult activities in Higher Institutions are mind-boggling irritating and distasteful. Lives of promising young men and women have been cut short by the bloody hands of murderous gangs in schools.

According to Nyong (2013) one student was reportedly killed at the University of Uyo during violent encounter with the police as they embarked on a peaceful protest over transport fares within the campus. This occurred when the police opened fire and threw teargas canisters on campus resulting in the death of a student and injured dozens of students and teachers. Again, three bombs have been found in different locations at Bayero University Kano (Famutimi 2012). Also students and teachers were massacred in Mubi, Mubi Polytechnics Adamawa state. According to Manyan (2012) more than forty students and teachers were killed and injured in Adamawa crisis by unknown gunmen. Similarly students and lecturers were kidnapped at University of Calabar, (Daniel & Favour 2016).

- **Lack of vibrant staff development programmes:** Most institutions of higher learning in Nigeria lack functional staff development programme for training and re-training of staff. Standardized staff development programme on a continuous basis will help academic and non-academic staff to modify their behaviour, attitude, value, skills and competence. In this way they grow, learn on the job and develop their knowledge and thus become more effective and efficient in the performance of their duties. Staff development programme is necessary and worthwhile in this era of knowledge exploitation and emergent knowledge based economy but lack of it reduced staff efficiency and encourages poor performance.

- **Frequent labour disputes and closure of higher institutions:** This is a global challenge but rampant in Nigerian higher institutions closure of institutions affects staff productivity and the realization of educational aims and objectives. The disruption of academic programme of institution of higher learning affect students learning outcomes, since lecturers find it difficult to complete the course work. The frequent disputes and strike galore by higher institution staff and students leave students with little or no time to complete both their theoretical and practical work. In most cases a semester's course work is sandwiched to few weeks during which lectures are rushed to accommodate the time lost to strike. This type of academic rush is an obstacle to the attainment of educational goals of higher education in Nigeria. According to Soriwei, F. and Adetayo, O (2017) Academy Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) embark on total strike nationwide. The strike has paralyzed academic calendar of Nigerian Universities.

- **Lack of information communication technology facilities:** Most institution of higher learning in Nigeria do not have functional information and communication technology resource centres to improve teaching and learning, enhance quality research and academic collaborations and training. Some institutions are not linked with functional internet connectivity for staff and student development. (Asiyai, R. I. & Oghuvbu, E. P 2009, Idowu, I. A., Esere, O. M & Omotosho, A. J. 2011).

### **Challenges Facing Management of Higher Education in Nigeria**

The major constraint facing effective management of higher education in Nigeria may be attributed to inadequate funds and inability to access funds meant for higher institutions. Oyeneye (2006) and Adegbite (2007) maintained that the major challenge facing the management of Higher Education in Nigeria is inadequate funding. Again Ayayi and Ayodele (2002) noted that the total expenditure apportioned for Higher Education in the country is grossly inadequate. Ekundayo (2006) observed that Nigeria government over the years has not been meeting the United Nation Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

recommendation of the 26% of the total budget. Aina (2007) observed that government priority to education is still very low, the apparent shortage of funds available to higher institutions have been responsible for declining library infrastructure and laboratories in recent years. Another factor is lack of proper accountability on the part of institutional heads. Accountability is the ability of an institution to demonstrate that it has effectively achieved certain ends and has employed the most efficient means to achieve those ends. In a situation where there is little or no proper accountability in terms of financial management, such as value of money spent, effective management suffers a setback.

Furthermore, political interference and lack of academic freedom affect Nigerian higher institutions particularly in the choice of chief executive. Mgbekem (2004) maintained that the higher institutions in Nigeria are run through committee system which are either responsible to the council or the senate.

According to Nwiyi (2006), the issues of academic freedom and the due process are at the heart of the teaching and learning enterprise and transcends institutional traditions. In the opinion of Okeke (2007) whatever assumed relationship between the state and higher education institutions, the state is under obligation to respect and accord to all staff members, the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. The systematic infringement on academic freedom on appointment, transfer and removal of vice-chancellors, provosts and rectors become the prerogative of the “visitor” (Head of government or Governor) which brings about serious dislocation in the operation of the Higher Education System.

Okediran (2007) posited that the desired autonomy of day to day running of the institutions should be recognized. More so, poor salary structure, constant strikes by academic staff unions, poor staff training, insecurity and cultism are also challenges facing management of higher education in Nigeria. Akindutire (2004) maintained that deterioration and salary erosion during the past years have promoted substantial brain-drain of academic staff. Anyamele (2004) also posited that teacher training is a means of professional improvement and updating which deals with all development functions aimed at the maintenance and enhancement of one’s professional competence. While Sinah (2007) posited that where cults exist there is no guarantee that academic programme and activities would run normally and finally, Olaniye (2012), Famutime (2012), Manyan (2012) all reported of periodic bombing of higher institutions in the country where students and academic staff were massacred.

### **Revitalization of Higher Education Management globally and in Nigeria**

The following measures should be adopted to revamp higher education management globally and in Nigeria, the measures are:

- Adequate funding of higher education: The gross under funding of the educational system in the country has been rendering higher education incapacitated. Odiya and Omofonmwam (2007) remarked that UNESCO recommended 26% of the total budget of a nation to be allocated to education. Government should allocate more funds to enhanced higher education programmes. This will help in ensuring effective management by institutional heads.
- Re-appraisal of the role of higher education and the world of work. Higher education in Nigeria today needs a total over hauling and re-structuring, this reform is required to improve the performance of Higher Education programme.
- De-politicization of higher education system. Political interference especially in the appointment and selection of principal officers of higher institutions. The academics should be free to choose who becomes their heads without external interference. Bablola, Jaiyeoba Okediran (2007), posited that the place of school head in the administration of school cannot be over emphasized therefore, there is need to follow the conditions to the letter.

### **Conclusion**

The need for higher education came as a result of the fact that higher education is responsible for the development of and production of high-level manpower within the context of the needs of the nation. Higher education is the bed rock of development in the country and the world at large but it is bisected with problems such as insecurity, financial crisis, misappropriation of funds, poor accountability and lack of autonomy. However, for meaningful development to take place in higher institutions, government should fund higher education and remove bottle necks in accessing funds meant for higher education in the country.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that proper accountability on the art of institutional head should be maintained as well as full implementation of educational budget and policies. Again, the government should provide adequate funds for higher education programmes, grant autonomy and easy access to funds without bureaucracy.

There is need for pragmatic reforms in higher educational institutions in Nigeria through collaborative efforts by Government, business sectors, civil society and the academia in terms of research, quality delivery, teaching methods and community services.

Furthermore, the supervisory arm of higher education (NUC, NBTE, NCCE) should re-double their effort to ensure effective supervision in terms of admissions, accreditation of programmes, institutions and monitoring of facilities. The supervisory body should also beef up efforts to check indiscriminate award of honorary degrees and professorship as well as admission and results reekertearing in Nigeria higher Institutions. Aside all these, the internal democracy of higher institutions in the country should be maintained. This will help to curb frequent strike actions embarked upon by unions of higher institutions in the country. Government should invest in human capital to increase the ability to absorb and use knowledge by empowering Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) for staff development. The Economic Fraud and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) should be alert to expose any Provost, Rector, Vice-Chancellor, Chairman of governing council, Commissioners and Ministers of Education that are corrupt. This will reduce indiscriminate embezzlement of funds meant for higher educational development in the country.

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