

GLOBAL CHALLENGES OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN BAYELSA STATE: THE WAY FORWARD

Cecilia Angaye Timiniebipa Timi-Johnson, Ph.D
Isaac Jasper Boro College of Education, Sagbama,
Bayelsa State.

And

Regina Patricia Abam
Isaac Jasper Boro College of Education, Sagbama,
Bayelsa State.

Abstract

From a global perspective, challenges are normal to life, likewise in every organization in the world even education in general (and higher education in particular) irrespective of developed and developing countries. Higher education has been buffeted with long-standing problems of inadequate funding. This has given birth like a pregnant woman to the following: brain drain, research infrastructure and examination malpractices. The paper therefore recommended that the federal government must accept and implement the 26% funding formula for education recommended by UNESCO to impact and sustain higher education. This will go a long way to meet the demand of infrastructure for conducive learning, retain good and experience academic, reduce brain drain, increase research and development and students' enrolment.

Keyword: Global Challenges, Higher Education, Funding, Brain Drain, Infrastructure

Education has been defined in various ways as the aggregate of processes through which an individual acquires knowledge values, attitude and behaviour that are of positive value to the society to which a person belongs or as the process of learning to live as a useful and acceptable member of the community. According to Timi-Johnson and Richard (2016) opined that education is a process of helping students develop, acquires appropriate skills and knowledge that will help them become somebody in life and be impactful to their society and nation at large. It is the basis for transformation, industrialization and a high way to global knowledge economy.

Higher education has the main responsibility for equipping and imparting students with the advanced knowledge and appropriate skill required for professions. Higher education referred to as post secondary or tertiary education; this is the education given after secondary education in monotechnics, polytechnics and universities and these institutions offered correspondence courses (Federal Ministry of Education 2014:30). World Bank in Timi-Johnson and Richard (2016) higher learning of education is a place where the frontiers of knowledge are developed through practical work and exercise. The entire intellectual and professional life of a country depends on sound tertiary education that provides quality products (graduates) of international standard for high productivity. Indeed, higher learning of education is a crucial arena of transformation and imperative to economic and social transformation bringing development to society.

More so, study has shown that one of the secret of developed countries advancement in science and technology and economic wise is traceable to higher learning of education. For developing countries like Nigeria to be listed among world economy, higher learning of education is fundamental where knowledge has become an important area of exploit for competitiveness. The quality of education generated from higher learning of education is crucial to national development.

However, the quality of education in higher institutions can help transform a nation's economically, politically and socially. However, the role of higher education cut across every aspect, human capita and national development. This is why; it is unique in operation from other institutions. What really defined higher education institution is the ability and capability to disseminate knowledge and skills through teaching, contribute to advancement in knowledge through research and engage in community services. The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014) lists 7 goals of higher education under section 8 no. 59 (a-g) as to:

- ❖ Contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training;
- ❖ Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society;
- ❖ Develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments;
- ❖ Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;
- ❖ Promote and encourage scholarship and community service;
- ❖ Forge and cement national unity; and,
- ❖ Promote national and international understanding and interaction.

Though the goals stated above are wonderful and laudable, but can only be achievable through effective implementation which is a challenge. Nigeria have good policy formulation but poor implementation which has resulted in Higher institutions

of learning failure to produce graduate with a combination of skills and value system that could make them self-reliant. This has made the national policy on education more of a paper work than realization in Nigeria.

Global Challenges in Higher Education in Bayelsa State

From a global perspective, challenges are normal to life, likewise in every organization including education in general. The potential of tertiary education systems in Bayelsa State to fulfil the 7 goals of tertiary education by Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) and core objectives of tertiary education is frequently thwarted by long-standing problems of finance/funding. This problem has resulted to the following: brain drain, inadequate training, breeding of educated unemployment, research infrastructure, record management, improper curriculum content, and over population in the university and examination malpractices.

1. Inadequate funding: As water is to fish and blood to human for survival, so is fund to organization. Fund is the life-wire of every organization that must achieve its stated goals and objectives irrespective of good formulated policy. In the same vein, higher education inclusive will continue to experience underachievement of goals and objectives if inadequate funding continues. According to Udida, Bassey, Udofia and Egbona (2009) one of the most serious problems threatening the standard of the educational systems is that of dwindling level of public funding in the face of rising demands and hence rising cost of higher education. This shortage of funds affects job performance and the growth of the institution. Higher educational institutions cannot perform optimally without funding. The inability of federal government to objectively accept and implement the 26% funding formula for education recommended by the UNESCO has impacted negatively on the sustainability of higher education in Nigeria. Fund allocated to tertiary education has not significantly increase to meet the growing demand of infrastructure for conducive learning, research and development and increase in students' enrolment.

However, inadequate funding to education is far alarming and has continued for many years without any significant change in improvement of allocation of fund to the higher education in Nigeria. It is therefore imperative to consider educational management as possible solutions in addressing some of the crisis perceived in educational management and higher institutions respectively. Federal government has not being able to fund tertiary education adequately to achieve the best results. The consequences is the state of the tertiary education today, where teaching staff are leaving the country in for greener pastures abroad; with less experience teaching staff more in the higher institutions than the experience ones. Otokunefor (2011) cited in Francis (2015) argued that many University lecturers could not justify their degrees in the classrooms. The effect is brain drain and breeding of educated unemployment. In a statement made by former CBN Governor Professor Charles Soludo that eighty

percent of Nigerian graduates cannot be employed. Onyeneye (2006) cited in Francis (2015) agreed with the above statement after a review of relevant literature, that study concluded that the quality of Nigerian University graduates has declined and cannot be match or meet the expectation in the labour market in the present 21st century. The reason being that, they are below the expectation to be employed by organization. This is not healthy for our tertiary institutions and also not safe for the society and the nation at large.

Yet, stakeholders in the tertiary education are lukewarm to finding solution to the problem of funding higher education; the effect is the decline in the quality of education in Nigeria. There is the need to design other ways of funding public universities to enhance Nigerian education system. Hence, various propositions have being designed to lessen the burden of funding being carried solely by the government in Nigeria by introducing tuition fee both in federal and state universities, encouraging entrepreneurship activities on various campuses, seeking for funds from international development collaboration, making giant strides in scientific breakthroughs and becoming the forerunners in technological advancements and implementation etc (Arikewuyo, 2001) cited in Famade, Omiyale and Adebola (2015).

However, funding of tertiary education is highly imperative due to the costs involved in operating and maintaining an institution in Nigeria and everywhere in the world. Hence, Olokoba (2014) observes that there were too many regulatory agencies and parastatals with the attendant erosion of high quantum of funds present in the Nigerian universities and the effect is the unnecessary bureaucracy that is avoidable overhead. Consequently, even not so essential capital costs on facilities and projects institutions of learning suffer neglect. The facilities are neither replaced nor maintained. These facilities are not expanded either, instead enrolment increases by hundreds of thousands every succeeding year. He also observes that as a result, the expected lecturer/student ratio is unattainable due to funding that has posted as constraints on staff recruitment and development cum with facility improvement and expansion. Yet, the situation can be ameliorated; if the formula for funding university education suggested by (Arikewuyo, 2001) is adopted. In a nutshell, the neglect of the challenges in the tertiary institutions will affect the core mandate of teaching, research and community service in higher education.

2. Brain drain: Brain drain is noted as one of the global challenges in higher education institutions especially in Africa and Nigeria in particular. Based on this, brain drain may occur when the probability of immigration is large in going abroad for work and abandoning the domestic jobs. According to Ekundayo and Ajayi (2009) Brain-drain refers to widespread migration of academic staff from the universities in the country to overseas universities or equivalent institutions where their services are better rewarded. Peter and Chike (2012) described brain drain as the migration of

educated and skilled labour from poorer to richer countries. Also, Utile (2008) asserted mass exodus of highly trained and experienced academic from countries with poor conditions of service to those with better work conditions and better remuneration.

According to Ige (2014) Estimate of Presidential Committee on the issue by the Military Government revealed that between 1986 and 1990, 30,694 professionals from tertiary institutions left the country. He also, reported that between 1988 and 1990, over 1,000 lecturers left the federal universities in Nigeria while as at 2007, over 10,000 Nigeria's academics were working in United States of America. The head count of academic staff in tertiary institutions in United Kingdom revealed 153 Nigerians and 268 South African in sub-Saharan Africa.

Due to brain drain ordeals, tertiary institutions in Nigeria are short of experienced lecturers to adequately handle quality research and teaching and learning activities. The institutions because of inadequate funding are restricted in employing professional as lecturers in certain field. The few available lecturers are seriously overworked. Some institutions of higher learning are short of lecturers and some programmes are not accredited by National Universities Commission (NUC). Attainment of good quality in higher education requires teaching staff of adequate quantity and quality (Romina, 2013).

Based on the global challenge of brain drain in our tertiary education, the following could be seen as factors responsible: Inadequate funding of the tertiary education has resulted to poor academic salaries when compare to their counterpart in other part of the world; inadequate infrastructural facilities (including research). It must be known that while the best brains are leaving the university system, the broad aim of producing high level manpower from the system for national development cannot be achieved.

If there is no concert measure or policy to handle brain drain in the tertiary education; the quality of Nigeria higher education graduate will continue to decline resulting to tertiary education decadent which national goals and objective will be a failure. Where higher institution graduates will be only certificate holders that are unemployable in the labour-market. Francis (2015) agreed that the quality of Nigerian University graduates was declining in recent times against the demands of the 21st century society and expectations in the labour market.

3. Research infrastructure: The inadequate research infrastructure in our higher education has buffeted seriously the achievement of tertiary education goals and objectives. The facilities required for good research in tertiary education are in short supply such as laboratories and apparatus, research library, conference/seminar rooms, econometric laboratories, relevant books and journals are all seriously inadequate and outdated. World Bank (2004) supported the equipment for teaching, research and learning are either lacking or very inadequate and in a top bad shape to

permit the universities the freedom to carry out the basic functions of academics. This is another reason for mobility of top-flight academic to where they can enhance and showcase their potentials academically. Inadequate infrastructural facilities for research pose a big threat to the quality of tertiary education and their goals. Where indigenous research are rated below standard and not accepted when compare with their counterpart in developed nations due to infrastructural facilities for research.

4. Examination malpractices: Examination malpractice is a common global phenomenon most especially in Nigerian higher education institutions. Examination malpractice has been described as a virus/cankerworm in the educational system especially higher education institutions. Examination malpractices have given institutions a bad name, lost of confidence in Nigerian graduate to be employable by reputable organizations. Examination malpractice has eaten deep into the “bone and marrow” of some students and staff (both academic and non-academic) to the extent of wishing for legalization in Nigerian higher education institutions. However, Esrom (2013) sees examination malpractice as the massive and unprecedented abuse of rules and regulations pertaining to internal and public examinations, beginning from the setting of such examinations through the taking of the examinations, their marking and grading, to the release of the results and the issuance of certificates. This agreed with Wilayat (2009) who asserts that as a deliberate wrong doing, contrary to official examination rules designed to place a candidate at an unfair advantage or disadvantage. She further argued that, it is any illegal act committed by a student single handily or in collaboration with others like fellow students, parents, teachers, supervisors, invigilators, printers and anybody or group of people before, during or after examination in order to obtain undeserved marks or grades.

However, what could have being the cause of this cankerworm called examination malpractice?

i. Inadequate facilities such as classrooms, halls, libraries, and laboratories pave way for examination malpractice in higher education institutions in Nigeria. The reason is that tertiary education administrators/management admits students beyond the available physical facilities. This scenario of over crowned students under examination condition, without hesitation will cause examination malpractice.

ii. The emphasis on paper qualification or certificate is another cause of examination malpractice. In Nigerian society today, attention is focus on certificate rather than competence on the job. Students’ therefore focus on getting grades without adequate skill and technical know-how. The result is having many graduates with certificate who cannot defend it and compete with their counterpart in other higher institution outside the country.

iii. Slothfulness on the part of the students’ remains one of the causes of examination malpractice in Nigerian higher education institutions. Students are no longer diligence, discipline and dedicated to their academic pursuit by studying. No

matter what, if a student is not prepared for an examination he/she would like to cheat in the examination hall to pass.

The Way Forward

i. Nigerian governments are good policy makers but very weak in implementing policy. The examination/malpractice Act 33 of 1999 stipulated that offenders punishment range from a fine of N50,000 to N100,000 and 3-4 years imprisonment. The true of the matter, how many offenders have faced the above penalty. It is more of paperwork than implementation. For sure, if this Act 33 of 1999 is enforced in higher education institutions irrespective of the offender, the issue of examination malpractice will be reduced drastically or even disappear without a trace.

ii. Based on Nigeria scenario, government has being the main source of funding higher education institutions. Since government funding is insufficient to maintain and upheld the core mandate of tertiary education, every institution should design strategies of internally generated income from tuition fees, seeking for funds from international development, offering long distance and part time programmes and others.

iii. The Federal government should accept and implement the 26% funding formula for education recommended by the UNESCO to impact and sustain higher education. This will help meet the demands of infrastructure for conducive learning, research and development and increase in students' enrolment.

iv. Government should upgrade pay package to motivate academic staff and reduce brain drain in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This will keep the best, talented and experienced in the educational sector and to achieve higher education goals and individual goals in the long run. To this effect, higher education administrators should ensure adequate and competitive remuneration packages to be given to attract and retain high quality academic.

v. Government and non-governmental organizations should support higher education institutions by motivating academia for quality research and innovation by providing infrastructural facilities for research especially those in the science field. This will reduce brain drain and enhance the quality of graduates in higher education institutions. The resultant effect will manifest in achieving higher education core mandate and above all national development.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, the paper concluded that higher education is buffeted with challenges such as inadequate funding, brain drain, inadequate research infrastructure, and examination malpractices. These challenges have slowed and hindered the progress of higher education in Nigeria. This has made the national policy on education for higher education more of a paper work than realization in

Nigeria. In addition, if the proffer way forwards are implemented, the higher education in Nigeria will be among the world recognized.

References

- Agi U. K. and Yellowe N.A. (2013). Management Strategies for Regenerating Secondary Education for National Development and Self-Reliance. *Journal of Teacher Perspective (JOTEP)* 7(2).
- Arikewuyo, M.D. (2001). Public participation in management of higher institution in Ogun State, Nigeria. *Evaluation Research*, 1, 30-37.
- Ekundayo, H.T. and Ajayi, I.A. (2009). Towards effective management of university education in Nigeria. *International NGO Journal Vol. 4 (8): 342-347*. Available online at <http://www.academicjournals.org/INGOJ>.
- Esrom, T. J. (2013). Curbing Examination Malpractice in Schools: Participative Advocacy. *JORIND* 11(2):125-131. Available online at: www.transcampus.org/journals
- Famade, O.A., Omiyale, G.T. and Adebola, Y.A. (2015). Towards Improved Funding of Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria. *Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (AJHSS)* Vol.3 (2):83-90.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014). *National Policy on Education* (4th edition) Abuja: NERDC Press.
- Frackman, E. (2003). Higher Education Information systems. *A Proposal for an overall concept for Higher Education System in Croatia*.
- Francis, D.I. (2015). Solving the Problem of Poor Quality of University Graduates in Nigeria- A Proposed Holistic Approach. *British Journal of Education* 3 (7):52-70.
- Ige, A.M. (2014). Combating Brain Drain Menace in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria: The Way Forward. *International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning* Vol. 1(2): 20-33. www.noveltyjournals.com

- Olokoba, A.A. (2014). Impact of funding on the provision and management of students' welfare services in colleges of legal and Islamic studies in Nigeria. *Unpublished Dissertation submitted to School of Postgraduate Studies, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.*
- Otokunefor, T. (2011). "Why Nigerian Universities Produce Poor Quality Graduates", *in Alpha Education Foundation Educational Monograph Series*, No. 3.
- Oyeneye, O.Y. (2006). Current Issues in the Administration of University Education in Nigeria. *Lecture delivered at the 5th Convocation Ceremony of University of Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria, March 29th.*
- Peter N.M. and Chike, E. (2012). "BRAIN DRAIN": Implication for economic growth in Nigeria. *American Journal of Social Issues & Humanities*. 2(2): 41-47. <http://www.ajsih.org>
- Romina, I.A. (2013) Challenges of Quality in Higher Education in Nigeria in the 21st Century. *International Journal of Educational Planning & Administration*. Vol.3(2):159-172. <http://www.ripublication.com/ijepa.htm>
- Timi-Johnson, C.T.A. and Richard B.A. (2016). Towards Transformation of Entrepreneurship Education in Universities in Bayelsa State: Contemporary Issues. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Academic Excellence*, 15 (1):127-138.
- Udida, L.A., Basse, U.U., Udofia, I.U. and Egbona, E.A. (2009). System performance and sustainability of higher education in Nigeria. *Being a paper presented at the 11th International Conference of Educational Management Association of South Africa (EMASA) 7th – 9th August 2009.*
- Utile, T. (2008). University autonomy and brain drain syndrome in Nigeria. *Being a paper presented at the 3rd conference of the ACU's Human Resource Management Network 23rd -25th May, 2008, Trinidad and Tobago.*
- Wilayat, M. (2009). Causes of Examination Malpractice/Unfair Means. *The Journal of Education Awareness and Research* Monday, July 13.
- World Bank (2004). Improving Tertiary education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Things that work. *Report of a regional training conference, Accra, Ghana.*