

# **RE- ENGINEERING ON CAMPUS HOSTEL ACCOMMODATION IN PUBLIC TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN DELTA STATE FOR IMPROVED STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE, CHARACTER MOULDING, EMPLOYABILITY AND SELF PRODUCTIVITY**

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines the situation of students' accommodation in public tertiary institutions in Delta State in the face of continued negative education outcomes. It also examines the hostel accommodation situation in a developed country like the United Kingdom and a developing country like Kenya. It posits that students require a conducive learning and living environment for excellent academic skills acquisition and character moulding. Furthermore, the paper concludes that hostel accommodation is a serious issue in educational facilities and avers that achievement of educational objectives will remain illusive unless steps are taken to reengineer students' hostel accommodation in public tertiary institutions. Moreover, the paper recommends ways of reengineering students' on- campus hostel accommodation in public tertiary institutions in order to achieve academic skills and character excellence for employ ability and individual productivity.

Dwindling financial allocation to the educational sector has affected the educational system in many ways. This has become visible in the decaying school environment which is not only noticeable in public primary schools but also in government tertiary institutions. Many school buildings are in various stages of dilapidation with worn out wall paints, broken doors and windows, soaked ceilings and leaking roofs. Little is being done to renovate or maintain existing school structures and less still is being done to put up new buildings to accommodate the ever increasing population of students that enroll in schools each academic session who bring their weight to bear upon the already over-stretched infrastructural facilities in the schools. Classrooms, for example, are overflowing with learners, there are inadequate chairs, tables and sometimes inadequate standing space. Students in some tertiary institutions, sometimes, have to stand during lectures for more than two hours at a stretch. Some of them even hang out at open windows to listen to lectures and take notes at such lectures. The problem that brings much pain to students as well as their parents and community is the issue of hostel accommodation, be it on or off campus.

Hostel accommodation adds to the quality of an institution. It sometimes removes value from the quality of a school if the students from such hostels are behaving in ways contrary to good community values. If the students living within a community behave in anti-social ways that bring pain to the community in which they reside, then such a school is not accomplishing the educational goals it has been established to accomplish. This is why the issue of regulated on-campus hostel accommodation should be given another close look and careful reconsideration.

On- campus hostel accommodation in tertiary institutions is a school facility which is as important as classroom facilities and other school buildings. Housing is a fundamental human right of every citizen; parents are to provide their children with accommodation as the right of these children. The government stands in the place of the parents when they undertake to build schools for the citizens. This implies that when the students leave the home of their biological parents, they will now be housed by those who stand as their parents. Donnellan (2001) posits that teachers and foster care givers have a duty of care to behave as a reasonable parent would do to ensure the child's safety even though they are not obliged to assume full parental responsibility for the students especially as many of them have attained the age of reasoning. There is now a serious emergency in the students' hostel

accommodation in tertiary institutions today which calls for urgent action on the part of the government. According to University of Nigeria, Nsukka's (UNN) advertisement print out (2012) the government has, in a way, withdrawn from its financial responsibility for students' hostel accommodation services. The position of the UNN is affirmed by Fatunde (2010) who stated that the federal government has not been interested in committing funding to accommodation. This action of government is akin to that of parents denying their children the responsibility of placing a roof over their heads. It is also the same as the action of one who brings children out to the streets and offers them training but who does not care where they come from to acquire the training or where they rest their heads at the end of the day after each training session. The fate of such trainees is already predetermined. At best, the trainee may succeed in acquiring the training in addition to other unforeseen and undesirable anti-social informal training which has no relevance to the training the trainee was called out to obtain. At worst, the trainee forgets about the training altogether - the first reason for the call out - and graduates prematurely into all manner of vices that not only destroy such a trainee but also jeopardize the lives of all with whom the trainee comes into contact. The latter has been state of affairs in the Nigerian tertiary education since the school adopted the system of mass admissions according to Idachaba (2007) in Egwunyenga (2009) without commensurate expansion of existing school facilities especially in the area of on-campus hostel accommodation. It is noteworthy that majority of first timers or freshmen in the tertiary institutions are young secondary school leavers who are leaving their homes for the first time. As Maduewesi (2005) puts it, these learners are the most precious resources in education, not for use, but for moulding in learning and in character.

Education is aimed at perpetuating the culture of the society from which it emanates. When these youngsters are brought from their more protective home environment and are literally left in the cold among strangers, the outcomes of their educational pursuits may become, at best, unintended and at worst, undesirable. It is therefore not surprising that the 21st century tertiary education is plagued by such social malaise like drug abuse, cultism, armed gangsterism, armed robbery, rape, murder, brazen-faced skimpy dressing and out right self destructive habits like cigarette-smoking, alcoholism, abortion, violent outbursts against one another, cohabitation between male and female students, homosexuality, examination malpractice and other acts which not only border on lack of self-control, but are also inimical to academic excellence and good character building. These characters are also alien to the Nigerian culture. This view agrees with that of Nwakpa (2010) who describes such behaviours as unethical, unacceptable and runs contrary to norms, morals and regulations of the community.

This paper is thus written against the background of perceived inadequate hostel accommodation of students in tertiary institutions and its possible negative impact on academic performance, students' character, achievement of educational goals and the students' employability at the end of their training period. The second and fourth goals of tertiary education as stated by Federal Ministry of Education (FME) (2004) are: to develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual society; and to acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society. These goals are attainable if steps are taken to re-examine the present state of the educational facilities which includes hostel accommodation in tertiary institutions. The problem of this study is whether these educational goals can be attained with the present state of hostel accommodation in public tertiary institutions in Delta State.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the state of hostel accommodation in a developed country, in a developing country and in Delta State public tertiary institutions. Furthermore, the paper will make suggestions on how on-campus hostel accommodations can be re-engineered to achieve educational goals and enhance employability and self productivity for national development. The paper will also examine and establish whether or not there is a positive relationship between the hostel accommodation and students' academic performance. The paper will answer the following questions. What is the state of hostel accommodation in developed countries? What is the state of hostel accommodation in developing countries? What is the state of hostel accommodation in tertiary

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institutions in Delta State? Is there a relationship between hostel accommodation and students' performance? What is the way forward? The paper will be of significance educational planners and administrators, students of tertiary institutions, parents and the communities in which the schools are established. Hostel Accommodation in Developed Countries

According to the United Kingdom Council for International Student Affairs website (UKCISA) there are different categories of accommodation for students in schools in the United Kingdom. Students are offered a list of the types of hostels from which to choose. The student is to choose any of the following:

- Bedroom or dormitories on the school site. The students live here with the residential house staff and their families. This is classified under the category of independent school accommodation.
- Special accommodation for English language students. Under this category, students choose to live with an English family to enable them practice their chosen course in a supportive environment. The student may also choose to live in halls of residence or hostels. If the student chooses to live with a family, such a student is obliged to abide by their house rules.
- Some of the accommodations are school-owned and some are privately owned, self-catering shared houses are also available.

In the United Kingdom a student has the choice to choose a great place to live in, The basic items in each student's room include a single person bed, a desk and a chair, a wardrobe, a bookshelf and a waste paper bin. There is sometimes a shared common room with comfortable chairs or sofas, a TV, DVD player and a pool table. They have a shared kitchen furniture and equipment like cupboards, a deep freezer, fridge, cooker with grill and oven, a sink, electric kettle and other such basic kitchen utensils are provided. The bathroom and toilet facility can be for the individual to share with a few others, depending on the type of accommodation. It is pertinent to state that the accommodation is regularly cleaned by cleaners who are employees of the school.

**The State of Hostel Accommodation in a Developing Country**

Kenya, like Nigeria, is a developing country. In Kenya government or public schools used to admit students only according to the bed space available. In other words, admission was tied to availability of bed space (accommodation). Under this dispensation only 10,000 students out of the 100,000 that apply for admission each year are admitted (the Africa Report, 2009).

In a recent write up, however, Mbury (2011) noted that the government came up with educational policies which delinked admission from availability of beds or accommodation. Some of the palliative measures put in place to assuage the accommodation problem include inviting the private sector to invest massively on students' accommodation projects. The price for off campus hostel accommodation has been left to market forces and the prices are exorbitant due to price of lands.

Private universities like United States International University -Africa -5IU-A) and other new generation private universities are doing much in the area of students' hostel accommodation. According to the school's website (February, 2012), residential housing plays an integral role in the university's educational mission. Therefore life in campus housing is an experience that is enjoyable, rewarding and beneficial to the development and growth of each student. It is also stated that there is a quality residential programme that provides for a supportive environment in which every student can live, learn and develop academic and social skills. Hostel Accommodation in Public Tertiary Institutions in Delta State.

There are six tertiary institutions in Delta State namely: College of Education, Agbor; Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba; College of Physical Education, Mosogar; College of Education; Warri, College of Agriculture, Anwai; and Delta State University, which has campuses in

Abraka, Asaba and Oleh. Abraka is the main campus and is also the administrative headquarters of the university.

Hostel facilities in public tertiary institutions in Delta State, like in other tertiary institutions throughout the federation are in dire need of attention. In a recent survey by the Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) cited by Iyizoba (2009), it was revealed that hostel accommodation is given to 30% of students' population in Nigerian universities. Describing the state of hostel accommodation in Nigeria universities, Ekwunenga (2009) stated as follows: "The Nigerian universities students presently live under horrible conditions on campus. Their accommodation is believed to be so bad and insanitary, congested and over crowded, impeding the capability to learn effectively. A room with two wardrobes which used to be allocated to two students in the past now accommodates six students. Yet in such arrangements, not more than 40% of the students get official accommodation". Ette (2011) agreed with observable state of hostel accommodation in tertiary institutions in Nigeria by stating that dormitory rooms are crowded, diseases are rampant and it is not unheard of for eight people to sleep in one tiny room adding that prisoners in America are better treated than students in Nigeria". This researcher also has a first hand experience and observation in 2010 while being temporarily accommodated in a hostel in a Delta State public tertiary institution. It was observed that up to twelve students were being accommodated in a small room which had one window, already obstructed by an old iron, "vono" bed which is being used by the students in a 21st century school. Apart from the deplorable state and congestion of that hostel room, students cook with kerosene stoves in that same room and urinate into little containers inside the same room, for lack of proper sanitary facilities. The observation of the researcher is in agreement with the views of Okebulola (2004) in Ekwunyenga (2009) that up to twenty four students stay in one big room originally meant for ten students. Ekwunyenga (2009) further explained that the rooms in these on-campus hostels are often choked up with wears, bugs and beguiles, resulting in less space for chairs and desks, making the rooms inadequate for personal study. Some tertiary institutions like Delta State University, Abraka campus and Federal College of Education, Technical) Asaba have taken steps to increase their on-campus hostel accommodation by virtue of their developing their new permanent sites but the old dilapidated hostels are still in use without additional care or maintenance. The problems of inadequacy remain and so off-campus accommodations still thrive in these institutions.

Off-Campus hostels are sometimes in the form of privately-owned flats or self-contained rooms. In rural areas like Abraka and Mosogar, sub-standard houses, even mud houses are rented by students as hostel spaces. The researcher made observations from personal experience that some of these houses are not only old fashioned, lack basic amenities like good toilets and bathroom facilities but are also located in houses that contain shrines for idols. The houses lack kitchen facilities and water. Students, therefore, cook at corridors or passages and spend time and money searching for water whose purity cannot be ascertained. There is also no electricity in some of these off-campus hostels so that students resort to the use of bush lamps and candles as source of light. This buttresses the fact that these hostels lack safety and security measures, thereby leaving the students at the mercy of armed gangs who roam freely on the streets by day and by night. Students who fail to lock their frail doors by 6.30 pm stand the risk of being robbed and gang-raped. Edukugho (2006) in Ekwunyenga (2009) aligns with the position about the unconduciveness of the off campus hostel accommodation by asserting that over 80% of the students' population live outside the campus with many students becoming victims of shifty landlords and hostile communities. They are also presently in bloody confrontations with host indigenes. Students in off-campus hostels especially in the rural areas live in filthy, congested conditions which deny them their welfare, comfort and privacy.

Olubusuyi, (2003) summarized the hostel accommodation situation in Nigeria's tertiary institutions thus: "... there is a problem which is common to all students at different levels of tertiary institutions. This is the acute inadequacies of hostel accommodation or the outright non-existence of it in many universities, polytechnics and Colleges of Education". In this terse state of a self advertisement computer print out of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, the advertisers further summarizes the state of hostel accommodation thus: "for quite a long time, the environment in which

our students were living was in a deplorable state". This situation still very much exists in public tertiary institutions in Delta State.

### **Does Hostel Accommodation Affect Students' Academic Performance?**

A study on the perceived level of academic stress among first timers in Nigerian Universities revealed that inadequate provision of accommodation significantly influenced academic stress among Nigerian students. Iyizoba (2009) corroborates this fact by averring that the results of an enquiry into reasons why Nigerian students fail to perform well revealed that the chief cause of poor academic performance was attributable to facilities and conditions prevalent in the universities. Iyizoba concluded by positing that hostels are in dire need of attention blaming inadequate accommodation for the present day mediocre educational standards, deplorable academic performance, and poor moral behaviour which have become synonymous with the average Nigerian student. Iyizoba also suggested that creating a sustainable living environment for our students in tertiary institution will contribute to better academic performance and catapult Nigerian universities into world wide rankings. In a comment, Olubodun (2010) in Fatunde (2010) blamed our dwindling educational standards partially on the lack of a comfortable places for students to study and relax after classes.

### **Conclusion**

It is anticipated that if the students' hostel accommodation is re-engineered to provide a conducive learning and character moulding environment it will enhance the nation's human capital development.

The graduates of tertiary institutions will truly be found worthy in learning and in character. Good academic performance may fetch someone a good employment but a well moulded character will sustain such a person on the job. No bank, for example, will want to employ someone who is a drunkard or a robber, no matter how glossy his academic performance and certificate may be. In the new trend in globalization, only those who have all round education, that is, those whose intellect and character have been well moulded are employable. Nigeria, like other developing nations, deserves a work force that is positively productive. The government, through educational authorities, must brace up and clog every loop hole through which learning is hindered and anti-social characters are imbibed in our tertiary institutions. If the government continues to neglect the issue of students' hostel accommodation, which is a big issue in education, the achievement of the second and fourth goals of tertiary education will continue to elude the nation. This will be a recipe for continued mediocrity and national under development.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made for the improvement of on-campus hostel accommodation in public tertiary institutions in Delta State:

- The government, through education authorities, should build modern and well furnished hostel accommodation for the students.
- There should be laws guiding those who live in these hostels, as is done in developed and other developing countries.
- The laws must be strictly enforced especially as it concerns maintenance, good sanitary conditions, personal relationships in the hostels, times for locking up the gates and laws against smoking in the hostels.
- Laws on noise pollution can also be strictly enforced to protect other students who want to live quietly.
- There should be a liaison between off-campus hostel proprietors and student affairs officers so that a track could be kept on students outside the school-run hostels.
- A registration process and a census of students living in each off-campus hostel can be a good step forward so that fraudulent people will not hide under the guise of off-campus students and bring the school to shame and disrepute.

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