

# THE NEED FOR DIVERSIFYING POST SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR EMPLOYMENT AND SELF PRODUCTIVITY IN NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

Post secondary education has traditionally been associated with university education in Nigeria. A growing demand for post-secondary education has necessitated its diversification. This is a process necessarily associated with the expansion of the system on one hand and labour markets on the other. The expansion and diversification of the system is moving hand in hand and is moving from elite to mass post-secondary education. This paper seeks to determine the levels of diversified courses to be offered in post secondary education institutions for employment. The reasons and forms of diversification which will be more responsive to labour market requirement in order to increase the range of choice available to learners were discussed. The paper concluded on the necessity of diversifying post-secondary education to cater for immediate skills requirement in order to reinforce and protect the contribution of post-secondary education to employment and self productivity.

Post Secondary Education (PSE) has traditionally been associated with university education in Nigeria. Historically, universities have played a central role in general knowledge and transmitting it from generation to generation. The understanding of importance of education to development has become wide spread since after the Second World War (Varghese & Puttman, 2011). This view has encouraged the expansion of higher education, mainly through public institutions. Universities symbolized national pride and self respect and they remained elite institutions with limited access.

The need for diversification of higher education is in response to varying demand emanating from expansion in Secondary education in Nigeria. As the market also demand readily employable graduate, a finished product approach in different sectors of the economy emerged. The demand for education is shifting from theoretically oriented to more occupation related study programmes in order to produce a more vocationally trained labour force. The economy of Nigeria is becoming market based, which means they prefer knowledge as operation (practical knowledge) to knowledge as contemplation (production of theoretical knowledge). Operations implies producing graduates as outputs to be used in the production process; skills learnt in post-secondary education are expected to match skills needed in the labour market. Universities are increasingly seen as too rigid, overly academic, less oriented toward traditional occupational preparation and elitist (Varghese, 2011). The traditional universities with their elite orientation cannot satisfactorily cater to the varied demands for study programmes linked to the skills demand in the labour market.

The growing demand for a type of education different from that traditionally offered in the universities requires the implementation of alternative modes of delivery and will lead to the development of a plurality of institutions and diversity of providers and study programmes (Martin & Bray, 2009).

The expansion of higher education should reach a stage of tertiary education for all. A substantial share of tertiary education will now be provided outside universities and institutions that may or may not grant a degree.(Atchoarena, Reisberg & Rumbley 2009)). All category of tertiary education is included under the broader term Post-Secondary Education (PSE). PSE includes all forms of education after the secondary level. Its diversification is a process necessarily associated with the expansion of the system, on one hand and labour market, on the other. Diversification can help government transfer the financial burden of education from the state to households.

Diversification of post-secondary education is the process in which the system becomes more varied or diverse in its orientation and operations. It reflects a deviation from a uniform and rigid system (Universities) to a flexible system that can accommodate varying educational demands within the country from a multiplicity of providers. Diversification consists therefore in the institutions offering opportunities to pursue PSE, study programmes and in the student body or clientele and ownership and control of provision (Teichlar, 2008). It can be related to structural and cultural aspects of education linked to institutional missions or academic programmes (Fair weather, 2000).

### **Level of Courses Offered in Post-secondary Institutions**

Post-secondary education has two distinctive components: tertiary education and non-tertiary education. Tertiary education expressed simply by Martin & Bray (2009), designates the third level of education which follows secondary education and, before that primary education. Kerr (1994) identified three major types of tertiary education. The first type designated a level of which the main objective was the generation of new knowledge and the education of independent professionals such as scientists, lawyers, doctors, Engineers and managers. The second type was more concerned with the application of knowledge and provided education for persons expected to work under supervision while the third level concentrated on short-cycle and part-time training. The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) builds on the conceptualization and distinguished three levels of tertiary education:

- level 5A comprising academically oriented programmes leading at the minimum to a degree and a minimum duration of three years.
- Level 5B comprising occupationally-oriented short cycle programmes at the associate degree level with a minimum duration of two years and
- Level 6 for post-graduate level such as Ph.D and doctorate.

The non-tertiary level refers to all programmes offered at the ISCED 4 Level. Many institutions offer courses below the tertiary level through continuing education colleges at the non-tertiary level (ISCED 4). Non-academic diplomas, pre-degree and short vocational programmes in Nigeria belong to non-tertiary PSE. Most PSE institutions offer preparatory courses at the tertiary level ISCED 5 or above. Non-university tertiary institutions (NUTI) provide courses in the advanced research programmes ISCED 6.

The degree structures should be harmonised so as to move towards the development of the three tier Bachelors-Masters-Doctorate Structure. A Bachelors programme should last for three or four years whereas a master's will take between one and two years. The doctorate may take an additional three to four years. Beside the academic degrees, different certificate courses should be offered below the Bachelor level. Non-academic diplomas should also exist. Sub degree certificates often for professional entrance as well as sub-degree diplomas can also be offered. The tertiary education entrance certificate although granted upon completion of secondary education like pre-degree, pre-nce and pre-nd can be classified as post secondary non-tertiary if acquired in the continuing educational sector. Academic degree beyond the doctorate like second doctorate can be offered. The degree structure should be post-graduate, graduate and under-graduate level. Diploma programmes at different level should be offered. Post graduate diploma is above a Bachelor's but below a master's degree. Some courses should be offered to obtain a certificate that may not necessarily be of tertiary level. Such courses will represent PSE, but are not equivalent to the tertiary level (Varghese & Puttman, 2009).

### **Reasons for Diversification of Post-Secondary Education**

Teichlar (2008) attributes diversification of PSE to drift theories, the drift to vocational courses, to increased flexibility towards soft models and broad study ranges and to cyclical theories, assuming that some structural pattern and polices come and go due to different factors of influence. Cerych and Sabatier (1986) attribute diversification to labour requirements resulting from technological developments and conditions arising from a move from an elite to a mass higher education.

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Institutions of post-secondary education are therefore increasingly focusing on the production of knowledge as a market good and saleable commodity. In this view, operational knowledge transmitted by tertiary institutions helps to widen market operations. In the process, post-secondary institutions are being transformed from peripheral institution to major economic institutions in the mainstream of production.

Democratization is another argument for diversification. PSE is no longer perceived as an elitist privilege but rather as a right and even an obligation (Neave, 2000). The egalitarian and democratic values prevailing in most societies promote the equality of opportunities not only at the entry level but also an achievement that is the attainment of a degree effort to bring a larger number of students from disadvantaged groups into the fold of PSE results in a more diversified clientele. The evolving social origin of the student body also influence aspirations, motivations, interests and the financial ability of students to continue in the system. More often than not, students from poorer socio-economic backgrounds will be looking towards PSE as a passport to getting a job immediately after graduation.

The changes in curricula, responding to multiple demands, and course structures adapting to students career expectations are the direct result of increased diversity. Forms of instruction are moving away from formal and face-to-face interaction to new ways of transmitting knowledge and skills that are really in the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). This multiplicity of requirements could hardly be met within traditional institutions. Therefore, diversification is seen as a means by which PSE system prepare them to cope with the challenges that result from a diversified clientele and demand (Claudia, 2010).

Some of the reasons for diversification is globalization, the knowledge economy and changing demand for skills. With the transition towards knowledge based production, economies are increasingly realizing the importance of PSE, the promoting knowledge production (i.e. R&D) and absorbing technological advances (Varghese, 2011) The gains in international competitiveness are the result of highly qualified and trained pool of professionals. The reliance on a knowledge economy is also associated with a shift in employment prospect from manufacturing of service sectors and an increase in the qualification levels of employees.

The skill requirements and qualification demanded for job entry are also high and rising. It can be argued that when production become more knowledge intensive, the demand for PSE in the labour market increases and this in turn increase demand for PSE. The persons considered most qualified will not then primarily be the liberal education graduates but rather graduates of a programme imparting practical, applicable knowledge and knowledge based technologies (Hanson, 2008). It has been observed that the demands of a growing upwardly mobile (or at least upwardly aspiring) population and the needs of an increasingly competitive, technologically sophisticated economy are responsible for the expansion and diversification of PSE.

The expansion of secondary education has also necessitated diversification. The success of universal Basic Education (UBE) in fostering enrolment in primary and secondary education has led to even greater pressure for PSE to expand. This is sometimes referred to as the pipe-line effect. This pressure is specially important in Nigeria where primary and secondary levels of education are fast expanding and a growing proportion of school graduates decide to join tertiary education institutions. The expansion of secondary school level increases the social demand for PSE and as we have seen, this demand is leading PSE to diversify into different forms. The demand for PSE is high in Nigeria because secondary education has already expanded.

Diversity could also be related to the growing specialization of the academic field which may be institutionalized either within a university or outside the university structure. Institutional arrangements should be carried out for research. Researches can either take place in the universities or research institutes outside the traditional universities. These can be R&D institutes, or research

associations. These institutions should carry out research in selected areas and free from teaching responsibilities. PSE system needs to respond to prospective changes and future challenges and develop greater capacity for innovation. The capacity to respond to new developments becomes more important for every PSE system and each single institution. Diversification is again seen as a prominent means to reach this, based on the assumption that diverse systems with differing institutions bear the greatest potential for various and adequate innovations. Specialized institutions can respond to these specific requirements faster than others.

### **Forms of Diversification**

Based on review of institutions offering post-secondary levels of education in different countries, the present paper adopts a classification of PSE institution into four categories: (i) universities (ii) colleges/non-university institutions (iii) tertiary short-cycle institutions, and (iv) post-secondary non tertiary institutions.

As noted at the beginning of this paper, higher education was traditionally associated with universities, which could be considered the apex of the PSE system. This category includes institutions generally providing tertiary education up to the highest academic levels and awarding degrees. Universities of course vary in their orientation and focus: from prestige universities with strong focus on academic research to basic teaching universities, or professionally oriented universities (Barnett, 1994) including service universities. In general, the top-tier universities and most prestigious institutions are strongly rooted in research, and very often closely associated with the type of research carried out (Gurbb,2003).The teaching universities focus more on instruction, conduct less research, and are in general, less prestigious. The importance attributed to prestigious institutions, as well as the introduction of university excellence initiatives is likely to maintain the distinction (Sadlak and Liu, 2009). Service universities specialize in offering short-term courses. These institutions emerged during the economic crisis and downsizing of public funds to universities (Cummings 1998). Some traditional universities have also incorporated service functions. The university sector concentrates on basic research, while the professional college should be responsible for professional education and applied research important to a region (Tjeld, 1998).

This second category comprises of college/non university institutions that also offer academic degree, but which are more focused on undergraduate studies. In Nigeria, colleges are affiliate to universities, in cases in which they do not have the legal right to award degrees. As with universities, the colleges can also be categorized into two groups: academically or vocationally oriented colleges. The colleges are for instance academically oriented and mostly undergraduate institutions, whereas others have a vocational orientation. The institutes classification although professionally oriented, about two thirds of them pursue further studies at the university level (Le Nir, 2008). Thus, in practice the institutes resemble more academically oriented colleges than they do vocationally oriented ones.

Of relative recent origin, non-university systems are more practical in nature and vocationally oriented; they represent community colleges and polytechnics in Nigeria. Training functions are thus carried out by university alternatives. Sometimes these arrangements can be referred to as short-cycle or non-university institutions. The OECD (1998) classified these trends into three groups:

1. The multipurpose model pattern of community colleges and the first two-year programme of undergraduate education;
2. Specialized model institutions, offering vocationally, oriented, short cycle course.
3. A binary model of polytechnics, offering degrees distinct from, but comparable to those offered by universities this type gave rise to the development of non-university sectors in tertiary educations.

The third category of tertiary short cycle institutions concentrate for the most part on technical and vocational education as well as degrees below the Bachelor level. Institutions within this category include the community and multi-disciplinary colleges, the colleges of technology, the technical schools and technical institutes. It is difficult to categorize the multiplicity of institutions belonging to

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this classification. In general these institutions offer courses between the post-secondary, non-tertiary and Bachelor levels, and they include institutions that are non-university level, such as tertiary short-cycle education' 'alternatives to universities, and sub degree education. Although referred to as tertiary short-cycle education; a few programmes in this area can be similar in duration to higher degree-level programmes, but many of the programmes usually imply an amount of work of less than 180 credit points (Kirsch, Beernaert and Norgaard, 2003). Studies in these institutions do not depend on further courses of study and do not necessarily lead to further higher education. Therefore, they represent a cycle of their own and lead to a completed certification.

The non-university sector has existed for decades although its rapid expansion is a recent phenomenon. Initially termed short-cycle higher education (OECD, 1998), it later became an alternative to universities (OECD,1991). The non-university institution (NUI) in the post secondary education sector (OECD,2006) differentiate between a short-cycle multipurpose NUI, e.g. education sector colleges; short-cycle specialized NUIs, offering short more vocationally oriented courses in limited subject areas; and binary NUIs, which are distinct from those universities but grant degree in polytechnics. The OECD (2005) distinguishes non-university tertiary education on the basis of:

1. Goals- whether vocational preparation or wider range of learning is the aim;
2. Levels of institution- basic vocational preparation or higher-order occupational skills;
3. Service to local communities- local relevant research and local access.

The fourth category which is post secondary non-tertiary institutions, refers to institutions that operate above the secondary level but below the tertiary level, and that confer either sub-degree vocational certifications or higher education entrance degrees. Since this level of education covers a very heterogenous group of institutions and programmes, it is difficult not to denominate by default. With regard to the ISCED classification' post-secondary non-tertiary institutions should be retained since delineation from the secondary and tertiary education sector seems the most common characteristic of such institutions. Institutions that can be assigned to this category are technical colleges, the specialized and upper vocational and technical schools and the vocational and technical schools.

The public-private classification is a cross-cutting classification in terms of ownership. All the categories of institutions described above can be in either the private or public sector. The state played a dominate role in the development of PSE in Nigeria, to the extent that there is a state monopoly on tertiary education (World Bank, 2002). During and following the period of the structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s, the role of the state was questioned and market operations in higher education were promoted. The market operation in PSE can be characterized by two trends, namely the privatization of public institutions and the emergency of the private higher education institutions (Varghese, 2004). Privatization implies the application of market principle in the operation of higher education institutions, even when ownership rests in the public domain. Private institutions on the other hand denote the growth of the non-state sector in higher education.

Privatization can imply full pricing of the services with no funding support from the state, or quasi-privatization with partial funding by the state. The latter is more common. Privatization of public institutions can take different forms:

1. Cost recovery support services; many public utility and support services and student support systems are contracted out to private agencies on full-pricing basis. The core teaching function is subsidized.
2. Cost recovery or cost sharing: cost recovery is affected mainly through levying fees from direct beneficiaries. This is sometimes supported by student loans.
3. Corporatization of universities: some universities should establish companies or corporations with operational autonomy to generate additional income. The corporatization of public universities allows them to borrow money, acquire investment shares, and enter into business ventures to meet major share of operating expenses.

Private higher education institutions are of different types. (Bjarnason, Chenk, Fielden, Lemnitre, Levy & Varghese 2009) developed a typology of private institutions as elite and semi-elite, non-elite, religious and cultural for profit, etc in the context of diversification.

Private higher education institutions can be differentiated based on their orientation and source of funding (Varghese, 2006):

1. State-supported-private institutions: some private institutions of higher education receive funding support from the government. The support can be minimal or substantial.
2. Not-for-profit private institutions: private non-profit institutions are owned and operated by trusts that rely heavily on endowments and fees collected from the students. Most of them are self-financial institutions. Some of the best universities in the United States, such as Harvard, MIT, Princeton, Stanford, and Yale, are private and have large endowment funds.
3. Religious agency-supported private higher education institutions: Christian and Islamic organizations are active in providing private higher education in different regions. The Roman Catholic Church; the protestant church and Islamic organizations.
4. For profit higher education institutions: some private institution by design operate at a profit. Some of the private for-profit institutions are run by corporations and trade the stocks and shares of educational institutions (Ruch, 2001).

Many of the private institutions of higher education operating in Nigeria are for-profit institutions. They mostly rely on student fees as a major source of financing, offer courses in market-friendly subject area; and at times are affiliated to universities based abroad. Private universities are growing faster than public institutions and are increasing their share of total enrolment. Private higher education institutions can also be cross-border or national institutions.

In many instances cross-boarder institutions integrate host countries through private higher education institutions. The independent branch campuses of renewed public universities operate under regulations applicable to private institutions in the host countries. The cross-boarder institutions (Martin & Bray, 2009) will be important in terms of size and prestige.

Distance learning assumed an added significance of late and includes correspondence courses. Open universities, virtual universities, online universities, and the like. Distance learning has become larger than the traditional university sector and more students enroll than in any public university sector in Nigeria. Different types of distance education institutions exist: (1) single-mode institutions, which focus exclusively on distance education; (2) dual-mode institutions, which offer both distance and face-to-face education simultaneously; (3) a consortia or a group of institutions that collaborate to provide distance education (Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley, 2009). Of all types, open Universities continue to be the most important category like the open university of Nigeria.

One of the important forms of diversification is based on programme of study. It relates to the change in courses and study programmes which can be diversified for a number of reasons. As previously discussed, diversification is the result of two perspectives in higher education: knowledge as contemplation and knowledge as operation. Knowledge as operation is market-friendly, whereas knowledge as contemplation is more research-friendly. In the recent past, markets have exerted a strong influence on the form and content of course offered by higher education institutions (Schwartzman, 2004).

Relevance has become an important consideration and influencing factor in study programmes. Relevance is very often defined in terms of the skills demanded in the labour market. Governments are interested in curricular changes to align discourses in higher education closer to the requirements of the production sectors of the economy. In the process, practically oriented programmes and fields of study as well as pedagogical approaches stressing real world applications have seen an appreciable rise in popularity (Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley, 2009).

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With the emergence of private sector, study programmes seem to have proliferated in non-traditional areas. Private institutions need to attract students to raise funds in order to survive. Private, no frills institutions adopt a supermarket philosophy, pile them high and sell them cheap. However, students are only willing to pay for studies if they are in an area that will lead to paid work immediately after graduation. Therefore, such institutions should offer study programmes in finance and accounting informatics, and the like, and universities in Nigeria offer, courses in design, dance, drama, music, catering, hotel management, and so on.

Traditional universities should diversify their courses and study programmes. Many of them have introduced market-friendly courses on a full cost-recovery basis and it has become a source of generating additional income. Some universities offer incentives (additional payments) to staff member who teach in these study programmes in addition to their regular teaching job.

With the expansion of higher education, the shift from elite to mass higher education has diversified the clientele. In fact with massification, students from elite origins are becoming a minority in enrolment. Students from a middle-class background who constitute a majority, envisage higher education as a passport to obtaining a good modern-sector job. Increased student interest in business is accompanied by a strengthening of materialist and power values and a decrease in student interest in education, social sciences, arts, humanities, nursing, social work and allied health. It is accompanied by declining altruism and social concern' (Astin, 1991). Such a preference is also reflected in the choice of subject area for studies among students and is in line with the market demand for graduates.

In Nigeria no formal distinction is made between part-time and full-time students and both categories of students obtain the same degree. In Nigeria, a distinction is made on the basis of cost of the cost-public subsidy which will be less for part-time courses and students or based on workload (Tight, 1994). Part-time students have become a majority seeking post-secondary levels of education, primarily due to the lifelong nature of education, and this group proves to be more reliable students on a larger scale, since many believe that academic concerns are taking a backseat, and one fears that the status of the university is inversely related to the share of adults recruited in the student body (Davies, 1995). Women students out number men student in higher education in many universities in Nigeria. It is pointed out that, in some instances, some of the institutions are lowering admission requirements for men, though none will admit publicly to doing so (Fiske, 2000). The increasing presence of women within universities is due to the fact that a larger number of girls are completing secondary school education, and with higher scores. A larger number of those who succeed are also willing to seek higher education. More importantly, a shift from an industrial to service economy is also associated with appointing women to what were traditionally male jobs.

The influx of overseas students is another change to be noted in the recent past, and many universities are diversifying their courses to suit the requirements of the overseas student market. The number of cross-boarder students to Nigeria recently increased; nearly 2.7 million students pursue cross-boarder education in 2005 and this number will increase to 7.2 million by 2025 (Bohm, Davispneares & Pearce, 2002). The most familiar pattern of cross-boarder student flow used to be from developing to developed countries. The fast expansion in number of foreign students should be experienced by Nigeria. This change in student composition has implications for the expansion of PSE, since many of them have a demand for market-friendly courses.

In general there is a social divide among the students attending traditional universities and new non-university tertiary institutions (NUTIs). The latter may not be motivated to pursue higher studies; they may be dropouts from the traditional higher education institutions, a good share may be from a lower socio-economic background (OECD, 1998). The admission requirements also may be lower than those for the university sector. There may also be more part-time teaching staff with lower academic degrees, a greater teaching load, low research opportunities, less job security, and fewer promotion possibilities (OECD, 1998).

### **Conclusion**

PSE includes all forms of education pursued after the secondary level-both tertiary and non-tertiary levels of education. This paper focused on the need for diversification of post-secondary education in Nigeria, through diversity of providers, programmes and clientele. The expansion and diversification of the system will evolve simultaneously and be mutually reinforcing. Expansion reflected a more elite to mass and further to universal PSE. Diversification reflects the capacity of the system to respond to the immediate demand arising from the labour market. Discussions on the reasons for diversification indicated that academic and economic reasons were of equal importance. Through diversification, the system will be more responsive to labour market requirements and increase the range of choice available to learners.

The general classification of diversification in PSE institutions should follow the four following categories: universities, colleges/non-university institutions, tertiary short-cycle institutions and post-secondary non tertiary institutions. All except the last of these offer courses leading to certification at the tertiary level. These types of institutions, although given different names exist. In most cases, the non-university sector is expanding quickly, although the university sector still accounts for a major share in enrolments. The share of the non-university sector varies from one-fifth and two-fifth of all students enrolled in tertiary education. The fourth category offers courses mostly in technical and vocational areas which, while they may not lead to any certification at the tertiary level, are useful for job seeking.

It can be argued that diversification is a process necessarily associated with the expansion of a system, on the one hand, and with the effect and position for post-secondary education in relation to the demand emerging from the labour market, on the other. Diversification also provides a safety valve for government to escape from increasing demand and for investing public resource in higher education. In many instances, Nigeria will succeed in transferring the financial burden of education from the government to the diversified institutions and the institutions will consequently; succeed in transferring it to the students and their households. From a national point of view, while it is necessary to diversify the PSE system to cater to the immediate requirements of the labour market, it is important to continue reinforcing and protecting the contribution of higher education to the long term goals of economic development and social equity.

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