

STRUCTURAL AND SOCIAL DEFECTS OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examines the structural and social defects of University Education in Nigeria. In the last two decades or so, the universities have been under severe stress as a result of multifarious factors such as political instability, low staff and student morale, brain drain, cultism, examination malpractice, loss of public confidence in the system and decline in the quality and standard. The paper observed that there are numerous positive landmarks in University Education to make Nigerians proud. Above all, Nigerian Universities have brought practical meaning to the concept of adaptive education by structural provisions to realistically meet the challenges of the local environment and solve priority problems. In conclusion, the study recommend that to ensure high quality production of graduates in Nigerian Universities, NUC should embark on accreditation of programmes on its first year of commencement.

Education is an implicit heritage of any society or culture. The term education instinctively arouses only conceptual ideas of what is known as formal education propagated through the organization called school of various levels. Formal education became a necessity as the home and community became ineffectual and even incompetent, in training the young for adulthood through informal contact. Consequently, education involves man's capacity to learn, to organize learning in symbolic forms, to communicate this learning as knowledge to other members of the species, and to act on the basis of learning and knowledge as an agent to preserve and transmit culture and socialization (Okoro, 2000).

With the context of a formal education such as school, involves much more than the learning of skills, and acquisition of information about why and how the society works or how it should work. Accordingly, Olagboye (2000) maintained that education that results from more or less formal pedagogical procedures constitutes only a part of the preparation of the child to behave in accordance with the roles of an acceptable participating member of the society. A very important part of the education or socialization process includes the unconscious assimilation and internalization of beliefs, values, and patterns of behaviour of members of the society and environment with whom the individual interact.

This forms the rationale for assessing the Nigeria University educational system on the basis of structural and social phenomena. The school as an element of education is an agent of state, established and funded by the people for preserving their culture, whatever that may be. As rightly noted by Utomi (2002), the earliest efforts at the introduction of Western education came from non-state initiative in 1842 when the forty-years long monopoly of the Christian missions was interrupted by some minimum intervention by the colonial Government in 1842.

Development of University Education in Nigeria

University education in Nigeria started with the recommendations of the Elliot commission in 1943, which resulted in the establishment of the university college, Ibadan in 1948. Afterwards, as Nigeria approached independence in 1960, the calls for increase in the number and types of universities become insistent, culminated in the Ashby commission and eventually resulted in the founding of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka by the Eastern Nigeria Government in 1960, Obafemi Awolowo University (university of Ife) by the Western Nigeria Government in 1962. Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria by the Northern Nigeria Government also in 1962 and the University of Lagos by the Federal Government in 1962. With 5 universities in 1965, the growth has been phenomenal 11(1975), 25 (1983), and by 2006, there are about 74 universities; See table 1.

List of Nigerian Universities

Table 1

1. University of Ibadan, Ibadan

2. University of Nigeria, Nsukka
3. Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife
4. Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria
5. University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos
6. University of Benin, Benin City
7. Bayero University, Kano
8. University of Calabar, Calabar
9. University of Ilorin, Ilorin
10. University of Jos, Jos
11. University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri
12. Usman Danfodio University Sokoto
13. University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt
14. Federal University of Technology Owerri
15. Federal University of Technology, Akure
16. Federal University of Technology, Yola
17. Federal University of Technology, Minna
18. Nigeria Defence Academy, Kaduna
19. University of Abuja, Abuja
20. Abukabkar Tafawa Balewa University
21. University of Agriculture, Makurdi
22. University of Agriculture, Abeokuta
23. Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
24. University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State
25. University of Agriculture, Umudike
26. National Open University, Abuja
27. Rivers State University of Science and Technology
28. Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma
29. Abia State University, Uturu
30. Enugu State University of Science and Technology
31. Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye
32. University of Ado-Ekiti
33. Lagos State University, Ojo
34. Ladoke Akintola University of Technology
35. Imo State University
36. Benue State University
37. Delta State University
38. Adekunle Ajasin University
39. Kogi State University
40. Niger Delta University
41. Anambra State University of Science and Technology
42. Kano University of Technology
43. Ebonyi State University
44. Nasarawa State University
45. Admawa State University
46. Gombe State University
47. Kaduna State University
48. Cross River University of Science and Technology
49. Akwa-Ibom University of Technology
50. Plateau State University

51. Babcock University
52. Madonna University
53. Igbinedion University
54. Bowen University
55. Covenant University
56. Pa African University
57. Benson Idahosa University
58. ABTI University
59. Redeemers University
60. Ajayi Crowther University
61. Al-Hikmah University
62. Caritas University, Amorji-Nike
63. CETP City University
64. Bingham University
65. Katsina State University
66. City University, Ibadan
67. Bells university of Technology
68. Crawford University
69. Wukari Jbilee University
70. Crescent Univeristy
71. Novena University
72. Renaissance University
73. University of Mkar
74. Joseph Ayo Babalola University

Source: Office of the Executive Secretary National Universities Commission, Abuja.

It is interesting to note that in the last two decades or so, the Universities have been under severe stress as a result of multifarious factors such as political instability, low staff and student morale, brain drain, cultism, examination malpractice, loss of public confidence in the system and decline in the quality and standard.

The Funding of University Education in Nigeria

The funding of universities by the Nigerian government has been nose-diving as a result of dwindling revenue from its mono-product economy. The World Bank Report (1987) on University Education in Nigeria further truncated meeting pints between government and staff and between government and students by its recommendation for additional cost-sharing of finances by parents and the society. Per capital expenditure on Nigerian students in Universities was put at N15,000 per annum (1994) and that implied that undergraduate students pay only about 0.6% of this cost while postgraduate students pay only about 5.9% of the cost. The World Bank Report had therefore

recommended payment of 15-20% of unit recurrent cost for undergraduate and 100% for postgraduate students. Sizeable portions of university budgets go into providing municipal services for the community (Ajayi, 2004).

The cost of education must be shared amongst all the stakeholders. The Longe Commission (1992) discussed the cost implication of student enrolment and the size of funding problem and suggested among other things imposition of 2% on all profits declared by companies operating in Nigeria. Consequently, this led to the Emergence of Education Tax Fund and according to Jaji (2002) the fund between 1994/95 and 2001 generated on approximate amount of 41 billion naira which were disbursed to various institutions across the country to upgrade facilities and staff training.

Quality Assurance and Enhancement of Certification in University.

According to Oni and Dabalen (2000) report on labour market prospect of Nigerian graduates showed that employers complained that graduates are poorly prepared for work. The report revealed that academic standards have fallen considerably over the past decade and that a university degree is no longer a guarantee of communication skills and technical competence and as a result our graduates are viewed as half baked. Therefore, government as a major stakeholder in education sector must ensure that quality of education provision are assured and enhanced. Unless this is done, the question asked by Osuji (2003) at the National Council on Education delegate meeting asked question that "How do we reverse the present trend whereby parents now prefer to send their children to institutions in Ghana, Gambia, even Uganda or other Anglophone African countries rather than send them to our universities?" Will never be solved. The implication is that certificate from other West African countries are receiving more value. The State Ministries of Education and Federal Agencies through proper monitoring should strive to enhance the quality of certificates instead of cheaping the award of certificate through Sandwich programmes that lack quality, all in the name of generating funds for the system.

The Physical Sciences

The facilities for effective teaching of science and technology and the teaching personnel in these fields are generally very inadequate or often not existent (Oni, 2000) mathematics and Physics have not been popularized. Development is "Conquest" of the universe through the advancement of science and technology (Fubara, 1989). The universe itself is physics which is describable by mathematics, therefore no nation can or have ever achieved greatness and development through scientific and technological progress by relegating mathematics and physics to the background.

Support and Sustainability through Minimum Standard in University Education

There are quite a number of agencies of federal ministry of education that helps the government to ensure the sustainability of higher education. These agencies are the National Universities Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE). All these agencies formulate and prescribe minimum standards for those institutions (Ajayi, 1997).

Minimum academic standards for all programmes taught in Nigerian universities were developed in 1989 by NUC and the first accreditation exercise of degree programmes was done that same year. However, accreditation exercise can be seen as a step aimed at ensuring sustainability of university education. Taking a cursory look at the manner of ensuring minimum standard by NUC, one would say that it provides a way of sustaining the education system at this level, however, stiffer measures can still be utilized especially before academic programmes commence or are put in jamb brochures. It has been discovered that some institutions just announce to University Matriculation Examination (UME) candidate even after JAMB examinations have been conducted that some willing candidates can switch to such programmes. This practice is based on certain loopholes in the accreditation exercise that allows for programme commencement when programmes are already three years old. This system may likely have contributed to a regime of production of half baked graduates when the specifications of human and material resources needed for full skill development of students admitted are not put in place but are only hurriedly put together for the sake of accreditation when students are in final year of their degree programmes awaiting graduation.

Appointment of Governing Councils

The appointment of the governing council or administrative authority of most institutions is defective. This policy making body should be made up of accomplished professionals in their various fields of endeavour. However, there is a tendency to appoint members on the basis of political patronage rather than proven proficiency in educational matters. This creates too much conflict in policy directives and priority setting between the head of the institution and his academic advisory board or senate on one side and the governing body on the other side (Erinosho, 2004).

Research Output

The greatest casualty of the crisis in the Nigerian university system is research output, its quantum, quality, and relevance in quantitative terms, there has been a decline in the research output by Nigerian scholars over the years. Saint, Hartnett and Strassner have noted that the number of scientific publications by Nigerian scholars decreased from 1,062 in 1981 when they were a relatively few

universities to 711 in 1995 when the number of universities increased very significantly. In comparison, scientific publications by scholars in South Africa numbered 3,413 in 1995. (Saint et al, 2004).

The world ranking of universities (2006) based on productivity, including scientific publications that are considered important and notable, shows that no Nigeria University, nor indeed African university feature among the topmost fifty. The universities were drawn largely from the United States of America, Europe and South America. Of 100 top-ranking African Universities in the world. There were only three Nigeria universities and one private university. These were in a descending ranking order: Obafemi Awolowo University, He Ife; University of Ibadan, and University of Benin. The private university that was named was Pan-African University, Lagos. The number of universities in West African that were among the 100 African topmost was nine (9). The ranking is as set out below:

Table 2: West African Un. In top 100 African, World-rank Universities, July, 2006

AfricanRank	Name of University	World Rank
1.	University of Cape Town	387
42.	University of Ghana	5,739
52.	University of Senghor	6,085
53.	Obafemi Awolowo University	6,199
67.	Kwame Nkrumah University of Sc. & Tech,	6,612
68.	University of Yaounde	6,794
72	University of Ibadan	6,971
87.	University of Benin	7,442
100.	Pan-African University	7,655

Source: World University Ranking on the Web. Top Africa.

However, table 2 shows that the topmost ranking university in Africa was Southern African University. Indeed many other universities in Southern and East Africa featured among the top 100 African Universities.

Formulation of Research Policy

The fundamentals of effective research set out as a policy for both long and short term objectives of the nation need to be formulated, coordinated and systematically funded and implemented on a continuous basis. Oni (2000) maintained that this type of policy should not be unduly affected by political party changes without scientific justification. Therefore, consistent and sustained national research policy, its administration and financing demand more space and elaborate treatment than in this short discourse. In its absence, the nation achieves neither greatness nor the much wanted Scientific and Technological Progress to make us independent of foreign domination and the machinations of multinationals who control our economy. No other nation has used the pages of newspapers for discussing basic acquisition of nuclear technology as we are doing.

Games and Sporting Activities

Games and sporting activities promote emotional, physical and psychological health. They enhance discipline, spirit of teamwork and fair play, ability to win without being arrogant and accept defeat without bitterness. Several universities not only lack the facilities for but also appear not to recognize the need for provision of playgrounds and facilities for organized games and sports. In spite of laudable efforts of successive state and federal governments, Nigerian university system and its productivity continue to suffer serious set backs as a result of our misconceived and misdirected social values and corruption. Some of these setbacks include:

1. Low morale and lack of dedication of scientific, technological and teaching professionals.
2. Lack of student motivation for excellence in educational pursuits and resorting to cheating and other examination malpractices.
3. Student enrolment in disciplines in proportions completely unrelated to the manpower needs of the nation.
4. Unwillingness, to study mathematics and other science related courses.
5. Student involvement in secret cult activities.
6. Parental pressures and lack of proper career counseling leading to forcing students into studies and careers for which they lack the aptitude.

Examination Malpractice

One of the devastating problems confronting the university education today is the examination malpractice. This phenomenon has been described by Denga and Denga (1998) as "one of the cardinal forms of educational malpractice". The authors further termed it "an ugly virus that is rapidly acquiring the status of a social, moral and educational epidemic in Nigeria". According to them, examination malpractice has become so internalized and legitimized among students that some of them regard it as a normal process of passing examinations.

In a publication made in the Guardian Newspaper on Sunday 23rd November, 2003, it was reported that no fewer than fifteen persons were arrested by the police for alleged impersonation and other examination malpractices during General Certificate Examination (GCE) in Borno State. On the incidence of examination malpractice, Orjikuta (2003) expressed her disappointment "at the way university students contravene examination regulations". She asserted that the more the regulations were toughened the more sophisticated students became at devising means to beat them. In the same vein, Omotosho (2002) lamented the disheartening wave of examination malpractices sweeping across the country's university education system.

Causes of Examination Malpractice

The current overemphasis in Nigeria paper qualification as a criterion for the selection of candidates for higher education and for employment into competitive jobs has been identified as one of the main causes of examination malpractice (Edem, 1997, Denga and Denga, 1998). Such a situation can compel some candidates preparing for examinations to devise certain extra-activities that would fetch them better grades. Therefore, by so doing, they would abandon healthy activities that would help them naturally become more knowledgeable. Emphasis on paper qualification, therefore, serves as pressure on the learner to attain academic success by all means.

The pattern of the examination questions set by the lecturers sometimes encourages some students to engage in malpractice. Where the questions require reproduction of the facts, such students may be tempted to search for the facts elsewhere if they cannot be drawn immediately from their memory. On the contrary, those questions that demand higher order cognitive processes tend to discourage malpractice. For this reason, examiners should generate questions that require understanding and other higher cognitive skills. Questions should arouse the examinee's creativity by demanding for divergent rather than convergent thinking.

Measures to Reduce Examination Malpractice

The following measures are suggested to further reduce the incidence of examination malpractice in the system.

1. Employer of labour should emphasize job excellence not paper qualification.
2. Government should re-establish probationary appointment in which applicants are tried on the job for a period of one or two years before confirmation of appointment.
3. parents should be discouraged from over petting their children and allowing them to spend most of their time at home watching video cassettes, instead of reading.
4. There should be change in the general attitude of the society. Emphasis, should be on academic performance and not merely on passing examinations.
5. Lecturers should engage in actual classroom teaching and should desist from awarding random continuous assessment scores for money. They should also desist from promising students further assistance in examinations.

Many factors have been enumerated as being responsible for the rampant occurrence of examination malpractice in the Nigerian University system. The society, the government the examining bodies, the lecturers, the university authority and the students themselves have all been known to share in the blame for the existence of the ugly phenomenon.

Cultism in Nigeria Universities

Campus cults can be traced back to the early 1950 when Wole Soyinka and some of his friends established the pirates confraternity at the university of Ibadan as a social club. Today cultism has taken another dimension with its activities described as barbaric, nefarious and diabolical group who have lost contact with sanity (Denga and Denga, 1998) the membership cuts across all sexes, classes and ages. It is not restricted to a particular area of the country. But the menace is more pronounced in

the Universities located in the southern part of the country than the ones in the North (Mbipom, 2003). However, the prime movers are the children of the rich and powerful who finance their activities.

Reasons for Joining Cults

The reason why students join these cults range from psychological, economical, and egotistical to the Ludicrous. Firstly, some students are said to join cults because they want to belong to this type of class that is seen as macho. Others do so because they want to protect themselves from becoming victims of such organizations. Other still do so because their parents who were member? encourage them to join. Also, others join because they believe that their academic progress squareh lies in their membership because anybody in the university is also a member.

Accordingly Deng and Denga (1998) asserted that some students join secret cults because of the following:

1. Inherent instincts in human beings to inflict pain, punishment and even death on fellow, human beings.
2. Mai parenting (hostile and uncaring parenting).
3. Failing students - Those that fail academically or expelled from school sometimes hang around to set the University on rampage.
4. Rivalry and competition - These come as a result of seeking for girls, protection from boy? from rival cults, protection from hunger, protection from being allocated dirt; accommodation in the hostel and protection from undue victimization from lecturers.
5. Peer influence - Good children who join their friends who are members of secret cults star, - an excellent chance of becoming member of secret cults.

Measures for Combating Cultism

Cultism can be combated in the Nigerian Universities by using the following measures:

1. All parents should be a stakeholder by constantly advising and checking their children against cult activities.
2. Creating awareness to parents and fresh student (especially) against the enticement to lur: them into secret cults.
3. Students should be counseled in the areas of self-concept, self-identity, study habits,, examination Phobia and anxiety, personal-social and emotional problems which tend trigger cultism and student unrest generally.
4. The use of fire-arms should be legitimized for the security department on campuses to blast secret cults.
5. Thorough checking should be done before students are admitted into the hostel. Each person should be adequately checked in and out of school.

Conclusion

The title of this paper - structural and social defects of University Education in Nigeria in not just to produce a catalogue of woes as if the Nigerian University system has achieved no positive results. Indeed there are numerous positive landmarks in University Education to make Nigerians proud. Above all, Nigerian Universities have brought practical meaning to the concept of adaptive education by structural provisions to realistically meet the challenges of the local environment and solve priority problems.

Recommendations

Based on the issues raised the following recommendations have been made as means of salvaging the situation;

1. To ensure high quality production of graduates in Nigerian Universities, NUC should embark on accreditation of programmes on its first year of commencement.
2. The cost of education must be shared amongst all the stakeholders.
3. Employer of labour should emphasize job excellence not paper qualification
4. All parents should be a stakeholder by constantly advising and checking their children against cult activities.
5. Government should formulate effective research policy for both long and short-term

objectives that would be coordinated and systematically funded and implemented on a continuous basis for advancement of science and technology,

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