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Nigerian University Education System

**Introduction**

Education is the biggest industry that touches on every fabric of our human endeavour. University education, which is our focal point in this essay, is an important form of investment in human capital. It is the engine of development in the new world economy. Nevertheless, it is by adequate university education that people get to know their basic rights and seek to get them enforced. This is because part of the reasons for the smooth ride of the unscrupulous ruling elite - lies in the fact that they have constantly worked on the emotions of an ignorant population. Lack of adequate education limits the horizons of the masses and therefore restricts the capacity of the oppressed to extract their rights from state.

However, in spite of the pertinence of university education to any nation, Nigeria has been bedeviled by many woes in her university education sector, such that anyone who has the good of the country at heart would agree that the sector need a divine touch. This write-up, will therefore have as its kernel, to consider the situation of the Nigerian university education.

**Historical development**

Development of higher education in Nigeria came within the pre-independence period(colonial era).The desire for having University in West Africa and indeed in Nigeria washighly exhibited for over a century before it finally came. The missionaries who started the business of education never assumed responsibility for education above primary and secondary levels. In short, missionaries’ efforts covered only the two levels of education; primary and secondary. Higher education was not dabbled into, probably; the initial and major intention was not even originally to make education their priority for Nigerians, but evangelism. However, the increasing awareness of few educated Nigerians (the nationalists)who felt very dissatisfied with this debasement of Nigerians in the establishment of post-secondary centres instead of higher institution, led to criticisms and serious agitations which compelled the Nigerian colonial government to consider the need for higher educational institution for Nigerians.This was eventually provided and in the year 1955, the first university in Nigeria known as The University of Nigeria Nsukka was established.

**Relevance of university education**

University education is more than the next level in the learning process; it is a critical component of human development worldwide. It provides not only the high-level skills necessary for every labor market but also the training essential for teachers, doctors, nurses, civil servants, engineers, humanists, entrepreneurs, scientists, and a myriad of other personnel. It is these trained individuals who develop the capacity and analytical skills that drive local economies, support civil society, teach children, lead effective governments, and make important decisions which affect entire societies. This function of education can be seen vividly in action in Nigeria.

Even though the university system in Nigeria has not had a very smooth sail from inception, it has witnessed many successes. The gains that Nigeria has derived from the university education become glaring when one considers the five national goals through which Nigeria‘s philosophy of education draws its strength, namely, to create a democratic and free society, a just and egalitarian society, a united, strong and self-reliant nation, a great and dynamic economy and a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens.

Furthermore, the university education in Nigeria has led to the development of many Nigerians into sound and effective citizens. Here, university education more than any other, has led to higher self- awareness and self-realization of individuals at various tasks, enhanced better human relationships, national consciousness and effective citizenship.

**Problems of university education**

The university system in Nigeria is vaguely poor and of low standard. Those who benefit solely from the educational system undoubtedly had connections. The university is the highest institution of learning however, these institutions are faced with numerous challenges in a bid to carry out and achieving their goals and objectives. These challenges include:

•**Poor infrastructural facilities** such as buildings for the purpose of lectures, laboratories, studios, workshops, student’s hostels, administrative blocks, recreation centers etc are lacking and if available are grossly inadequate. A more systematic challenge on these items is age. In most universities, there buildings are as old as man itself or as when the various institutions were founded. Some of these structures are dilapidated without any form of maintenance. Education in modern day are delivered in an entirely new manner with modern tools, techniques and teaching methods that do not fit the simplistic convention of antiquated old designs. At this age, most of these buildings are fading rapidly even if their original plan were replaced. Such conditions can affect the teaching and learning process in the university environment. It is also worrisome to know that due to inadequate lecture halls, student is over crowded in the available halls. Some are seen standing; some sitting on the widows while others are seen hanging around the corridors and corners of the classrooms. Some practical courses are never learnt in our laboratories or seminar rooms, cause we lack them. This leads to producing incompetent graduates in the society. This situation makes the student to see the university as a means of acquiring certificates and not the desired skills.

•Secondly, **university educational system in Nigeria is grossly under funded**. This has lead to neglect of high profile structures and amenities. The growing and changing nature of the university education calls for a strong economic force such as the funding system which we see today as ‘federal support’ should be dropped and improved. Poor funding of Nigerian universities also lead to poor motivation of staff to unscrupulous activities of lecturers.

•**Thirdly, it’s unfortunate to mention that most of the human resources, both academic and non academics employed, are employed on the basis of sentiments and no qualification.** They are not rated according to their certificates and qualifications. Imagine employment lapses where an engineer is employed as an administrative officer or an accounting graduate without basic knowledge in research work comes to teach ‘Research Methodology”. It is obvious that the system will eventually collapse. In this scenario, the principle of ‘garbage in, garbage out’- which implies bad input will result in bad output-comes in, the students will be short. In human resources, it will be in short supply, thus dwindling the system. Due to this shortage in the supply of human resources, classes are combined, which will eventually lead to the overcrowding of the lecture halls. Let’s not forget that administrative activities and work is slow and stagnant too.

•**Lastly, our educational policies are not always reviewed**. We always wait for when there is a problem or crisis before we start talking about what and how to implement policies. At other times even when we know that these policies are not working, they are not even reviewed. A good example is the educational needs of our various departments and faculties. New courses should be added to old exiting ones due to the dynamic nature of our society and environment. Also the content of most universities curriculum are static, they are not reviewed periodically to meet the yearning needs of our changing society. This makes learning old fashion and irrelevant.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, The university helps in the actualization of the vision, goals, and objectives of our educational needs. It is therefore imperative that the challenges in the Nigerian educational system be brought to the limelight in order to see ways of reducing or eliminating most of them. This is because, if these challenges abounds, the society will see education as only a way forward to acquiring certificate and not in the development of their cognitive reasoning and social powers, thereby shortchanging the desired growth and development we all long for as well as the various parties involved.