UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: THE CHALLENGES AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

ADEKA UKO FRANCIS (PhD)

Department of Educational Foundations
Management
College of Education, Oju, Benue State
Email: adekafu@gmail.com
Phone: 08063288619

Introduction

This paper examines the challenges of university education in Nigeria. The challenges include inadequate funding, mismanagement of funds, ineffective monitoring system, and issue of accreditation, incessant strikes, inadequate lecturers/facilities, dilapidated infrastructure, insecurity, examination malpractice, greedy/corrupt university administrators, and poor policy implementation, out dated curriculum, brain-drain, and issue of university carrying capacity and poor methodology of handling entrepreneurship education. This chapter explains these challenges in detail and proffers possible solutions.

Education

Ada (2012) sees education as a tool for self-development and the development of the society. It provides knowledge, skills and attitudes. Balogum (2010) observed that education is the light without which the word will be in darkness. Anisiudo (2013) rightly said that, "it is better to be unborn than untaught; for ignorance is the root of misfortune". Education is undoubtedly the foundation upon which the future of any society is built and the best investment any government can make for its citizenry which will basically result in the attainment of economic prosperity (wealth creation), scientific and technological advancement and political stability of a nation. Ochuba and Ochuba (2013) submitted that: education plays active roles in achieving peace and security; for example, the insecurity problems of the Niger Delta region were reduced to a maximum level through education. Duru (2011) observed that education compromises of all the series of instruction and discipline which are intended to enlighten the understanding, correct the temper, and form the manners and habits of

youths, and fit them for usefulness in their future stations. Similarly, Akpakwu (2012) described education as the process of bringing desirable changes into the behavior of human beings. Peters in Duyilemi, (2016) upheld that 'education involves the transmission of what is worthwhile of what a particular society values so highly that it finds important to pass on to each succeeding generation. Dewey (2012) said education in its narrow technical sense is the formal process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills, customs and values from one generation to another e.g. instruction in schools. Obunadike (2013) mentioned that education is the transmission of what is desirable to individuals to make them knowledgeable and contributing members of the society. Ofojebe (2014) maintained that any given time, education is important for any country's socio-economic, cultural and political development. Yilben and Makanjuola (2016) noted that education in its broadest sense is any experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character, or physical ability of and individual. It is the entire range of experience in life through which an individual learns something new via formal, informal and non-formal education. National policy on education (N.P.E) (2013) asserted that

education is the greatest force that can be used to bring out redress as well the greatest investment that the nation can make for the quick development of its economic, political, and social and human resources. Education can be a way of reducing of reproducing social inequalities. When executed with excellence, it benefits the individuals, society and the economy (Olulube, Ameale, Kpolovie, Oyekwere and Elechi, (2012)

University Education

University education is very important to the society as it is through is that various professions which aid in the development of the society spring out from, University education refers to education after the secondary school level. The aim of university education is to produce skilled man-power, who are efficient and effective in their chosen field of study and who will help to cause growth and national development in Nigeria. University Education makes Optimum contribution to national development by:

a. Intensifying and diversifying its programmes for the development of high-level manpower within the context of the needs of the nation.

b. Making professional course contents reflect our national requirements.

c. Making all students part of a general programme of all-round improvement in university education, to offer general study courses such as history of ideas, philosophy of knowledge, nationalism and information technology (IT); and

d. Making entrepreneurial skills acquisition a requirement for all Nigeria universities. (NPE2014).

The goals of university education are very laudable but seem to have been faced with many problems affecting implementation and realization of the national objectives of education in Nigeria Omotayo, (2008). Ikpeze (2010) maintained that the challenges confronting tertiary institutions in Nigeria include financing issues, political interference, the growth of private quickly admitted that the challenges dealing the worst deathblow is that of underfunding of tertiary institutions. Thus, it is very important to address these challenges that university education in Nigeria face so as to ensure that the education is one of top quality.

The Challenges of University Education in Nigeria

1. Inadequate Funding: Funding refers to the various means through which institution finance their activities; University education requires funds to meet the set goals of the institution. Funds are needed for development of infrastructure, purchase of library and laboratory facilities and much more. In fact, the absence of funds would lead to a host of other challenges in the university thus it is important that funds should be adequate enough to supply the needs of the university. The financial challenge facing university education in Nigeria is gross under-funding which could be linked to undue reliance on Government for funds by university managers (Eragbe, 2014). Some materials are required for certain entrepreneurial tools and material purchase, so it becomes expedient that money be made available for the acquisition of such to enhance the teaching and learning of entrepreneurship subjects (Kannno and Onyeachi, 2012).

2. Mismanagement of funds: Apart from the challenge of inadequate funding, university education in Nigeria is also plagued with mismanagement of funds (okebukola, 2002; marinho, 2002; ekankumo and kemebaradikumo, 2014; Acho and abuh, 2016). Adinoyi (207) enunciated that the mismanagement of funds has eaten deep into university

education in Nigeria via high financial misappropriations, fund-misuse, embezzlements, un-accountability of existing funding source and breach of project implementation **polices.** Ololube (2016) noted that grant monies provided by the NUC and NBTE which are meant for capital projects are either stolen (wholly or partially) or diverted to other projects. For example, in 2012, the administration of a university in northern Nigeria was accused of fund mismanagement to the tune of fifty billion naira that was initially budgeted to keep the institution running for five years. In 2013, the management of a south-west based University was accused of diverting an estimated 3.5 billion naira appropriated for hostel and lecture theatres development (the budget and monitoring committee of the academic staff Union of Universities, **OAU** branch, (2016). Also, in 2014, the audit report of the office of the auditor-general for the federation revealed that a south-east based University was involved in an unaccounted 10-million –naira worth of contract for the re-modeling of the vice chancellor's office, a contract which was not in the university budget plan.

3. **Ineffective monitoring/ supervisory system:** A monitoring system refers to the various methods used to supervise activities both academic and non-academic within the university. **Diksha** (2016) submitted that supervision is a planned programme for the improvement of teaching and learning. Most universities in Nigeria lack an effective monitoring/supervisory system thus things are done haphazardly. Incompetent staff and undisciplined students misbehave because they are not being effectively supervised and this would lead to a total breakdown of law and order within the university. Adinoyi (2017) asserted that the lack of proper monitoring system and evaluation within the educational sector have fuelled corruption and fund mismanagement.

4. **Issue of accreditation:** for a university in Nigeria to run a course of program, that course/programme is to be accredited by NUC. The NUC visits universities, inspecting the various faculties and give their approval/disapproval on what they have seen. If they express their discontent on the facilities within the faculties and departments, that programme cannot run in that university.

5. **University strike action:** university strikes refer to actions of protest against harsh working conditions within the university. Omoike cited in unachukwu and okorji (2016) that a strike (also called strike action, labour strike, walkout, industrial action, revolt, and stop-work, down tools) is a temporary work stoppage caused by the mass refusal of employees to work. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) is a union of all academic staff in public universities in Nigeria, both federal and state. They are responsible for calling on strike actions so as to make the federal government meet the demands of their members. The strike actions lead to a pause to a disruption of the academic calendar. Students will then spend months without learning anything.

6. **Inadequate lecturers:** with the introduction of new courses by the NUC, the challenge of inadequate lecturers became one of the major challenges faced by university education in Nigeria. Thus, students left with no lecturer to these new courses.

7. **Inadequate/dilapidated facilities and infrastructure:** in most universities in Nigeria, there are inadequate, incomplete and dilapidated infrastructures within the campuses. Infrastructural facilities such as laboratories, libraries, lecture rooms, hostels etc are either not available or are not up to the global standard. The available infrastructures are often left to decay. Many academic libraries in Nigeria have not initiated viable income-generating strategies to supplement government funding because of poor economic situation of the university. A lot of graduates being rolled out are not well equipped for the modern world as they lacked the modern –day technological infrastructure in their libraries and laboratories when they were in the university .infrastructure facilities within the system are not reactivated ,instructional facilities are not procured and maintenance of facilities are stalled. Uncompleted as well as elephant projects are strewn everywhere (waziri, 2010).

8. **Insecurity:** this is also another challenge faced by university education in Nigeria. It is common knowledge that where there is peace, there is progress. But in situation whereby peace does not exist and insecurity is the order of the day, there will be complete and utter disruption of the environment. This occurs in most universities where cultism, riots, fights, robbery, rape and

other forms of insecurity take place. Staff and students do not feel safe when these things occur and thus, the activities within the university (academic and non-academic) are disrupted.

9. **Examination malpractice:** this refers to any form of misconduct on the part of the students during their examinations. It occurs in many forms and is done by students to gain marks which they did not work for. Onyenma (2012) posited that examination malpractice is any form of illegal and authorized assistance given to a candidate or student in an examination. Dada (2014) corroborated the above definition and described examination malpractice as any behavior by candidate or anybody saddled with the responsibility of conducting the examination; that goes against the conduct of such examination; before, during and after examination. Babalola (2010) pointed out that the quality of graduates depends on excellence in education, especially in conduct of examinations, grading and recording of marks. If students continue in this act, they would end up lacking the knowledge on the course and would later cause problems when practicing their careers. Thus, examination malpractice is

a danger not only to the university but to the society at large.

10. **Greedy/Corrupt University Administrators:** This is one of the major challenges faced by university education in Niger Anidoh, Ebuohand Nweke (2017) posited that corruption in the education sector is a social problem that has lowered the quality and standard of education in Nigeria and requires immediate solution. They said that today, none of the tertiary institutions in Nigeria is ranked among the first twenty universities worldwide and concluded that this is a sign that the quality of graduates is extremely low. They are mostly deficient in competence or capacity and are unemployable development. Ascma and Mamkaa (2013) asserted that corruption is an aggressive cancer that has eaten deep and strangulated all the vital cells of Nigerian's development. Despite the fact that funds for the university are inadequate, some greedy and corrupt administrators still use their position to amass wealth for themselves thus leaving the university in a poor state.

11. **Outdated curriculum:** some universities in Nigeria are still relying on the old curriculum despite the fact that the

NUC has introduced new courses into the university system. This would cause the students in the university to be disadvantaged as they would not be familiar with these new courses that their peers in other universities. Mbah (2014) said that the changes in the needs and aspirations of the society should reflect the changes in the curriculum in order to meet those needs and aspirations.

12. **Brain Drain:** This refers to the permanent movement of academic minds from one country or state to another. These academic minds, in order to seek greener pastures, immigrate to universities abroad and thus, leave the universities at home without adequate lectures to teach the students. Ogenyi and Ugwu (2017) stated the mass departure of Africa's intellectuals and skilled populations to western nations which is called "brain drain" has been one of the greatest obstacles to the development of African countries which has resulted to suffering from the shortage of professional and skilled individuals necessary for the shortages of professional and skilled individuals necessary for the advancement of the nation's capital.

13. **Poor methodology of handling entrepreneurship education:** Esu (2010), Entrepreneurship education can only come from a functional and balanced curriculum laden with such prerequisite flexibility that is capable of building a whole man for self-reliance, especially such skills needed to survive in the 21st century that looks exciting yet daunting because of the accompanying challenges that it presents to us in Nigeria. Adeshina (2011) observed that some of the teachers teaching entrepreneurship education were never trained or retrained. Consequently, job profiles kept by most of these teachers are outdated.

14. **Issue Of University Carrying Capacity:** carrying capacity refers to the number of students each faculty department can admit in relation to the number of facilities on ground for the students in order to use and facilitated teaching and learning to achieve the objective and goal of the institution. Even with the directives of the national university commission (NUC), some universities still admit more than the carrying capacity there by over stretching the available facilities. At a point the over populated population are shifted to other

facilities and departments that is not their other choice. The aim of these universities that over admit students is to make more money so that they can complement with what they will get from the federal to state government to run the affairs of the universities at the expense of the students.

15. **Poor policy implementation:** policy implementation involves translating the goals and objective of a policy into action. Ejuogu(2005) citied in Unachukwu an Okorju (2016) posit that poor polity implementation occurs as a result of the cankerworms of corruption and gross mismanagement of resources and these have been blamed for the deplorable state of the country's educational system. As a result of these two factors, the sector has consistency witnessed scarcity of resources, to the extent that less than 20 percent of eligible children of secondary school age get enrolled into schools at the tertiary level , only 0.3 percent of Nigerian youth who are due for enrolment at the level get the opportunity to go into higher institution. There is need for effective and better planning as this will go a long way to implementation.

Solutions to the challenges of university Education in Nigeria

The solution to these problems includes:

1. Adequate funds should be provided to these institutions by the government through the Federal ministry of Education (FME) and other organizations responsible for funding university education such as TETFUND.

2. Member of the public are advice to be security conscious by closely monitoring the activities of their children.

3. Promotion of peace education in the curriculum of various institution of university education.

4. Student should Desist from engaging in all forms of examination malpractice.

5. Student should be checked for dangerous items as they enter and exit the school by security personnel at every point of entrance to the university promises. Suspected ones should be checked immediately to maintain peace in the university.

6. The university should try as much as possible to maintain the structures within the campus. Building should be painted to look neat; the university campus should be kept clean at all times and the libraries

and laboratories should be renovated and properly maintained from time to time.

7. Greedy and corrupt administrators when caught and investigated thoroughly should be sacked immediately.

8. Provision of adequate facilities for staff and students in the universities should be a priority of the university.

9. Cameras should be placed in examination halls to monitor students during their examinations.

10. Students should be thoroughly searched for contra banned items (guns, knives, etc.) before entering into the hostels and lecture halls.

11. Students have to sign an undertaking before matriculating into university that they would not engage in activities which are against the university ethics.

12. Students should be given university handbooks and should learn the rules and regulations of the school so as not to gall victim of the consequences of breaking university rules.

13. There should be suggestion boxes in various departments and faculties within the university.

14. Incompetent staff of the university both academic and non-academic should be thoroughly investigated and disciplined by the university disciplinary committee.

15. Evaluation of teachers should be carried out from time to time; the universities should find out how these lecturers relate with the students and punish any inappropriate behaviour.

16. Peace and conflict studies should be inculcated as a general course in the university.

17. Adequate facilities should be provided in the university in order to dissuade students from engaging in all forms of protests, demonstrations, and violence on campus.

Conclusion

This chapter has addressed several of the challenges faced by university education in Nigeria. It has been noted that it is through university education that there will be an emergence of skilled manpower who are efficient and effective in their chosen field of study and who will help to cause growth and national development in Nigeria. The challenges discussed include inadequate funding, mismanagement of funds, issue of accreditation, insecurity, university strike action, insufficient staff, inadequate/dilapidated infrastructure, insecurity, greedy/corrupt university administrators, poor policy implementation, brain drain, outdated curriculum, and poor

methodology of handling entrepreneurship education, lack of collaboration and partnership, poor library and laboratory facilities. Inadequate staff, issue of university carrying capacity, and examination malpractice. It would take a collective effort from all members of the university to tackle the above solution; if applied, it would be enough to tackle them.

References

Acho, Y.& Abuh, P.A. (2016). Corruption and accountability in the Nigerian public sector: an empirical discourse. International Journal of Public Administration and Management Research 3(3), 47-54.

Ada, N. A. (2012). Curriculum and Entrepreneurship Skills Acquisition in Nigeria. Nigerian journal of curriculum studies. 19 (2). 5-19.

Adeshina, T.J. (2011). Entrepreneurship Education in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria: A strategy to strengthen the economy. Journal of Educational Research and Development, Faculty of Education, ABU Zaria, 6 (3) 41-45.

Adinoyi, J. (2017). Corruption and Public Finance Mismanagement in Nigeria's Tertiary Education Sector: the exigency for open government. Accessed from www. Basic Rights Watch. Org on 1st December, 2018.

Anidoh, H.C.D., Ebuoh, C.H., and Nwekem, J.O. (2017). Academic Corruption and Students' Achievement in Tertiary Institutions in Enugu State. *International Journal of Progressive and Alternative Education* (ASPROADEDU), Vol. 4 No. 1, 170-182.

Akpakwu, S.O. (2012). Educational Management: Theory and Practice. Makurdi Ventures Publishers.

Asema, T., & Manmkaa (2013). Corruption in the Nigerian Education Sector: The Way Forward. Katsina-Ala Multi-disciplinary journal, 1 (4). 149-159.

Balogun, A. M. (2013). Challenges of higher education in Nigeria: A Manager 's Perspective. Being a Paper Presented at the Maiden Edition of the Faculty of Education Annual Lecture Series, University of Ado- Ekiti, March 22nd

Dada O.M.O. (2014). A Sociological Investigation of the Course, Effects, and Solution to the Problem of Examination Malpractice: The Opinion of Crawford University Students in Nigeria. International

Journal of Advanced Research in Management Sciences, 3(5), pp. 20-33.

Dewey, j (2012). Democracy and Education. The free press, Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia.

Dikshe, k (2016). Meaning and scope of supervision. retrieved on 04/06/2020.

Duru V.N. (2011) Curriculum Studies: Concept, development and Implementation. Owerri: Avang Global Publications.

Duyilemi, A.N. (2016). Education, Corruption, and Value Reorientation in Nigeria. Journal of the National Association of Women in Colleges of Education (JOWICE) 21 (1)8-12.

Ejiok, B. (2005). Daily Sun Newspaper, Monday, 11 April, 10.

Ekankumo, B. & kemebaradikumo, N. (2014). Quality Financing of Higher Education in Nigeria: A Nostrum for the Provision of Quality Education. Journal of Education Practices, 5 (19), 78-90.

Eragbe, H. (2014). University Education in Nigeria: Using Oshodin's strategy to Convert Intangible to Tangible Development in E.O. Ojeme and I.I. Salami (Eds) Transformational Leadership in the University of

Benin, A. Publication of the Faculty of Education, University of Benin.

Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2014). National Policy on Education. Abuja: NERC.

Ikpeze, N. (2010), New Industrial Policies and Perspectives for Manufacturing in Nigeria in Itans, H. basset all (Eds), African Development Perspective Yearbook Vol. 11 itamburg: Lit Verlag.

Kanno, T.N. & Onyeachi, J.A.E. (2012). Curriculum Implementation and Entrepreneurship Skills Acquisition at the Tertiary Education Level in Nigeria. Nigeria Journal of Curriculum Studies 19 (2), 177-186.

Marinho, H. (2002). Tools and techniques for mobilizing resources for schools. Paper presented at the forum on Cost and Financing of Education in Nigeria, Education Sector Analysis (ESA), September 17-19, Abuja, Nigeria.

Mbah, A. (2014). Repositioning Adult Education Curriculum for National Development. The Intuition: An International Journal for Research Development, 6(1), pp. 72-82.

Obunadike, J.C. (2013). Development and validation of the teacher motivation

assessment scale for Quality Assurance in Universities in Anambra State. Journal of Educational and Social Research, MCSER Publishing, Rome, Italy. Vol. 3 No.6.

Ochuba, N.E.G. & ochuba C.D. (2013). Education and National Security: The Role of Business Education. Journal of National Association of Women in Colleges of Education (JOWICE17 (1)166.

Ofojegbe, W. (2014). Integrating Peace Education into the Nigerian Basic Education Curriculum for a Lasting Peace and Environmental Sustainability. European Scientific Journal. 10, (34): 154-170.

Ogenyi, M.N., & Ugwu, N.E. (2017). Brain Drain and African Development. Journal Of Progressive 349-362.

Okebukolam P. (2002). Issues in Funding Universities in Nigeria. Paper Presented at the forum on Cost and Financing of Education in Nigeria, Education Sector Analysis (ESA), September 17-19, Abuja, Nigeria.

Ololube, N. P. (2016). Education Fund Misappropriation and Mismanagement and The Provision

of Quality Higher Education in Nigeria.

Olulube, N.P., Amaele, S., Kpolovic, J.P., Onyekwere, L.A., and Elechi, G.E. (2012). Quality higher education for improved knowledge is essential for national and regional development. International Journal of Education, Economics and Development, 3(2). 179-204.

Omotayo,D.M. (2008). The State of University Education and Academic Excellence in Nigeria. Journal of Qualitative. 4(4), 14-19.

Onyenma, Q.C (2012, May 9). Still on Examination Malpractices. Nigerian Tribune. Pp. 3-4

Unachukwu, G.O. &okorji P.N. (2016). Educational Management: A Shill Building Approach. Anambra; Rex Charles & Patrick Limited.

Waziri F. (2010). Corruption and Governance Challenges. Nigeria Conference Proceedings, Monograph Series, No. 7, CLEENT Foundation, Abuja, Nigeria.

Yilben, J.J. and Makanjuola. A.A. (2016). The Role of Functional Education for National Development in a Democratic Setting: The Nigerian Experience. Nigerian Journal of

Educational Issues 1 (1) (P.117)

Pankshin: Obedtor Computers.