



Nigerian Higher Education In Perspective: Current Issues And Problems

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ABSTRACT

The deterioration of the quality and standards of Nigerian educational institutions remains a nagging and bothersome national topic. Our tertiary institutions still loom far from catching up to the first 6000 universities in the world rankings. Even amongst the first 100 universities in Africa, the leading Nigerian universities only reached not too enviable positions (Unilag 20th, OAU Ife 23rd, Unibadan 38th, Unilorin 41st, Covenant Ota 43rd and FUT Minna 57th positions according to Answersafrica.com for 2015 gradings; and for 2016 rankings, Unilag came 16th, Unibadan 17th, OAU Ife 45th, Covenant 49th, Unilorin 54th, UNNsukka 63rd, FUTOwerri 67th, Uniben 78th Abuz 86th, Un-Abeokuta^{88th}, in International Colleges and University Rankings). Some identify the financial problem, for others, it is access, or quality or brain exodus, or federal governance tyranny; too often, it is a generation of mediocre students and facilities, yet to others it is the massification (excess supply versus adequate demand of resources) and the subordination of Science and Technology to the Humanities, Law and the Social Sciences. This paper attempts a scrutiny of the evolution of tertiary education starting from Yaba Higher College (1934) to contemporary institutions being set up by the Federal, State Governments, private organizations and persons. It also deeply examines the major issues plaguing higher education and attempts some panaceas.

Keywords: Education, University, Institution

INTRODUCTION

One of the most vibrant, ever-busy concerns of the Nigerian State and its people is the education sector. Some believe it is the greatest industry of the nation, with the flood of impressive statistics of institutions, personnel, and the myriad of stakeholders, beneficiaries and contributors in the sector? It is a sector that is ever versatile, ever problem-prone from its motley of patrons, managers, clients, pupils, adherents, apostles, zealots, ideologues, job-seekers, parents, all contesting for attention and responses. Despite the long-run attraction and credibility of the education industry, some of the sparkles include the quantum leap of '42 universities in 1990 to 141 in 2015' as well as 'massive changes in the curriculum'¹ (Okebukola 2016). For a plethora of good and great reasons, a 170million population country must be concerned about what impact, geography, the background, the circumstance of the people. This study seeks an appreciation of the prevailing status and the prospects of Nigeria's education enterprise especially the era of those 'who used their brain, their pain and their tongue to expel British colonial exploiters'. Such a study is essential as education is a tool to enable Nigeria know 'her destination'¹

There is need for some retrospective, introspective and prospective overview as prelude to contemporary and future policies, plans and experiences. This triad of objectives in this paper intends to intensely examine using specific issues confronting the sector. Year by year the populace is visited with declarations, some fanciful, others promissory, seldom of concretely verifiable achievements in budget form or in official engagements like foundation-laying, speech-making, some formal extempore action. At the often charismatic expressions, hopes are raised, emotions are pushed, praises are sung. Tragically, there are numerous shortcomings, concerns that can attract wailings, and worry as to what 'destination'

Nigeria is headed. All sub-sectors of education are beleaguered by the enormity and ferocity of cumulative and contemporary problems that are not going away but are well-known and often discussed, conferenced, budgeted on and submitted about. Thus whilst many are conscious of strides and efforts in progress including frequently increasing annual budgetary allocations, many stakeholders are concerned at the nation's mundane achievement and the lowly prospects. Nwachukwu and Okoli³ (2015) noticed the end of 'the hey days' of higher education with the on-coming of military regime particularly in the 80s with poor funding, massification of enrolment, incessant shut-downs flowing from strike actions, brain drain, cultism, lack of infrastructural facilities which overtook the university system.

Whilst doing a cold but balanced appraisal of the sector in UNICEF's 1999 State of the World's Children's Report recorded that '.....about 4million Nigerian children have no access to basic education and that majority of those that are lucky to enter schools are given sub-standard education' (Dike 2016)⁴. The same report having listed 48,242 primary schools with 16,796,078 students in public schools, and 1,965,517 in private schools, and 7104 secondary schools with 4,448,981 students with the rider that 'Most of these schools are in dilapidating states' (Dike, *ibid*, p3). The author cited the most troubled of the triad as being primary education where 'there are about 2015 primary schools in Nigeria with no buildings of any type. Classes are held under trees'. It should be added that even in urban areas, much less but starkly similar to rural areas, pupils are compelled to carry wooden chairs on their heads to sit on in school carried over long distances from their homes, others just sit on the bare floor to receive class lectures although this is a rare and exceptional occurrence.

Pressure for the establishment of a university for and in West Africa started with persuasive and inspirational writings (Nduka Okafor⁵; 2011). James Horton wrote "We want a university for West Africa and the Church Missionary Society has.....built an expensive college, which should now be made the focus of learning for all West Africa....."(Horton 1868/388). 'a university to produce knowledge to refute attacks on Africans'.....the Colonial Office was not agreeable to Blyden's request for help in founding a university'.

The early beginnings, motivation, inclinations for Higher Education; Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone

Despite inflicting sweeping incursion and military conquests on local communities in Africa especially to deal with recalcitrant and rebellious groups who resisted colonialism and military suppression, colonialism was a catalyst for an exit from slavery. Slavery, as precursor to colonialism is usually regarded as the most bestial form of brutal degradation of the human being. This is despite the mitigation of the contribution of the Africans to the nefarity and ruthlessness of the trade, the profession, the carnage. "Even today, slavery has not completely disappeared from Africa"⁶ though illegal anywhere.

Liberated Slaves press for Higher Education

The British colonialists were obsessed with frugality, fund management and cost savings and would exert maximum effort to avoid dependence on the Home Office in Whitehall for funds to carry out activities in Africa.

Thus the colonial government gave no heed to subtle and vocal agitation and Nationalists for the establishment of a University. That agitation had commenced since the mid-nineteenth century under the direction of 'descendants of returned slaves'.

That crusade was for a joint (single) West African University to encompass the British Territories, Nigeria (and colony of Lagos), Gold Coast later renamed Ghana, Sierra Leone and the Gambia (Nduka Okafor; 2011 *ibid*).

Despite the denigrative and distractive campaign by colonialists, James Beate Horton made 'the earliest call for a University' along with William Davies and Samuel Campbell who were sent on training to England. There was a spirited call for a University for West Africa to be a focus of learning for all West Africa....Fourah Bay College should henceforth be made the University of Western Africa. Another

staunch advocate for the establishment of a West African University was Edward Wilmot Blyden who pleaded the essentialness of 'spiritual improvement for the Africans which could be enhanced by the establishment of a University'. Blyden also teamed up with Bishop James Johnson and later Casely Hayford who formed the Congress of British West Africa⁷. The Congress with its four-nation membership passed several resolutions in 1920 the second of which asserted; 'that in the opinion of this Conference, the time has come to found a British West Africa University on such lines as would preserve in the students a sense of African Nationality and therefore recommends (Okufu tranka 2011) that all existing secondary schools throughout West Africa should promote a course of training that shall best attain the end.....'

Despite the valiant efforts, it was impossible to persuade the UK Secretary of State; in any case, there were no means of funding the proposed University.

'.....British officials in West Africa always asked the Africans (in derision?) to foot the bill themselves', as summarized by Lord Lugard, famous for unifying Nigeria, in his Dual Mandate.

FOURAH-BAY COLLEGE AS PIONEER TERTIARY INSTITUTION IN WEST AFRICA

Fourah Bay College was founded by the Church Missionary Society in 1827, for the purpose of training Africans as Schoolmasters, Catechists and Clergymen. It was to provide its pupils considered suitable, as Teachers and Priests. In 1876; it was affiliated to Durham University in Durham's Matriculation Examinations and Durham's University Degree Examinations. By 1965 January, it received a Royal Charter as University College of Sierra Leone, although the Durham affiliation continued. It took on Degrees in Arts, Science, Economic Studies, Education, Theology, Civil, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering. The University of Sierra Leone Act of 1972 was passed to embrace Fourah Bay College and Njala University College⁸. Despite the evolution of Fourah Bay College, what must be stressed emphatically is the almost total aversion and indifference on the part of British colonialists to the aspirations of West Africans for higher education. For the colonial administration'.....the African was too backward a race to be introduced to European ideas and saw it as a waste of time'⁹.

The same apathy about the need for higher education in response to ceaseless agitation by nationalists in Sierra Leone, was applicable to Nigeria. It was not until 98 years later (after Sierra Leone was declared the first British Colony in West Africa) that the colonial administration set up their very first school in Sierra Leone, it was 50 years in Nigeria between the establishment of CMS Anglican Secondary School (the first secondary school in Nigeria) in 1859 and secular King's College, Lagos in 1909.

British Colonial Administration was only interested in providing some elementary (primary) education of "persons they wanted to be partners in their Indirect Rule and encouraged to be content with traditional and rural leadership of their people and not to try to imbibe foreign ideas that would make them feel superior to their peoples". Consequently British Colonial Administration made no financial provision for the College. Instead, the College was suspended at the outbreak of the first World War as the campus was occupied by German Prisoners of War. These disruptive interruptions in the early life of Fourah Bay College created a sad history of closure and reopenings, all due to lack of adequate funding. It closed in 1820 but reopened in 1822, closed in 1826, reopened in 1827 the year of the decision to upgrade to University College status in Clinetown. It was closed in 1859, was reopened 1866. The consequences of these disruptions is delayed stability similar to the fate of the first tertiary institution in Nigeria, the Yaba Higher College set up in 1934, following relentless agitation by nationalists and closed down tentatively in 1944 and totally in 1947.

The consequence of British officials' disinterest in indigenous Higher Education access was regretted in Anthony Kamara's conclusion that the British (in Sierra Leone) had set the stage for permanent future political tensions, conflict, malice, hate and struggle between the two largest ethnic groups which the country was divided into, two broad divisions flowing from British divide and rule policy 'intended to exploit the country with minimal British expenditure and mostly reliant on raising income by people through the use of our native rulers and chiefs'.

This polarization “was not confined to Sierra Leone alone, but similarly done in Nigeria with the country divided into Hausa-land to the North, Yoruba-land to the West and Igbo-land to the East; in Ghana, between Asante-land to the North and Southern Territories”¹⁰ (Anthony Kamara; Sierra Leone).

On the education enterprise by Western Missionaries, the British gave a blind eye to the entire Missionaries’ effort, “The British remained unimpressed, unsupportive and repugnant to the whole project, indeed.....The British failed to offer any financial assistance to the education project of the Missionaries”.

In sum, ‘on the education of the colonized people, the British performance was outrageously disappointing’ (Anthony Kamara *ibid*, p3).

To discourage potential students’ admission, the colonial government gave ‘British African countries scholastic requirements different from those presented in Europe. Until 1962, a student could pass the School Certificate scoring distinctions in all subjects but if he gets a Grade 9 in English Language, he failed the whole exams. The British gave their colonies conditions different from what prevailed in Europe’.

When the 2nd World War broke out in 1939, the British announced a permanent closure of Fourah Bay College just as they did Yaba Higher College in Lagos, Nigeria. In any case most government institution were closed down, some were occupied by soldiers including King’s College, Lagos.

Between King’s College Lagos in 1909 and University College, Ibadan in 1948, there was the Yaba Higher College set up after vociferous hue by nationalists.

Yaba Higher College set up in 1934 was no more than an ineffectual and unsatisfactory attempted solution or a mal-appropriistic panacea to the indigenous quest for higher education. The college admitted an average of 36 trainees per year and recorded more failures than passes whilst the ensuing graduates only qualified for recruitment as Assistant to while colonial officers in Forestry, Surveying, Law, Administration. The indigenous elite always wished for and agitated for a University Institution to be established even with their small numbers. Ayandele criticized them as amongst the most self-deluding people in the history of our people ‘.....they were very wild dreamers’^{10B}. Take for instance, their desire for university institution in 1881 at a time when Primary Education was available only to a few. “When job opportunities were for the

Clerks.....and yet in 1896, they went on working out details about a University at Ebute Metta” (Ayandele E. A. 1974/40). Yaba Higher College fizzled out as it was suspended in 1944 and cancelled after the 1945 end of World War 2, the students were moved to the incipient University College, Ibadan.

The African progressives, rightly, say that ‘university on lines of African nationality’ should be founded but do not indicate a single donation from the wealthy members of their community towards its realization (Luggard 1911). The first demand for a University was pressed by Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe who went to study in Pennsylvania, USA in 1925, returned first to Ghana 1934, then to Lagos 1937, engaging in vigorous newspaper and book writings (Nduka Okafor, *ibid*).

Zik as he was fondly hailed by his many admirers first conceived of a ‘University of Liberia’ in Monrovia for the benefit of all Africa based on African culture and social organization. When he launched an appeal for fund for this ‘dream private university’, his appeal yielded less than forty pounds within six months and, painfully discouraged, he refunded the money to the donors. He eventually founded the University of Nigeria in Nsukka in 1960, the year of Nigeria’s independence, thus heralding the establishment of more Universities.

Nsukka was a product of Zik’s resolve to set up a higher Institution. He showed the beacon for others to follow and influenced Orizu, Ojike, Mbadiwe to popularize American education by going to study in the United States and counterpoise citizens of Western Nigeria who concentrated on studying in the United Kingdom. Aluko asserts that the antipathy and resentment between Zik and Awolowo was probably exacerbated by that cross-continental preference. ‘.....the preference of Yorubas for British education and of Ibos for American education, coupled with militant Ibo claims of the superiority of American

education and of the easier-to-get American degrees has exacerbated Yoruba-Ibo tension¹¹ (Aluko, Mobolaji; November 16, 2004).

Aluko believed that the influence of Zik in Igbo education in Nigeria was phenomenal, and the competition it engendered with the Yoruba too was helpful to the Yoruba. In any case Zik ‘negotiated’ the establishment of University of Nigeria, Nsukka as the first indigenous University in Nigeria with some help from Michigan State University. The institution was a kind of ‘antidote’ to Ibadan University College set up on British University of London Lines in 1948. It was a full-fledged University from the start introducing a vast array of academic programmes.

The rivalry between Zik of the Eastern and Awo of the Western Region was largely constructive and productive. Awolowo and his team led by Dr. S. O. Awokoya had recorded, through their ingeniously pioneering the first free primary education scheme, an educational revolution not only in the West but in (Aluko Mobolaji; 2004 Nov 16) Nigeria as a whole¹² (Fafunwa Babs; 2004). Within a year of the commencement of the programme, the number of primary school teachers rose from 17,000 in 1954 to 27,000 in 1955, the budget for education rose from 2.2million pounds in 1934 to 5.4million pounds in 1955. By 1960, over 1,100,000 children were enrolled; more than 90% of children of school going age. The Eastern Region also planned a similar scheme but which suffered various hiccups (ibid, p. 192).

Following the establishment of Nsukka in 1960, the two other regions in the spirit of vigorous, healthy rivalry common to the Regions, set up their own regional Universities as independent, integral, full-fledged university institutions devoid of the apprenticeship under an older university. The incoming of the oil boom after the civil war end in 1970 saw new events in the higher education sector. The federal government, exuding intense confidence and grit, set up a reinvigorated National Universities Commission in 1974, took over regional universities of Ife, Zaria, Nsukka and Benin as well as established seven new universities in Calabar, Jos, Sokoto, Kano, Ilorin, Maiduguri and Port Harcourt¹³ (Ogunu, 2012) to attempt an even spread of the institutions. It also set up a coordinating body in Joint Admission & Matriculation Board in 1977 for the general management and conduct of matriculation examinations for admission into all universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education. The mechanism effectively curtailed the independence of the Senate and Boards of higher institutions for admission purposes.

Upon the overthrow of the Shagari civilian government end of 1983, the higher education saga took a new turn. The Buhari Regime abolished all existing private Universities whilst the revisionist Babangida regime reversed that decision such that by end of 1983, nearly 40 private Higher institutions sprang up around the country (Nduka Okafor p.386). The proliferation soon became a deluge such that the Executive Secretary of the NUC and the Imo State Governor expressed toxic condemnations of the trend. Gov Sam Mbakwe lamented “the whole thing was becoming a huge joke..... the whole affair became dangerously confusing as people started establishing kiosks they called universities.....if we don’t do something fast to arrest the situation, we might end up producing graduates that cannot qualify as bus drivers” (Okafor, ibid).

The urge and ambition to establish University Institutions was not confined to politicians and nationalists but extended to private citizens. An Imo Technical University was proposed and promoted by one Dr Bassil Nnanna Ukaegbu using the ‘Technological & Economic Development Mission (TEDEM)’. The Imo State Government, intent on setting up its own University declared Imo Technical University as illegal. That proscription was further solidified through the Imo State High Court Chief Judge through to the Appeal Court although Supreme Court clarification in May 1983 (Supreme Court Law Report 1983) ‘opened the floodgate of unregulated private Universities’. The official reticence and prevarication lasted through the Buhari regime of 1983 to 1985 but the situation upturned when Gen. Babangida set up the Gray Longe Commission in 1990 on the Review of Higher Education in Nigeria, which gave the green light for what became a deluge of public and private universities.

With the private ones, the expression of the public Universities was a reflection of the extra buoyant and ever confident financial prosperity of the 70s which had started tapering downwards in the 80s such that

the structure, organization and issues dealing with higher education suffered a drastically changed dynamics.

ESTABLISHMENT OF UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA

Mobolaji Aluko (2004) noted the controversy that surrounded the naming by Zik of the University of Nigeria in advance of 'University of Ibadan' which would have been preferable for Dr Kenneth Mellanby its first Vice Chancellor. The UNN was the first to introduce the American course system and numerous practical courses which UCI scorned for long.

It was an American type land-grant College for the express purpose of emphasizing agriculture, technical, commercial and home economics education and blend those with the classical concept of universities whilst adapting both to suit Nigeria's circumstances and society¹⁴. UNN's creation and other regional universities were enhanced by the classification of Higher Education as an item on the concurrent list of 1960 Constitutional functions.

The University of Lagos was established in 1962 following the 1961 UNESCO Advisory Commission Report and expected to be 'professionally and technologically oriented'¹⁵. University of Ife was next in Oct 1962 following an insightful resolve by the leadership of the Western Region who insisted on a University even when the Ashby Report 'omitted' the Western Region request.

It was established and located in the Ibadan Branch of the defunct Nigerian College of Arts and Science which then became the Ibadan Branch of the University until the movement to its Ife permanent site starting from January 1967. The former Mid-West Institute of Technology established under Samuel Ogbemudia Governorship became the fifth and final version of the first generation Universities as the University of Benin.

Proliferation of Universities and Massification of Students

Federalism, Regionalism and Statism have assisted the tendency for proliferation of institutions including the Universities and have sustained or worsened the inter-tribe and subtle rivalry among states, regions and tribes for an equitable share of the national cake. Thus, the factor of equity is a central point of demand for Nigerian nationalities' quest for Nigeria's federalism. The on-coming of the oil boom which followed immediately after the Civil War victory by Nigeria's ruling military produced a confidence, an ego booster and pushed into the ruling regime the feeling of enormous power to achieve, and to secure especially based on a military which had vanquished its foes on the battle field and dealt successfully with the threats of secession. It was also a military anxious to appropriate all power in the polity even beyond those prescribed in British bequeathed federalism. Thus, the Federal Government passed Decree no 46 on May 31, 1970 transferring Higher Education from the concurrent into the federal exclusive list¹⁶.

This led to the take-over of the four regional universities Abu Zaria; University of Nigeria, Nsukka; Unife- Ife; and Uniben - Benin to add to the other two Federal Universities, Ibadan and Lagos. Still in the supercilious mood of power opulence, seven new Universities were decreed Calabar, Jos, Maiduguri, Sokoto, Bayero- Kano, Port-Harcourt and Ilorin, the latter three being former affiliated Colleges.

To be fair to the Military, Nigeria enjoyed a serious internationally positive image especially after some decisive interventionary assistance to Southern African Countries fighting for independence and freedom. This over-confidence led to the oil boom goof that 'money was not Nigeria's problem but how to spend it' (Toye 1983). There was also intense pressure for increased admission places for the multitude of qualified candidates who trooped yearly sitting for JAMB Examinations and the post-JAMB tests. Separately seven (7) State Governments established State Universities between 1980 and 1983 in Port-Harcourt (1980), Enugu (1981), Imo State, Okigwi (1981), Ekpoma (1983) and Lagos State (1981/82), Owerri 1981/82, Ago Iwoye (1983).

Simultaneously, '..... foreign Foundations stopped offering Nigeria assistance to the Nigerian education system believing that 'Nigeria is now a very rich country' since 'money was not Nigeria's problem':

Rivers State University of Science & Technology, Port Harcourt 1980

Anambra State University of Technology, Enugu 1981

Bendel State University, Ekpoma 1981

Obafemi Awolowo University, Ado-Ekiti 1981/82

Imo State University, Owerri 1981/82

Ogun State University, Ago Iwoye 1983

Lagos State University, Lagos 1983

The institutions were products of declaration by Governors and Commissioners for Education and started outright through upgraded existing College of Education or Polytechnics. To Toyé, many 'see the institutions as political ventures of status symbol rather than a product of serious assessment of capability to train qualitative manpower in well funded, adequately staffed and equipped Universities'¹⁷. Thus followed the wave of third generation of universities including Cross State University, Uyo 1984. Then followed a spate of federal universities established by the Federal Government including Abuja, Bauchi, Akure, Abeokuta, Yola, Minna and Owerri leaving Federal Government with 20 universities and 8 state universities as at 1988. The next decade heralded the incoming of private universities in their numbers sponsored by organizations and individuals.

Inequitability, Disproportionality and Shortcomings in Higher Education

The Nigerian Government had frequently declared policy willingness to use education as a tool for socio-economic development thus after the Civil War, there was attendant adoption of the policy-triad, Reintegration, Reconciliation and Reconstruction¹⁸ (Ogechi Anyanwu; 2010, *ibid*).

It is noted that 'Out of 14,468 students enrolled in the five Universities in 1970, students from the South constituted more than 75.6% of the total students' population. There were several causations for this lopsidedness, one of them was that only one (ABUZaria) was the only University located in the North out of the six in the country. Facilities available in the Universities were so limited that only 1,500 candidates were admitted out of 7000 applicants (Anyanwu 2011/5. This was despite special fund allocation dedicated to University of Nigeria Nsukka to rebuild and reconstruct after the widespread devastation of the 1967-70 civil war. The federal government put some persuasive pressure towards the provision of 'maximum number of students....in university education'. Other solutions fashioned were the race by the new States to have their own Universities despite fears that that might be inward-looking and inbreeding. The isolation of the youth of each state of the Federation into their State Universities might not make for the much needed unity of the country. There exists the painful danger that both students and their teachers will remain within their states and that a new type of tribalism might develop. The North demanded the quota system for admission to provide a better leverage for Northern Students and reduce their disadvantage of admission access. This was secured in 1958 and in vogue till the federal character principle was invoked and constitutionalised in 1979.

Localisation of Human Resource in Higher Education

Nigerian Universities are considered 'less international' in terms of academic and student diversity. Many do not have a single foreign teacher, some have a few students from neighbouring countries to Nigeria. There is insufficient cooperation amongst educational institutions internally and externally even intra-departmentally thus making cooperative and collective research effort a far cry impossibility, within the universities and the polytechnics¹⁹.

Internationalisation activity is minimal yet crucial for quality upswing. Bayero University, Kano had a fruitful linkage by which Universities in Warsaw, Poland; Sebha and Al-Fateh in Libya, stayed in the USA with an exchange of undergraduate students for a semester or two at Bayero mentioned existing universities. Lack of funding and poor articulation are often identified as cause of this programme interruption or cessation.

This was the scenario in the first generation and second generation universities until the civil war and its aftermaths; prolonged military rule, brain drain, structural adjustment programme, the oil price slump of the 1980s.

Owing to pressures from the former Military Governors of the Northern States through the Interim Common Services Agency (ICSA)²⁰, the Head of State Gen. Gowon, leading to reclassifying the Higher Education subject into the exclusive rather than concurrent classification. The Federal Government arrogated to itself the sole right to establish and legislate on all matters on further expansion, and force a central planning system ostensibly to remove parochialism and promote national unity.

The Babangida Administration which took up office in August 1985, succumbed to pressures to bring back Private Universities. It decided in establishing the Gray Longe Commission to do a Review of Higher Education in Nigeria including fashioning the proposed eligibility criteria for the establishment of future Universities in Nigeria. For proposed eligibility, several straightforward criteria were specified the most important of which was the provision of detailed eligibility for sponsorship of a University:

“An Institution of Higher Learning may be sponsored or owned by the Government of the Federation or of a State or by a Local Government at.....

(a) By a company incorporated in Nigeria, or
(b) By an individual or an association of individuals who are citizens set out in the schedule to this Act for establishment of Institution (Federal Government of Nigeria, Decree No 9 of 1993).

(c) The specific requirements are provided:

- The academic structure and the spread of disciplines (in areas of felt needs) of the proposed institution.
- Evidence of adequate funding, capital and recurrent and adequate academic and support staff.
- Guaranteed source of funding to the tune of N200m for five years.
- Availability of at least 100 acres of land and a master plan of the development of the land over a period of 25 years.
- Information on the availability of water, power, communications, and housing for staff and students.
- Evidence of the availability of library, laboratory and workshop facilities in the short and long term.
- Well articulated mission, a university law not in conflict with conventional academic practice.
- A general set up not too radically different from the norm in Nigerian Universities so as to ensure the credibility of the new institution.
- These guidelines²¹ were supplemented by 13 application-steps for the establishment of private starting from the initial routine application.”

In sum, the National Universities Commission under the aegis of the Federal Ministry of Education and the Federal Executive Council keeps a meticulously close watch on the protracted process of setting up and nurturing new Universities. In some quarters, this supervision is excessive, invasive and pernicious. This resentment is broken into two – against the overwhelming surveillance and the all-covering supervision by the National Universities Commission. As discussed in an earlier portion, the capacity of and reach of the NUC over Higher Education are superior and continuous. Each institution is also busy contending and defending against events in and outside the campus especially with key stakeholders including the Police, Students, Alumni and Employers.

At the Foundation Day Ceremony of the University of Ibadan, 17 November 1995, Gen. Abacha cautioned:

- (a) Dissipation of energy in pursuing personal gains or unnecessary union activities is tantamount to misplaced priorities and contribute to lowering of standards of education. The recent dissipation of so much energy in campus politics by staff instead of devoting time to the primary duty of teaching is of growing concern to government”²² (Kunle Amuwo, 2016).
- (b) Gen. Abacha emerged with a proposal to rationalize Federal Universities from 23 to 6 for each political zone, the remaining Universities to State Governments.....to reduce the financial burden of the Federal Government and the alleged mad rush by Southerners for higher education, (Kunle Amuwo p.6).

“The present state of infrastructure and learning in University of Ibadan today has deteriorated significantly’. The present state of U.I. epitomized the decay of the academic.....a reprehensible policy of equalization and leveling has brought our truly distinguished and model universities into ‘bad company’ . ‘We now have education without enlightenment, information without thought, data without analysis, social relations without grace”;

One significant verdict of Amuwo was that the Nigerian University system was steeped in the miry clay of consumption of imported material products, which was due to ‘poor prioritization of higher education’. The scant relevance and utilization success of Universities has often led to questions as to how defensible is the colossal quantum of resources and hopes expended on the institutions. He further ruefully lamented that the Visitor (Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces), has ‘supplanted the University Senate’, highly politicized and centralized government agencies have replaced well-informed, respected and progressive citizens, and university teachers and students – the victims-are blamed for falling standards.

Vice Chancellor Prof. Ojetunji Aboyade acknowledged in 1977 that there was ‘a loud litany of disillusionment with academic institutions – being chanted by the general public’ Amuwo *ibid*. This is despite the profoundly positive reputation which had been garnered by Unibadan: ‘Its products bestrode and transverse the land’. Heads of Industries, Ministries and the professions were largely ‘Ibadan People’. These Ibadan people would not be easily cowed by military leaders who ‘began to spurn all rules and procedures, as soon as some experience in policy-making was garnered’. Academia proceeds by virtue of their training and temperament to reject and renounce being regimented into unalloyed obedience and untainted loyalty to one voice. Aboyade appropriately described the town and gown relationship as ‘an adversarial relationship of near incompatibility.’

In sum, the intention for the ascension into office by the military in 1966 by seizing the machinery of government on the guise of wanting to check the drift towards anarchy and disintegration was neither achieved nor pursued sustainably. The apolitical and nationalistic military whose image was perceptible prior to January 15, 1966, received a resounding defeat that was solidified as military rule was prolonged and derailed.

In any case, as counterpoise to its integrative potential, the Nigerian Military ‘.....proved to be corrupt, permeated by secret societies and protection rackets’ and instruments of sub-nationalismin ethno-religious matters and allocation of national resources’²³ (Ajayi Adegboyega Isaac; 2013).

Academia represented by Nigerian Universities are also reacting to military distancing and cynicism by developing a closed nature²⁴ (Onoja Adagbo, 2012). Successive Governments, Military or Civilian have had to use University Academics in Governance even when there is frequent asseveration that military rule in general is antithetical to democracy²⁵ (Ukanna B. Ikpe,2000).

.... The Babangida regime also embarked on extensive incorporation of influential Civil Society beginning with individuals and groups capable of enhancing the public image and credibility of his regime. For instance, academics and intellectuals were offered lucrative political appointments.

Those included persons like Wole Soyinka, Eme Awa, Humphrey Nwosu, Adele Jinadu, Sam Oyovbaire, Omo Omoruyi, John Ayoade.....(Kunle Amuwo 1990). As Julius Ihonvbere has suggested, the numerous directorates and agencies created by the Babangida Regime were actually meant for ‘settling’ people of this category (Ihonvbere 1991:120). Similarly, Labour Unions were infiltrated, so enticed and balkanized that union leaders openly solicited governments’ patronage. In fact the then President of the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) Mr Paschal Batyau, ‘vociferously campaigned for the extension of

Babangida's tenure from 1993 to 1996.....traditional rulers and members of the National Assembly joined the clamour as they supported the annulment of the June 12 Presidential Election. Babangida recruited clients and supporters all over Nigeria (Ukana B.Ikpe, 2000).

This intense alienation of the Military from the Nigerian Society would only be complete by an inclusion of the despicable governance by the Abacha Regime.

The Northern Military was rabidly opposed to a power shift to the South. Gen. Abacha after overthrowing the Shonekan Regime, governed Nigeria with only very

trusted loyalists and clients. Very few of his ministers could meet him face to face to discuss state policies, others had to approach the President through favourite Ministers and Abacha's own close business partners. He indiscriminately transferred State funds into private accounts (Mohammed 1998), acquired extensive property, and had business interests in virtually all the States of the Federation (Ukana Ikpe, 2000, in Fraud Incorporated 1998)²⁶.

Obasanjo summarized his views on Abacha. 'Abacha used everything against the Nigerian interest, against the Nigerian people, and only for himself, his family and his cohortsjust the security apparatus, even the political system, the economic system, everything that was there was used for him, his family and accomplices, (Obasanjo, 1998:10 in Ukana B Ikpe Ibid).

Town Dependence on Gown

Multiple issues generate controversy, some bickering, demands, dissatisfaction, sometime disgruntlement, relative to challenges affecting academia and society.

None disputes the requirement for higher education, science and technology, research and discovery, the knowledge industry towards the socio-economic development of Nigeria and her people. There is agreement that research was previously prominent, the four original Universities were bearing academic and intellectual excellence, '.....Ibadan was famous in Medicine, Education, Religious Studies and History. Ahmadu Bello was renown in Engineering,

Veterinary Medicine, Agriculture, History, Arts and Medical Sciences, Lagos was recognized in Business Administration, Law and Social Studies, Nsukka was famous in languages and literatures'²⁷. He was noted for Pharmacy, Agriculture, Administration and Law between the 1960s up to the mid 80s. The Nigerian graduates of the early period were classified among the best in the world. ASUU affirmed that 'between 1960 and 1980, graduates of Nigerian Tertiary were among the best in European and North American Universities and Nigerian academics proved their mettle, they recalled national and international acclaim and recognition. These developments created the actual possibility that Nigeria would realize her destiny as the power house of African liberation and the pride of the black man and woman all over the world' (ASUU 2002 in Bako Sabo, 2005).

The vital nature of research and development to Nigeria's growth was emphasized when CODESRIA in 2005 conducted 'Universities, Research and Development in Nigeria, prepared by Sabo Bako of ABUZ, Zaria. Part of the positive applause for Nigerian research in those early years was due to the early steps taken by colonialists starting from the 1920's to establish agriculture research centers in Ibadan, Umudike, Umuahia, Samani and Zaria, the West African Institute of Social and Economic Research which later became NISER.

Several instability and often regressive problems; military coups, the civil war, structural adjustment programme, Nigeria's governance expansion deluge; states, local government, parastatals, foreign and local indebtedness, religious fundamentalism, corruption and misgovernance crept in disruptively.

Significantly, the international development community including donor agencies, encouraged African Countries' (including Nigerian) relative neglect of higher education, thus, 'higher education suffered from reductions in spending'.

Many African Countries struggle to maintain even low enrolment levels, and the academic research output in the region amongst the world's lowest (David Bloom²⁸, David Canning and Kevin Chan, Feb 2006).

There are scores of additional research institutes all over Nigeria some with identical and duplicated functions but almost all not making recognized and credible impact on society commensurate with people's wishes and needs.

Tertiary education plays a recognizable role in promoting economic growth, may improve technological catch-up.....may accelerate technological diffusion, decrease knowledge gaps and help reduce poverty. For Nigeria, the sector has passed through various transformative problems, the military coups, the civil war, structural adjustment programme, expansion of Nigeria's governance expansion deluge: states, local governments, parastatals, foreign and local indebtedness, religious fundamentalism, corruption and misgovernance swept in disruptively. These vicissitudes have procured numerous grounds for an applause and for lamentations by society.

CURRENT MAJOR CRITIQUE OF NIGERIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

One critical theme in Nigerian higher education is political and operational stability, perhaps one of the greatest challenges of Nigerian governance, (Oluwayemisi Joseph²⁹; Jan 3,2013). The feature of instability is a general Nigerian phenomenon since independence in 1960. The inability of succeeding generations to sustain or improve on good old practices is what scholars give up in dismay, why some recall the good old days and call for the renaissance of the past, the past which is treated as history, gone forever. Oyedeki in his 2012 work asserted³⁰:

“.....A major feature of Nigeria's governance instability is the peremptory and unplanned tenure instability of top government functionaries. During the ten years 1999 to 2009, the Nigerian newspaper 'the Guardian' observed rather disdainfully that ten ministers in the federal government had served in the Ministry of Education. The article went on to list them and summarise the largely unsavoury or at least untimely circumstances of their exit from that Ministry, irrespective of the fact that virtually all of them were highly educated Nigerians, several were academics, some of them delivered blueprints for the administration of the Ministry even within their very brief tenures (Education: 10 Ministers, 10 years of democracy”.

In the Guardian of May 28, 2009, the ten ministers listed were Prof Tunde Adeniran, Prof Fabian Osuji, Senator Llyel Imoke, Mrs Halima Alao, Mrs Chinwe Obaji, Dr Oby Ezekwesili, Mr Abba Ruma, Dr Igwe Nwachukwu, and Dr Sam Egwu (Oyedeki Babatunde; 2012).

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A flurry of criticisms have frequently been thrown at university institutions in Nigeria and elsewhere. They are big organizations thriving (or surviving) in the middle of an interested, sometime apathetic, often-times concerned, demanding public. To some, the major test is marching the mission of the university 'to the needs of its political, social and cultural environment then to the nuances of an ever-changing world' Ogu E; Nigeriaworld.com Feature Article³¹.

Routine issues include demand and supply (market forces) of its products, brain drain (faculty exodus), socio-political issues (virtually ceaseless volatility), strategic management, structure of the organization) which seem broadly similar but nonetheless evoke crises continually, research and development needs of the institutions in and for industry and society.

Of all prevailing scrutiny and exposition needs of the worrisome decline of Nigerian higher education, perhaps the most potent is the recent brutally frank salvo by Peter Okebukola (ibid) former Executive Secretary of the NUC and former VC of Lagos State University. He was filled with profound disgust and candour against the current government 'reforming without impactful reforms', providing 'access, less in, more out', 'quality sliding down on slippery slope', 'inadequacies in curriculum and curriculum discovery', 'funding inadequacies'. He was wholesomely averse to teachers' lack of commitment, diligence and integrity, he was acerbic in his odium for 'parboiled teachers'.

Universities are intended as problem-solving machinery for the Town, their depth of knowledge and understanding should provide them with a superior leverage to retrospect, introspect and prospect whilst attacking, overcoming and solving their problems and society's problems. So why is so much apathy,

mediocrity and (Ogu E; 2008) indolence visible in the knowledge industry? No matter how much resources society infuses unto the universities and research institutes, the organizations are part of and function inside the society inseparably. Higher education and its patrons and beneficiaries are ineluctable even when it is realized that the institutions (universities) are a world commodity.

Nigerian institutions cannot extricate themselves from the local milieu just as it cannot cocoon itself from the world's university system. The inference that can be drawn is that the local environment and its draw-backs and limitations are always likely to be greater as an influence than the external factor.

CONCLUSION

There is the need for greater freedom for and of universities. Prolonged militarization of the country produced virtually a crippling centralization of the university organization. The loss of autonomy was partly a consequence of 'academic staff and student organizations voicing criticisms of the regimes in power'³² (Saint, Hartnett & Strassner; 2003). The Report noted that the real value of government allocation for higher education declined by 27% between 1990 and 1997 as emoluments grew by 79%. On the other hand, academic freedom is sine qua non to universities the world over. The dilemma is how to mix the search for growth, development, science and technology with social processes that demand greater loyalty to the cause of higher education, the open sesame for human growth which is badly required in this developing country with a strong appetite for a forward movement.

The managers of the university system are adopting more private sector tactics to run Nigerian universities but at a strongly slow and cautious momentum. The older universities conduct an open competitive process to carefully select from amongst vibrant professors such as to work towards greater latitude in desires for charging fees or raising funds to run their organization to reduce the competition for the ever dwindling federal and state funding sources. Thus the cost of running federal university system put at the equivalent of \$210 million in 'Between 1997 and 1999, the number of academic staff declined by 12% even as enrolments expanded by 13%.....Federal government furnishes 84%, income-generating activities 7%, various fees 9% although no undergraduate fees are charged.

The problem of graduate unemployment evokes several sub-issues. There is a quantum of cynics who prefer foreign-trained Nigerians (and go all out to seek them from overseas and from within) to indigenous products, others rightfully or wrongfully denigrate indigenous graduates as often unemployable. Often there is an absence of insight, creativity, adaptability, knowledge and assiduity on the part of many indigenous graduates, thus they possess a routine reliance on paid employment in white-collar jobs often without fulfillment. In any case, the indigenous graduates are products of a wobbled and deficient primary and secondary school foundation, so lack the ability to communicate, explain and express.

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of many indigenous graduates, thus they possess a routine reliance on paid employment in white-collar jobs often without fulfillment. In any case, the indigenous graduates are products of a wobbled and deficient primary and secondary school foundation, so lack the ability to communicate, explain and express. Indigenous graduates also face discriminatory practices as many eligibility criteria are drawn up as obstacles facing competitors at job-seeking situations. To the extent that much of the nation's hopes for a national uplift rests on tertiary education achievement, a national resolve and awakening devoid of past cynicism and whining and griping in envy is a minimum social requirement.

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