

Evolution, Development, Challenges and Prospects of Nigeria Higher Education System (NHES)

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Introduction

Higher education is currently at a cross-road in Nigeria. There are legion of internal crises as well as serious external problems. Serious questions are being asked about their relevance and ability to contribute to the meaningful liberation of the people and the overall development of the Nigerian society. What is the root of these problems and what must be done? Is the situation hopeless or a temporary setback? What exactly do we want of our higher education and how can we transform them for relevance? How do we make them *provide deep insights and practical solution to societal challenges at a time like this* according to the organisers of this policy dialogue? These and similar questions serve as the background of this paper particularly from the perspective of the evolution, development, challenges and prospects of Nigerian higher education. We have to find out when the rain started to beat us. Have we not dwelled long enough on the topic of How Europe Underdeveloped Africa and should we not be reflecting now on How Africa Underdeveloped Africa? Rodney, W. (1972) and Agbo, J. (2010)

Historical Background

History of education of a people can only be meaningfully discussed within the context of their overall history in so far as education is considered as a major social institution, that is, an organised pattern of behaviour which exhibits the peoples' belief system, system of thought in relation to child rearing and upbringing as well as their notions of appropriate behaviour and definition of 'the good life'. Education as an institution of society is more than education as a discipline of study. It represents the whole system of transmission of a people's culture from one generation to the other in order to guarantee social and cultural survival. Every human society therefore has a system of cultural transmission as could be found in their system of socialization and covers all ages from infancy to adulthood. (Fafunwa, 1974; Taiwo, 1980; Fadipe, 1970). Children are regarded as bundle of possibilities and every society puts in place a strong system of education to ensure that these children are prepared to understand and cope with the unknown future. The family represents the basic unit of education as education begins in the home where parents and other members of the home serve as the teachers and the child learns toilet training, language, basic concept of number and numeracy. Among the Hausas, the structure of education centred around a strict moral code which is religious based and sought to achieve submissive behaviour while among the Igbo, children were taught to achieve through competition and the Yoruba education focused on the production of what they call *Omoluwabi* – a well developed

personality who can stand his/her own in all spheres with particular emphasis on strong moral base. Majasan, (1967); Babarinde & Bankole, (2011).

The structure of education in the pre-colonial Nigeria had been formidable enough to produce world leaders whether spiritual or in politics. For example, Oba Akenzua of old Benin kingdom, Alaafin Abiodun of Oyo Empire, Moremi of Ile-Ife, Queen Amina of Zazau on the political and diplomatic level while accomplished military commanders like Aare Kunrunmi dotted the whole indigenous landscape. Those who therefore claimed that traditional education was absent or either barbaric or primitive had failed to understand its features, strength and weaknesses.

Indigenous/Traditional System of Education in Africa

This is used to describe the type of education that existed as part of the culture of various peoples especially in the pre-colonial Nigeria. Although variations would be expected between and among different social, religious and ethnic groups, these variations were only in matters of details and we can therefore describe an educational system that cuts across various social groups in Africa and indeed Nigeria before the adoption of the current western type school system. Indigenous societies in Nigeria were known to be cohesive in that similar values and customs held them together and members identified with their family units which served as the primary unit of the society having strong tie. This strong tie led to collective behaviour among members of the same social groups and communities. Indigenous education had its root in the overall system of thought and traditions or philosophy of the people. The communal pattern of living led to emphasis on the training of the young ones in participation in the community life of the people. Children were brought up together in the extended family compound made up of a collection of many small buildings or several rooms with a common passage or balcony and a wide corridor in the middle serving as playground under the watchful eyes of the elderly. They knew only fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters as relations and related to them as such. They were further trained to show allegiance and interest in the communal values, norms, beliefs and traditions which were cherished and practiced over the years with emphasis on respect for the ancestors and kindness to parents and elders of the community. The overall emphasis was the development of good character and responsibility for living in society. The content of traditional education in the indigenous society was dictated by the geographical and environmental factors such as relief and drainage. For example, people living in the riverine areas learnt early how to swim, work the

canoe and grew up understanding the creeks, their inhabitants, surviving and making a living on the river. The inhabitants of the savannah region equally grew up to make a living in animal husbandry, understanding and adapting to the intricate echo system. Traditional education started from home but did not end there. Home education involved parents, brothers and sisters as teachers and this is comparable to basic or primary education of the formal western type that came much later. The next stage was neighbourhood education and involved other members of the neighbourhood. This was the secondary level of education among the indigenous peoples while the next stage was community education and the people who gave this were all members of the community designated for that purpose and this could be considered as the higher level of education. The final stage was represented by education that was received from the secret societies reserved for only the initiates where the secrets of the society and power formed part of the content. This last stage is comparable to postgraduate study for lifelong education.

The content included acquisition of concepts of number and numeracy through counting and complex mathematical operations as we find in the system of counting among various societies. Language and communication took serious efforts through learning of situationalised languages, tongue twisters, proverbs, adages and riddles as a sign of good breeding. Physical training took place through wrestling, games, acrobatic displays and the like as a weak and unfit nature was met with ridicule and disdain. Knowledge of history of the lineage, of the heritage, conquests, triumphs and failures of the community recorded in the memories of the elders were separated from the creative folklores, praise singing and other literary knowledge as indispensable aspects of education. The avenues of traditional education were the homes, village shrine, market places, farm, river, workshops, age-grade meetings and interactions, yearly and community festivals. A typical example was the Yoruba traditional education whose standard measure was the production of what they described as *Omoluwabi* who according to Majasan,

Designated those Yoruba whose good character was the traditional model for community. Its acquisition entailed, as in any process of education, the pursuit of knowledge and of livelihood familiar with colonial objectives, but clearly went much farther. Diligence in keeping custom, civility in public and private affairs, versatility of skills and interest, maturity of judgement: these were hallmarks of a practical, constantly tested intelligence and an emergent wisdom manifested in Omoluwabi. Majasan, (1967)

Of course there were weaknesses, as African traditional education had been severally criticized for being rigid and inflexible, that the same truth was taken almost forever and that age alone constituted the criterion for wisdom: that, it was timeless and wasteful, did not encourage spirit of enquiry for its employment of fear and superstition; for being segregatory between males and females and for being non-literate Fafunwa, (ibid); Taiwo, (ibid); Ezewu, (1984), Babarinde, (ibid). Whatever we make of the criticisms, the reality of traditional education cannot be denied and it is in this sense that Peters submits that, '*all education must be regarded as socialization in so far as it involves initiation into the public traditions which are articulated in language and forms of thought*' Peters, (1967). A relevant question here is; Are there lessons in the principles, content and operations of the indigenous education and how can we enrich contemporary education with these for relevance?

Islamic System of Education

This system of education was indigenous to a large number of communities in Nigeria especially among the Muslim adherents with a large population in the north of rivers Niger and Benue and southwestern Nigeria. Islam for its believers is not just a religion but a complete way of life; there are injunctions covering worship and prayers, mode of dress, food and drinks, marriage and divorce, public etiquette, training of children, inheritance and others, covering all facets of life and living. Islamic religion came with its own form of education and was dispensed in schools called Madrasa (Arabic) or Makaranta (Hausa) with some peculiar features; access to it is not age bound as one can find a child of seven learning the same thing in the same class with a man of seventy; withdrawal is also not age bound; no fees are charged and the Quranic teacher or Mu'alim (Arabic) or Mallam (Hausa) depends on gifts or other sources of livelihood; it was not based on competition as individuals progressed on personal levels and also as a result, there was no need for formal examination before graduation. The student was not restricted to a particular teacher and the content was essentially based on the Qur'an, Hadith or the traditions of the Prophet of Islam, Islamic literature, law and songs of praise. Another feature was that it accommodated more males than females since the religion emphasized that males and females should not intermingle indiscriminately and that every woman was expected to be respectable and responsible and should be protected from all internal and external evils. The methodology was mainly through drill, recitation and memorization with a constant use of the horsewhip or cane. The form of Islamic education practiced in Nigeria had been criticized for not measuring up to the standard of Islamic education known in the centres of Islamic civilization such as Damascus

in Syria, Baghdad, Kufah, Cairo, Turkey, Mecca, Medina and a host of others. In these places, emphasis was placed on Philosophy, Calligraphy, Astronomy, Mathematics and other Sciences including Medicine and Technology and had produced great scholars such as al-Ghazzali, ibn. Rushdi (Averroes) d.1198, al-Kindi, ibn. Sina (Avicenna) d. 1037, ibn. Bajjah d. 1139, ibn. Kaldum the great name in Sociology who died in 1406 and a host of others.

Islamic education has contributed substantially to world's civilization and culture. The scholars revived the pursuit of science at a time when Europe was enmeshed in Dark ages; they compiled great lexicons and philology; established the first university in the world (Al-Azhar in Cairo); paved way for the liberation of scientific research from theological dogmatism prevalent in Europe; introduced Arabic numerals; originated decimal notations and digitization; invented algebra; developed geometry, trigonometry especially the sine, tangent and cotangent; invented the pendulum and advanced the world's knowledge of optics; discovered potash, silver nitrate, nitric and sulphuric acid; practised scientific farming and devised good irrigation systems; artistic versatility in construction of mosques, palaces, tombs, cities; bequeathed mummification to the world, which has been modernized today as embalment; and so many other wonderful inventions Akinsanya, (2012). This makes one to query the substance of Islamic education adopted in Nigeria and the anti – intellectual disposition of the later day Jihadist in the country. The answer perhaps may have to be sought in political-economy rather than education simpliciter.

The easier path taken was unable to match western education that came much later. Incidentally, western education was opposed in the Muslim north because it was linked with colonialism and Christianity and when it was allowed, it was restricted to children of the royal class and the non-Muslim areas. The consequences of these were later to be felt in great disparity and education imbalance between the north and the south of Nigeria and the accompanying imbalance in the sharing of posts and privileges. The response had to come from other sources of power in the form of dominance in the military which later hijacked the political and economic power for a long period of the country's existence. Another major political economic consequence was the politicization of education through the introduction of controversial educational policies such as quota system, discriminatory admission, several changes in school calendar, Nomadic education, cancellation of certain private examinations, establishment of educational institutions for political balancing and a lot more. Despite all these, education has not significantly improved as there are still large number of drop-out, out-of-school children and youth, discrimination against the girl-child, poor facilities,

unqualified teachers and general questioning of relevance. What can be done to place education in the rightful place and make it play its expected role among various groups in Nigeria?

Western System of Education

Western education has a long history in Nigeria. The first beneficiaries were slaves and children of slaves who were exposed to western education abroad and later those educated at home. The first recorded effort according to Fafunwa, (1974) was some sort of educational institution in the Oba of Benin's palace in 1515 while the major open attempts took place in 1842 and 1843 through The Methodist Missionary Society and Rev. Birch Freeman followed by Church Missionary Society through Rev. Henry Townsend and Mr. and Mrs. De Graft of The Methodist Mission in Badagry. The pioneering effort was completed by other major Christian Missionary societies with the first secondary school CMS Grammar School, Lagos established in 1859.

The curriculum of western education consisted mainly of what was described as the 4Rs – Reading, Writing, Arithmetic and Religious Knowledge. These were to make recipient communicate with their masters in the Church and government, be able to read the Bible and run other errands as gardeners, cooks and so on.

We have established above that the venue of traditional education was the home and that the overall aim was the preparation of individuals for participation in the community or society and that emphasis was on the development of good character. But western education was deliberately set against the indigenous traditions and culture. Traditional religion and culture which were potent weapons for character training were discouraged from the schools because they were regarded as pagan and uncivilized ways. Sense of community was set aside in favour of individuality of the Euro-American culture. Content of education became foreign emphasizing foreign geography, history and culture. Indigenous languages which were vehicles for transmitting the people's culture were discouraged as vernacular, which was always prohibited in the schools with a fine. In terms of its administration, rather than the schools being the extension of home education, western education was removed from the indigenous communities; the schools were established outside and far from the local communities and the children were usually camped in the boarding houses where all they were fed with were foreign customs and ways of life days and night. Because of all these,

western education sowed the seed pregnant with consequences. It achieved the depersonalization of the indigenous peoples and raised the fundamental question of relevance which it is still battling to meet till date. This has led to the question of African educated elite being considered ill-educated, mis-educated and uneducated.

Evolution of Higher Education in Nigeria

The period between 1882 and 1929 could be described as the beginning of modern education in Nigeria and this period was marked by intensive missionary activity and expansion in southern Nigeria. Let us recall that western education was received with less enthusiasm in the Northern Nigeria for obvious religious and political reasons. This trend continues till date. However, at the period in focus, 1882 – 1929, the Colonial Government paid little attention since its main attitude to Africa was simply to make profit for the colonial government. However, since change is perhaps the most constant event in life, the attitude of the colonial government could not have remained static for long. Hence, government intervention started through a number of legal instruments. For example, the first Nigerian Education Ordinance was enacted in 1887. In 1920, Phelps- Stoke Commission was set up “to review the need for native education instead of western education” and between 1943 and 1945, Elliot Commission on Higher Education in West Africa was inaugurated to, “*report on the organisation and facilities of the existing centres of higher education in British West Africa, and to make recommendations regarding future development in that area.*” Taiwo, (1980)

1959/1960 witnessed the turn of Ashby Commission which was set up on the eve of Nigeria’s independence, an event which gave tremendous expectations for our people. The Panel was to, “*conduct an investigation into Nigeria’s needs in the field of post-secondary school certificate and higher education over the next twenty years.*” Several other efforts followed especially at the regional levels to chart a course for education. These included 1961-1962, Oldman Commission on Primary education in Northern Nigeria and in 1961, Banjo Commission in Western Region to,

review the existing structure and the working of pre-primary and secondary (grammar and modern) school system in the region, the adequacy of the teacher training programme; and the interrelationship between primary education and the various types of secondary education including pre-university education.

Again in 1963, the government of Western Region set up Ajayi Commission to inquire into increase in fees charged by private grammar schools and teacher training colleges; 1958 –

1962 Dike Commission was set up to review the educational system covering primary, secondary, and technical colleges in the Eastern Region; in 1968, Asabia Commission was set up by the Federal Government to look into the grading and duty post in voluntary agency and educational institutions. The above uncoordinated and sectional educational and curriculum development in Nigeria continued until the ruling elite finally led Nigeria into a needless thirty months civil war (1967 – 1970) which consumed huge resources in human and financial terms and inflicted lasting damage on the psyche of the nation. It took this civil war to wake the Nigerian ruling class up to the need to build one and united Nigerian nation.

The search for possibilities of achieving the new policy of Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Reconciliation intensified after the civil war and scores of items were considered and discarded. The final choice of education as *the instrument par excellence for achieving national development* NPE, 1981 should not be a big surprise. The past efforts in the field of education in the various regions had created massive development possibilities in human and infrastructural terms and had become a yardstick for measuring advancement of a region over the other. The preceding years before the civil war of 1967 – 1970 were those of massive investment in education and a period of intense rivalry among regions on the provision and expansion of western education. Those were the years of high hopes and great dreams for the future of Nigeria and her people. It was also a period when the ruling elite competed among themselves on the provision of infrastructural facilities and expansion of social amenities. Those were the years when it made meaning to talk of first to build a television station, a modern stadium and provide free education. Various governments boasted of education as taking the ‘lion share’ of budgetary allocation. Education assumed the pride of place in development planning strategy both at the Regional and Federal levels.

Higher Education System

Yaba higher college was established in 1932 as the first institution of higher learning in Nigeria as the northern and Southern Protectorates were amalgamated under Lord Lugard in 1914. Before then, according to Taiwo, (ibid), post-secondary education in the form of vocational and sub-professional courses was given in agriculture at the central agricultural research station, Moor Plantation, Ibadan, and at Samaru near Zaria, in veterinary science at Vom near Jos, and in engineering in Lagos by the Nigerian Railway Company and the Government technical departments Taiwo, (1980:77). The Yaba courses were mainly in the sciences with some elements of humanities and religion and by 1939, graduates of Yaba were

beginning to make impact in public works, hospitals, agricultural stations and government secondary schools. The fortunes of the college was negatively affected by the second world war of 1939-1945 through reduction of lecturers due to military call up and drastic reduction of fund. In July 1947, Dr. K. Mellanby arrived in Nigeria and took over the college as the nucleus of the new University College of which he was recently appointed Principal. The 104 students of Yaba moved to Ibadan during the Christmas to form the foundation students of University College, Ibadan, and on 2 February, 1948 University College, Ibadan opened on its temporary site in Ibadan with Dr. K. Mellanby as Principal.

In 1960 at independence, University College of Ibadan became a full-fledged university. University of Nigeria, Nsukka was established in 1960 while Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, University of Lagos and University of Ife (established by Government of Western Region) took off in 1962. By 1977-78, 7 new universities in Jos, Calabar, Maiduguri, Kano, Ilorin, Port Harcourt and Sokoto commenced operation with a total of 7,449 students. (Taiwo, *ibid.*) The table below show comprehensive information on the development in that sector over the years.

Table showing Higher Education Institutions in Nigeria as at 2011/2012

Monotechnics and Specialised Institutions	Federal	State	Private	Total
	23	2	2	27
Colleges of Health Technology & Allied Institutions	9	40	1	50
Technical Colleges	19	110	3	132
Approved VEIs/IEIs				99
Colleges of Education	21	38	4	63
Polytechnics	21	38	16	75
Universities	37	37	50	124
TOTAL	130	265	76	570

Data compiled from websites of the NUC, NCCE and NBTE (2012)

Indeed, we can boast of significant increase in the number of higher education since independence in 1960 but analysts have raised the issue of growth without development since

the myriad of problems confronting our people and country remain unsolved despite the mandate of the institutions of higher learning in that regard.

Some Thoughts on the Westernised African Education

Why has formal programme of education failed to produce desired end? Why has it failed to produce the kind of persons and society of our dream? Why has it taken us this long to realise the failure of our higher education? Policy analysts in the past have considered such questions and have come up with some positions. Castle for example, gave an historical background. According to him,

In the years between 1930 and 1940, colonised Africa underwent little fundamental change. The colonial officer administered his province, the European trader exploited its resources, the European missionary preached his Gospel and with some government assistance quietly proceeded with teaching his converts in schools and colleges which were to become the spear-point of educational advance. Castle, (1972)

This he noted (just like many other writers), distorted the growth pattern of those countries on one hand, while it equally made them victims of a definition of development by western criteria since these African countries cannot meet any of the western standards of measuring development. This then, goes Castle's analysis is the third world, comprising in addition to India and African countries with which we are concerned, Indonesia, South East Asia and the poorer countries of Latin America. *Geographically it is vast; demographically it is the most populous; economically it is the poorest; educationally, it is the most backward,* Castle, (ibid). He then pointed out the link between these factors, a practice which is typical of many social scientists' oriented towards identification of causal factors. He argues, *"The poverty of a poor country is one segment of a vicious circle of curable and closely related ills. People are poor because they are ignorant; ignorant because they are poor."* Castle, (ibid). And so went on the argument in concentric circles. Castle then cautioned that as soon as we introduce the word "ignorance" into the discussion, we enter into a new dimension which precluded any definition of development solely in terms of economics. It is at this point that he came out with his concept of underdevelopment. He saw underdevelopment as,

A constellation of circumstances, physical, social and political which contribute to the deprivation of the mind as well as of the body. It involves the poverty that debilitates health, the ignorance and superstition which depress the human spirit, the conservatism that resist change, the social privileges which inhibit the fruition and proper use of talent and skill. Castle, (ibid)

He then concluded that development must now be conceived as,

A situation wherein man himself becomes both the object and the subject of his own improvement, not merely as instrument in a process imposed from above and from without. Castle, (ibid)

Foster and Abernethy's points of attack were typical of policy-oriented Western social scientists at the time. And this was marked by a profound skepticism of the role of education in development. In his analysis of the course of schooling in post-independence African countries, Foster stated that:

The situation in education continues to be alarming. The battle against illiteracy...has already been lost...education is expected to have very little, if any impact on the economic, social and cultural development of the countries concerned...there is at present a feeling of deep uneasiness regarding the content and the aims of education.(Foster, 81-101)

It is however instructive to note that India, Indonesia, and many countries of Latin America have since left Africa behind to wallow in the deep sea of underdevelopment. Momouni and Majasan however went a step further by advocating a return to the indigenous culture, for relevance in education. A notion of potentially harmonious African culture and therefore a less wasteful and more productive society permeates Moumouni's writing. He believed that education wisdom and the will to release Africans from a "cultural ghetto" of national languages and cultures could restore a consensus basis for community. After laying the charges for irrelevance against the formal Western education, he then developed his notion of indigenous education and insisted on its continued relevance. Majasan also developed the case for persisting with Yoruba indigenous education whose standard measure is the concept of *Omoluabi*.

In both Moumouni and Majasan is found a predominantly romantic notion of indigenous systems, which may not be wholly justified by serious analysis. This trend however became very popular among African leaders like Jomo Kenyatta, Julius Nyerere and Kofi Busia among others. Their criticisms against formal western education are summed up by Thompson, 1967.

One point that has become very clear from all the above is that, all the attacks on formal Western education resulted from the quest for relevance. According to Akinpelu, the question of relevance is relevant to all activities and institutions because, *Evolution itself, to which society is much indebted, abhors all irrelevance and waste, and the path of evolutionary*

progress is littered with the wreckage of organisms that have not been able to prove their relevance for survival.(Akinpelu, ibid)

He, however, counselled that,

If we are to rescue the school from circumstantial irrelevance, the assumption that all knowledge and all education derive from the school has to be abandoned. This assumption which is very pervasive in developing countries has been described by John Hanson as one of the hallucinations and tragedies of African education.
(Akinpelu, ibid)

There is also a link between policy incoherence and indiscipline as established in a survey carried out by a team of researchers, under the auspices of NISER (Nigerian Institute for Social and Educational Research) on the problems and prospects of Nigerian educational system. It was instructive to discover that basic among the critical shortcomings and deficiencies militating against provision of quality education to Nigerians according to the respondents were: Lack of precise focus and direction in the system stereotypic and universalistic type of goals and objectives. Poor articulation of policies and implementation strategies manifesting themselves in casual haphazard, piecemeal and incoherent approaches nationally characterized as ‘Plan Indiscipline’ the grand example being the laudable National Policy on Education (Akinpelu, 2005).

In the meantime, what must be done? How can we attain national development through education? There is very little agreement on answers to such a question. However, examination of influential movements for educational reform in other parts of the world and at different periods can help us develop reasonably accurate comparative compositions about the origins, validity of changes proposed for promoting relevance. Long ago, Michael Sadler said that, “*The things outside the schools matter even more than the things inside the school.*” This valuable insight according to Zachariah and Hoffman, has influenced a generation of comparative educators to look for the relationship of education with other institutions in society.

Education and the Crisis of Development in Nigeria

Just before we go on let’s reflect over the meaning of development, the role of education in development and why Nigeria is still battling with problems of ignorance, mass poverty and diseases in the midst of plenty. Nigeria has adopted education (Western type) as a tool of

development. In the National Policy on Education, (1981) and as revised severally, the five main national objectives were stated and endorsed as the necessary foundation for the National Policy on Education. These national objectives were stated as the building of;

- A free and democratic society;
- A just and egalitarian society;
- A united, strong and self-reliant nation;
- A great and dynamic economy; and
- A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens. FGN, (81:7).

The policy went further to list values which the educational enterprise should seek to inculcate as;

- Respect for the worth and dignity of the individuals;
- Faith in man's ability to make rational decision;
- Moral and spiritual values in interpersonal and human relations;
- Shared responsibility for the common good of society;
- Respect for the dignity of labour; and
- Promotion of the emotional, physical and psychological health of children.

The national aims and objectives were further drawn from the above national objectives and listed as;

- The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
- The inculcation of the right type of values for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;
- The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and
- The acquisition of the appropriate skills, abilities and competences both mental and physical as equipment for individual to live and contribute to the development of his society (ibid.7)

Despite all these lofty objectives, Nigeria has been enmeshed in a crisis of development. According to a political analyst some years back,

It is, at the moment, domestically manifested mainly as military dictatorship and militarism. The economic domination of neo-colonial capitalists, in cohort with a mindless, repressive, oppressive and exploitative ruling class whose political wing is grossly incompetent, are the social forces whose activities provide the basic explanation for the desperate poverty of Nigeria. Asobie, (1998).

Policy failure and outright bad policies have also contributed to the crises and decline of our higher education. Half digested policies of “roll-back”, “concessioning”, “privatisation”, “commercialisation”, and “seeding” have created more problems and encouraged poor funding, government abdication of responsibilities, brain-drain, industrial unrest and other far-reaching problem of capacity of these higher education to rise to the challenge of relevance and responsibility.

Olorode also captured the failure of the Nigerian Ruling Class through the adoption of foreign-inspired economic policies designed to enslave the Nigerian people especially since 1978 in a critical essay where he identified the effects of their Policies to have,

killed local industry, wrecked the Naira, destroyed infrastructures, increased fuel prices, killed public health and education sector, created and increased mass unemployment, and created violence, kidnapping, tribal and religious wars, and insecurity. Olorode, (2011)

Understanding how we got to where we are as a people may demand some understanding of the linkage among complex factors such as the historical experience of slave trade, colonialism, neo-colonialism, economic and other policies and the role of education in society. We have shown the contradictions in western education and now we shall explore the more, its effects on the recipients through the concept of the Marginal man.

The Marginal Man

This concept was introduced by the eminent historian Professor Ayandele, (1972) to describe the educated elite in Nigeria. These are people who have been educated over and above their traditional culture but yet are not fully accepted into the new culture which they now worship so much. So, they are men and women of two cultures and citizens of neither. Although this phenomenon was more rampant during the colonial days and the early days of independence, the features still persist to varying degree amongst us till date. This has further been described as psycho-pathetic syndrome of loss of identity, the symptoms of which include the following; Adoption of foreign names of usually poly-phonemic nature, but usually without meaning in the traditional milieu. Examples included James Johnson, Richard Beale Blaize, Charles Joseph George, Joseph Pythagoras Haastrup, Henry Rawlinson Carr and many others. In terms of language, they abandoned the local languages in favour of the language of their colonial masters and would speak nothing but Queen’s English to the extent that

whenever they had to address the traditional people even from their villages, they had to employ an interpreter. In dressing, formal and civilized dress meant only the costume of Europeans involving for men – three piece suit of woollen materials even under the tropical sun and flowing gowns or micro-skirts, artificial wigs, skin bleaching and heavy make-up for women. In terms of moral conducts, they were usually ‘spoilt, degenerate creatures, vicious, unreliable and immoral’ according to Walter Miller = Medical Missionary and educationist who realized the failure of western education in developing good character. Alcoholism, cigarette smoking, loose sexual conducts, corruption and selfishness were some of the vices of this breed.

Again, it is no surprise that all these were the result of lack of proper understanding and appreciation of the link between culture and education, resulting in what Sociologists describe as alienation or loss of identity. Although there have been changes, many of us western educated elites still exhibit several of these features. The question is: what must be done to change the situation? Obi Egbuna has recommended ‘Partial Suicide’ which demands the extermination of the undesirable part of the personality. Difficult as this appears, it is a goal that can be achieved through an educational system that has been adapted to the needs of Nigerian society with a strong emphasis on the building of adequate human beings whose education draws from indigenous knowledge, Science and technology, values and emphasis on dignity of labour, good character, patriotism and commitment to the Nigerian project. All these should focus on the good life based on hard work, self discipline, self dedication, strong moral character and a vigorous intellectual pursuit. All these can only be achieved with the necessary institutional support through adequate teacher education, adequate funding, democratization of education and adoption of different forms of educational delivery.

Now Let’s Pause-reflect-Act

- What form of education should Nigeria adopt to achieve development - is it British, American, Japanese, German or any other type of foreign system of education?
- What are the indicators of development relevant to our country?
- What specific roles can teachers, educational researchers, administrators and managers play in the use of education for individual and national development?

We have tried to show education as a major social institution that affects and is in turn affected by other social institutions. That education grows out of the culture and traditions of a people and any attempt to educate without reference to the social milieu leads to artificiality and circumstantial irrelevance. Finally, we have attempted to rekindle hope in education as a tool of social engineering and development for according to a traditional Nigerian saying, a man who concentrates on building mansions without educating his children will eventually discover that the mansions shall be auctioned by the untrained children at the fullness of time.

Crisis in Higher Education

Higher education in Nigeria is in crisis, and so are the people who occupy and administer them. The former is a crisis in a political situation; the latter is a crisis of political attitude. We shall examine these in turn. The sorry state of higher education in Nigeria has been well documented in newspaper articles, learned journals, and several reports of government-sponsored panels. Therein are details of poor-funding, dilapidated buildings, poor or non-availability of basic infrastructure, poor or absence of teaching-learning equipment, lack of books, chemicals and other research materials, examination malpractices, poor remuneration, industrial unrest and brain drain, indiscipline and violence demonstrated through endemic secret cult activities. The list is almost endless with the effect being manifested in the inability of these institutions to adequately perform their assigned duty of transmission and generation of new knowledge, training in learning and character and contribution to national development.

Nigeria spends comparatively less on education; Lesotho 17.0%; Botswana 19.0%; Swaziland 24.6%; South Africa 25.8%; Cote d'Ivoire 30.0%; Bourkina Faso 16.8%; Ghana 31%; Kenya 23.0%; Uganda 27%; Tunisia 17.0% and Morocco 17.7%. (www.vanguardngr.com/2012/04/2012-education-budget-and-its-implications (Analysis) 07/10/2012). In 1990, the total Federal Government budgetary allocation in relation to the total budget stood at 6.07%, 1996 was 12.32%, 1997 - 11.59% and 1998 – 10.27% and 2012 – 8.43%. (Source: NUC, Vanguard Newspaper, 12 April, 2012). Details of the funding crisis is to be addressed by a more competent scholar and administrator. When we consider the fact that higher education only gets a small fraction of the above figure, we would appreciate the level of neglect suffered by that level of education in particular. It is no wonder then that several excellent brains and great minds who are supposed to develop Nigeria's higher education are either frustrated at home or forced out to develop educational system in Europe,

America, Asia, East and Southern Africa as a result of brain drain. The situation would have been mitigated if the material poverty of our higher education has been complemented by a wealth of the soul of the administrators and operators of those institutions. But no, the material poverty is just one of the crises of our higher education. The other frightening dimension is the prevailing poverty of the soul.

Poverty of the Soul

While writing on a similar theme. Dr. Pius Okigbo in a public lecture entitled *Crisis in the Temple* lamented the situation whereby our temples of learning (i.e. Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education) have been "*turned from intellectual citadels to a purely political market place*". The disaster as it were, was brought about by academics who by "*putting themselves totally at the mercy of the military or civilian political bosses, had, so to say, sold their souls (and) have thereby, of their own volition, in practically all areas of public service, surrendered themselves to the superior wisdom of the ignorant*" (Nduka, (1998: 14). Okigbo's submission reinforces our earlier position that higher education can only justify its existence if, and only if, it promotes new and existing knowledge for human development. But higher education of learning has progressively moved away from generating and defending knowledge into a political arena where the administrators, that is, heads of those institutions have become the centre, the alpha and omega.

In a rare display of candour, Festus Iyayi in a public lecture entitled *Of Monsters and Demons in the Nigerian University* submitted that,

Like Odysseus' Monster, our campus monsters also have one eye and eat people for their meals. Their one eye on power and the privileges it provides. Teaching, non-teaching staff and students who would rather that this eye- be turned in the direction of responsibilities and grandiose visions provide the ingredients for the meals of the monster. With their one eye on power, they throw out, sack, attack, humiliate, hand over to the state for safekeeping all those that seek to turn their eye towards the responsibilities of power. Iyayi, (1998:3).

But why do we single out administrators of higher institutions for the blame over the woes of higher education in Nigeria? The reason, which is almost self-evident, deserves to be elucidated. Every organisation is distinguished by the character of its leadership. It is through his/her eyes that the organisation is perceived and assessed because it is he/she that shapes the destiny of the organisation through his/her thoughts and actions. At different times, USA had its Abraham Lincoln, France had Napoleon and Germany – Hitler. Nigeria also had, at

different times, Muritala Muhammed and Sani Abacha - the duo sired in the same ancient city, but who adopted different destinies and ultimately left different footprints on the landscape of Nigerian history.

Further on leadership, the Nigerian celebrated writer and novelist Chinua Achebe was convinced that: *the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership... The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example, which are the hallmarks of true leadership.* Achebe, (1983:1). And so, the higher institutions established for generation and propagation of knowledge have become a haven of anti-intellectualism demonstrated through what Eskor Toyo, (1998) listed as: *corruption, admission irregularities, ethnicity, nepotism, tyranny and flagrant illegality, sloppy administration, sycophancy, degradation of scholarly colleagues and hostility to academic staff unions.* The issue of corruption in Nigerian tertiary institutions has reached a new crescendo to have attracted scholarly and literary commentaries in recent times and has been subject of investigations and concern to National Universities Commission (NUC), Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), scholars and commentators. For example, Torulagha in a study on the corrosive effect of corruption on Nigerian education system established relationships between corruption and lack of infrastructural development, modernisation and rehabilitation; lack of concern for student services; poor state of academic standards and increasing lack of professionalism and ethical standard by administrators and teachers. Torulagha, (2012)

Although Plato was the first to establish a higher institution -'The Academy', he became known for his pursuit of knowledge and his love of wisdom. The Renaissance opened the way for the questioning of existing orthodoxy and it was only after the Scientific Revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries that the industrial revolution became possible. We must point out that the scientific revolution was marked by superior knowledge. It had little to do with authority, position or age as our own educational 'leaders' would be propagating in a new millennium. The French, American and Soviet revolutions equally became possible with the questioning of orthodoxy and the liberation of people's minds. Today, the distinction between developed and underdeveloped countries of the world is linked with knowledge while the world leadership in the 21st century would be determined by knowledge rather than belief or mere opinion. If the institutions established for the propagation of new and existing

knowledge become anti-intellectual, how then can we join the rest of the civilised world in making our society safe for the people?

The Dilemma of Democracy

Democracy is an invention of the ancient Greeks. It was the rule *Kratos* by the people *Demos*. Even the modern day liberal democracy for which many Nigerians clamoured and died in recent times is built on consent of the governed, multi-party pluralism, electoral competition and guarantee of rights including equality before the law (Ake, 1992:2).

According to the Communiqué on Understanding Democracy:

the essence of democracy involves a system of government that is rooted in the notion that ultimate authority in governance of the people rightfully belong to the people, that everyone is entitled to an equitable participation and share in the fortunes and misfortunes of the land of his birth or citizenship, and that equal rights and equitable social justice is the birthright of everyone in the society
Quoted in Babarinde, (1994:228).

The above is the objective of democracy and the ideal of modern societies. Knowledge grows under enabling environment that is characterised by freedom to search and question as well as freedom to disseminate such knowledge. Such is the essence of academic freedom for which great scholars in Europe and in the ancient times have suffered excommunication, oppression and even death. According to Eskor Toyo:

To protect the life and endeavours of these small communities against all forms of molestation by various types of mundane authorities, enlightened monarchs gave them charters that legalised their autonomy and freedom to search, think, proclaim and teach what they thought. Toyo, (93:5).

The character of higher education is governed by disputations, argumentation, persuasion and respect for truth wherever it may be found. The prevailing myth of a good University, Polytechnic or College of Education that is being projected largely by the heads of those institutions as - the quiet one where, questions are neither raised nor disagreement ventured, is clearly anti-intellectual and will not lead to the advancement of knowledge.

The Challenge of Change

Nigeria is democratising and the value of human rights, freedom and justice are being espoused. Decisions affecting many will no longer be subject to the whim of one person. For better or for worse, the *demos* must rule. Having basked and profited in the fall-out of the dictatorship in the larger society and having submitted themselves to the 'superior wisdom of the ignorant' and hence, contributed to the near collapse of the educational institutions as

centres of academic culture, can our educational administrators rise to the challenge of democracy? Can they handle demand for accountability, freedom for human rights and justice, right to hold opinion and disseminate such, organise students and staff unions and associations and other non - conformists? Can they handle the superior dictate of their calling which is knowledge?

Prospects and Possibilities of Higher Education in Nigeria

Whether or not, Nigeria will play a leading role in Africa and in the 21st century and whether our institutions of higher education will be relevant in the process of nation-building shall be determined by the factor of change and adaptation. First, a sustained continuation of the ongoing change in the political environment must of necessity shift more attention to education, second, a change in the political attitude of administrators of our higher education and third a sense of greater responsibility, accountability and commitment on the part of staff, students and other stake holders. We can try these by setting legal framework for seeking redress internally between staff and staff, student-student, student-staff, administration-staff/students' unions etc to ensure the deepening of internal democracy and help develop conducive environment for the achievement of the vision and mission of these institutions.

There is also the need to set performance benchmarks with timelines for the administration of each institution upon which continuation in office shall be predicated. Decisions should reflect strict respect for academic freedom and institutional autonomy. Closely related to this is the need by Nigerian governments at all levels as well as companies and industries to patronise our higher education in all developmental projects as partners in progress. This could be done through consultancy, research and development, supervision and monitoring of programmes and projects in education, transportation, industry, commerce, tourism, urban renewal and development, power and telecommunication, agriculture and so on. These institutions should also aim to achieve excellence in specific programmes and launch meaningful research into indigenous knowledge in medicine, engineering, education and the arts, social sciences, agriculture and other areas of knowledge. A strong reward system should be instituted to encourage the achievement of the transformation objective.

It is about time we declared a state of emergency in our higher education, not by government but by the institutions themselves in conjunction with other key stakeholders. This declaration should be heralded with mass rally, symposia, talks, drama, shows, discussions

and mobilisation of staff, students, parents, activists and other key stakeholders. Indeed, people need be mobilised to occupy our higher education for transformation and relevance. This should be a logical follow up to this policy dialogue at each institution level. The challenges may be daunting but all hope is not lost and we can rescue our higher education one institution at a time. It is possible with the Nigerian spirit.

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