THE GOALS OF TERTIARY EDUCATION: A PHILOSOPHICAL ASSESSMENT OF NIGERIA'S NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION

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Abstract: *This paper gives a cursory history of Tertiary Education in Nigeria and attempts a philosophical analysis of the concepts of quality and access to education; two major concepts that featured prominently in the goals of Nigeria's Tertiary Education as stated in Nigeria's National Policy on Education (2013). Subsequently, a philosophical assessment of the goals of Tertiary Education as stated in the National Policy document and the implementation is undertaken. Based on this philosophical assessment, it is shown among other things, that the concepts of quality and access to education as reflected in the goals of Tertiary Education are better used with clarifications. In addition, it is argued that the history of Tertiary Education in Nigeria is not totally that of woe because Tertiary Education has made some remarkable impact in the nation's developmental strides. It is however emphasized that there are still enormous challenges facing Nigeria's Tertiary Education especially when compared with global best practices. Furthermore it is argued that there is still a wide gap between the policy statements on Tertiary Education and their implementation. Suggestions are made towards addressing the challenges pointed out. These suggestions include: government redoubled commitment towards the funding of Tertiary Education, the enforcement of ethics education that has its foundation in the traditional values of Africa in order to address the prevailing laxity in the moral tone of many of the Tertiary Institutions*

Key words: Access; Quality; Pedagogy; Education; National policy; Nigeria;

Introduction

Nigeria referred to officially as the Federal Republic of Nigeria, is located in the West African sub-region, bordering Benin to the west, Cameroon and Chad to the east and Niger to the north. The United

Nations Department of Economic Affairs (2017) in its world population prospects put the total population of Nigeria at 190,886,000, comprising 96,729,000 males and 94,157,000 females. Nigeria has a federal system of government with 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Abuja. Within the states, there are 744 local governments in total (FGN, 2017b). In Nigeria, higher education is provided by universities, polytechnics/monotechnics, colleges of education, as well as institutes that prepare candidates for professional courses such as accounting, law, architecture, mass communication, etc.

The first Tertiary Institution in Nigeria was the Yaba Higher College, established in 1934. This became the nucleus of the first University College established in 1948 in Ibadan. Shortly before independence in 1960 the need to have more tertiary institutions became obvious. This led to the establishment of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1960, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, University of Lagos and the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University); all in 1962. The University of Benin was established in 1970. These group of Universities became popularly known as the first generation Universities.. With the creation of additional States in 1975 coupled with the agitation for more Universities, the Federal Government established seven additional Universities namely; Universities of Jos, Maiduguri, Kano, Sokoto, Ilorin, Calabar and Port Harcourt and Ado Bayero University Kano – all known as second generation Universities. The third generation Universities were established between 1980 and 1990. They are the Federal University of Technology in Owerri, Markurdi, Yola, Akure, and Bauchi. At the same time several States established their own Universities. The fourth generation Universities are those established between 1991 and the present date. These include several private Universities, Nigerian Open University and other State universities As at August 2012, Nigeria's tertiary education system comprised of 122 Universities (36 Federal, 36 State, and 50 Private), 71 Polytechnics, 47 Momotechnics and 79 Colleges of Education (Bamiro 2012). Taking cognizance of the fact that the Universities were only two at independence in 1960, one opined that the growth in number is relatively a very rapid one. This is a welcome development going by the fact that non-governmental organizations such as UNESCO, the World Bank and Economic Commission for Africa have all argued for the necessity to expand higher education which must promote development of the whole person and train responsible, informed citizens, committed to working for a better society in the future (UNDP 1999 Human Development Report cited in Eggins 2010). This phenomenal numerical growth of tertiary institutions in Nigeria is commendable going by the

observation of Eggins (2010) that it is now accepted that tertiary education has important implications for the economic, political, and socio-cultural development, sustainability and global competitiveness of nations. However, despite the fact that the expansion of tertiary education is in line with the recommendations of international organizations and the situation in developed nations, with the sporadic numerical growth of the tertiary institutions in Nigeria in recent times, it is only reasonable to be inquisitive about the goals that the Federal Government has in mind for tertiary institutions in the country and to make a realistic assessment of these goals and their implementation. It is this trend of thought that occasioned this work. This is more so because functional tertiary education is the bedrock of any society that has made remarkable development over the years and is equally the secret of the success of nations that are fast developing, as its quality determines the quality of human resources and development.

Goals of Tertiary Education in Nigeria
The National Policy on Education (FGN, 2013a) section 5 subsection 80 - 85 specifies that the goals of tertiary education shall be to:
   • contributetonationaldevelopmentthroughhigh-levelmanpowertraining;
   • provide accessible and affordable quality learning opportunities in formal
      and informal education in response to the needs and interest of Nigerians;
   • provide high-quality career counselling and lifelong learning opportunity
      that prepare students with knowledge and skills for self-reliance;
   • reduce skills shortages through the production of relevant skilled workers;
   • promote and encourage scholarship, entrepreneurship and community
      service
   • forge and cement national unity; and
   • promote national and international understanding and interaction.

Tertiary educational institutions pursue these goals through:
   • quality student intake;
   • quality teaching and learning;
   • research and development;

- quality facilities, services and resources;
- the generation and dissemination of knowledge, skills and competencies that contribute to national goals and enable students to succeed in a knowledge-based economy;
- access to training funds such as those provided by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) and the Tertiary Education Trust Fund(TETFund);
- the maintenance of minimum educational standards through appropriate regulatory agencies; and ban all-inclusive, credible admission policy for national unity (FGN,2013a).

Concepts of Access and quality in Education: The Challenge of Meaning
Access to Education

According to Yang (2011), in response to corresponding expansion of higher education worldwide, comparative studies on access to higher education have also taken on increased importance. *Access*, however, has not been clearly defined in existing studies.

Du Plooy and Zilindile (2014) affirmed that in the literature that they studied, they found that the meaning of the concept access to education is not as clear cut as it at first would seem. They observed that for some authors, it is defined in terms of physical access, or in terms of entry(enrolment) into schools (Gamede, 2005; Chandani, Balan, Smith and Donahue, 2007; Alexander, 2008). For others, it is more than mere physical access, since it is reflected in educational outcomes or in what Samoff (2001: 25) calls "expanded access" (post enrolment experiences). Furthermore, the concept of access to education has been addressed (Ziderman, 2013) from four perspectives: the broadening of access (growth of the number of potential students entering Higher Education), the deepening of access(ensuring significant proportions of students from non-traditional social classes – the working class, ethnic minorities), retention and successful completion of studies(analyzing the factors that would lead to drop out, such as the increase of tuition fees or downturns in the economy) and maintaining freshman enrolment levels(need to provide loans to students).

Prodan et al (2015) point out that a definition of the term access to higher education is necessary due to its complexity and multidimensionality. They argued that one of the most widely accepted views is that access to higher education is the result of a complex set of relationships involving not only financial factors such as the cost of schooling and student aid but also students' attitude to higher education, their preparation, their aspirations, and other factors rooted in family background that start early in an individual's life (Finnie et al, 2008, p3 cited in Prodan et al (2015). Prodan et al

emphasise that access to education from higher education perspective can be understood not only as entry/admission to higher education but also as retention and successful completion of studies.

Harvey 2004:13 cited in Ziderman (2013) argues that while an acceptable generic definition of access is a process of enabling entry into higher education, access as a concept can still be looked at from four other different perspectives:

Broadening of access

This aspect of access relates to policies facilitating the entry of larger numbers of potential students into higher education. Underlying this trend is the recognition of the importance of larger higher education population for economic and social development particularly in the context of a more competitive global environment. The focus is not so much on the socio-economic composition of the student population but rather on the relative size of this enrolment.

Deepening of access

This has to do with ensuring that significant proportions of students from non-traditional areas (such as working class, ethnic minorities) enter higher education (Harvey 2004 cited in Ziderman 2013). Here the emphasis shifts from the need to increase the number of students in higher education to that of changing their composition in order to achieve a more socially acceptable balance amongst the various socio economic groups. This is achieved through reaching out to those usually disadvantaged groups who do not customarily pursue higher education studies. The central motivation here is clearly social, and aimed at improving the life chances of these groups.

Furthermore, the concept of access is understood to encompass not only entry into higher education but also retention and successful completion(National office of Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008 cited in Ziderman 2013). Drop out from learning is not only(or perhaps mainly) the result of academic weakness. Unforeseen financial difficulties may play a role in many cases particularly when brought on by such factors as tuition fee increase or a downturn in the economy (with less student employment opportunities). Similarly, the advent of tuition fee increase or economic slowdown may persuade many potential students to decide against enrolling in higher education.

According to The technical report of the National Household Survey (2009), the barriers to education literature review also highlighted the fact that access to education has been interpreted in different ways by different researchers, education practitioners and government officials, both locally and internationally. Based on the findings of the literature review, the research team settled on a relatively broad understanding of access which is defined as the ability to participate (CALS& Social Surveys, Baseline

Literature Review Report 2006:9 cited in Ziderman 2013).It was however emphasized that getting through the school gate was an important but insufficient measure of access. For example, a student has not gained meaningful access to education if he or she is too hungry to concentrate in class, or if his or her educator does not arrive to teach. Access as the ability to participate has therefore been conceptualized as having a number of dimensions.

These dimensions are:

Basic Access

This refers to learners getting through the school gates. Its components include initial enrolment, regular attendance on the part of the students and Schools adherence to the regulations pertaining to access to education i.e. whether schools are adhering to fees exemption regulations

Meaningful Access (Enabling Access). This has to do with the availability of basic resources and an enabling environment that can enable learning to take place e.g. a safe and dignified environment.

Quality

According to Alexander (2015), first, there was – and still is – a conspicuous lack of precision in the use of the keyword 'quality' itself. Though 'quality 'is often used quasi-adjectively, as in 'quality healthcare', 'quality teaching', 'quality learning' and so on, it is actually a noun. The adjectival use of 'quality', as in 'quality education', is no more than a slogan, offering limited purchase on what quality actually entails. But even when used as a noun, 'quality' is multi-faceted, for it can mean an attribute – as in 'the qualities we look for in a teacher' – or a degree of excellence, as when we say teaching is of outstanding quality, in which case 'outstanding' needs to be defined. So 'quality' – as in *Teaching and Learning: quality for all* – can describe, prescribe or evaluate. Alexander observes further that in the debate about quality in EFA this basic distinction has too often been blurred. That is to say, some have been happy to use supposed indicators of quality in teaching and learning – quality in the sense of a standard to aim for – without adequately exploring and describing those qualities or attributes of which teaching and learning are actually constituted. Alexander argued that when one favours prescription over description, there is the risk of producing a prospectus for quality which is arbitrary or biased. In 1985, Ball asked, "what the hell is quality?" Thirty years later, those in higher education are still trying to answer this question (Schindler, Plus-Elvidge, Welzant and Crawford 2015). Undoubtedly, defining quality continues to be difficult, with some asserting that quality can neither be defined nor quantified and others asserting that quality is

subjective and dependent upon individual perspectives (American Society for Quality cited in Schindler et al, Bobby 2014)

In the same vein, Scindler et al show that there are many significant challenges to defining quality; among which is the fact that quality is an elusive term for which there is a wide variety of interpretations depending upon the views of different stake holders.In addition, there are four groups of stakeholders that must be considered when defining quality: providers (e.g. funding bodies and the community, tax payers); users of products (e.g students); users of outputs (e.g. employers); and employees of the sector (e.g. academics and administrators; Srikanthan & Dalrymple, 2003). Each group has a different perspective on quality. Therefore, in order to define quality and attempt to establish a culture of quality in higher education, all stakeholders should be involved in the discussion to ensure that different perspectives and needs are incorporated (Bobby 2014). A second challenge is that quality is a multidimensional concept (Westerheijden, et al., 2007). Therefore, reducing the concept to a one –sentence definition is problematic. In some cases, such definitions are one- dimensional, lack meaning and specificity, or are too general to be operationalized (Eagle & Brennan, 2007). A third challenge is that quality is not a static but rather a dynamic, ever – changing pursuit of excellence that must be considered in the context of the larger educational, economic, political and social landscape (Bobby 2014).

Again, Sifuna and Sawamura (2010) emphasis that in studies of quality and equality issues in education in third world countries, it is pointed out that there is as yet no consensus on the definition of the term "quality". Motola (2001) in a similar submission points out that "debates in the international literature faces the difficulty in finding a definition of quality that would apply to all situations." There are for example, educators whose conceptualization of quality is grounded in a competency approach, where quality is the effectiveness of the degree to which objectives are met or described levels of competence are achieved. The literature on the definition of education quality is quite massive and hold different and contradictory positions. What seems however, clear is that while it has become increasingly popular in the discourse of education, especially in the less industrialized countries, there is little consensus on what it means and a universal valid way of measuring it (Lowe and Instance, 1989; Smith, 1997).

According to Telli (2013), quality of education is a complex concept. To substantiate his submission, he cites the example of UNESCO (2005) that contends that while all over the world there is a growing agreement about the need to provide access to education of good quality, there is much less

agreement about what the term quality actually means in practice. UNESCO (2005) points out that the term "quality education" varies dramatically from country to country depending on cultural and economic priorities. In the light of this, Telli (2013) argued that the concept and implementation of quality of education can be rightly considered as one of the contemporary challenges facing education policy makers across nations.

United Nations High Commission for Refugees-UNHCR(2011) emphasizes that while there is no universal definition of quality education, there are two common components; (a). an emphasis on the cognitive development of the learner. (b). the role of education in promoting the values of responsible citizenship(UNESCO 2005 cited in UNHCR 2011). The UNHCR interprets the first component as referring to the classroom environment and the second component as the wider context of the school system and social context in which learning is embedded. According to UNESCO(2004), the concept of quality is divided into four different approaches called humanist approach, behaviourist approach, critical approach and indigenous approach. In the humanist approach, quality is interpreted as the extent to which students translate learning into social action (Mutemeri 2010). Students should be seen ploughing back to the society after going through training. Behaviourist approach aims to control learners' behavior to specific ends with quality measured in precise, incremental learning terms (Mutemeri 2010). Whereas quality education in which social change is prompted, critical analysis of social power relation is encouraged and active participation of students in the design of their learning are ensured is critical approach (Mutemeri 2010).

As a multi-faceted concept, most definitions highlight the different elements of the basic input-process-output model that commonly underpins education research and policy analysis (UNESCO, 2002). Here quality is associated with the view that efficiency in the school system refers to a ratio between inputs and outputs. In this regard, a more efficient system obtains more output for a given set of resource inputs, or achieves comparable levels of output for fewer inputs, other things being equal. The output of education refers to that portion of student growth or development that can be reasonably attributed to specific educational experiences (Lockheed and Hanushek, 1988; Stephens, 1997).

In the light of the elusive nature of the concepts of access and quality of education as shown in the preceding paragraphs, for any meaningful communication, the use of any of the concepts must be with sufficient clarification. This will make it possible for the stakeholders to be on the same page and will also make realistic evaluation of the goals that has to do with these concepts and their implementation possible. Incidentally this is not the case in section – subsection – of Nigeria's National Policy on

Education which enunciates the goals of Tertiary Education.

The goals of Nigeria's Tertiary Education and their Implementation: A Philosophical Assessment

One of the goals of tertiary education in Nigeria as stated in the National policy on Education (2013) is to contribute to national development through high level manpower training. In pursuance of this goal, tertiary institutions in Nigeria mount courses both at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels in agriculture, arts, physical and social sciences, engineering, medicine, pharmacy, education, law etc from which high level and specialist manpower are produced for agriculture and food production, housing, drugs, chemical and textile industries, transport, communication, water, energy , gas, drinks, mining, and quarrying. Other areas where the graduates of Nigeria's tertiary institutions are useful are the civil service, bank, insurance, health, religion, journalism, judiciary, army, estate management, engineering and the tertiary education system itself. It gives courses in non degree areas for certificates and diplomas in various fields. The tertiary institutions diploma and certificate holders are employed in different sectors of the economy. It absorbs its own graduates into the tertiary service- the Vice Chancellors, the Rectors of Polytechnics, Provosts of Colleges of Education, Deans, Directors, Professors, Lecturers, Registrars, Bursars, Librarians, Administrative Officers are all products of Nigeria's tertiary institutions therefore helping to solve the problem of unemployment. As a result of this, Nigeria's tertiary institutions are by implication also reducing skills shortages through the production of relevant skilled workers which is one of the stated goals of tertiary education in Nigeria. Nigeria's tertiary institutions are actively contributing to the work of national development in diverse ways; graduates of these institutions serve as State Governors, Federal Ministers, State Commissioners, Chairmen, Directors, Members of Statutory corporations and several essential bodies in public and private sectors. The very best of the brains have left the country in search of greener pastures while many who are equally good and are still in the country are without jobs because of the dwindling economy caused by mismanagement, corruption and other factors. Those who would have employed themselves because of their skills do not have the necessary capital to start. However in some cases graduates of Nigeria tertiary education only have their certificate to show but cannot defend the certificate nor perform on the job. In this category are those that cannot even write nor speak correct English. The Nigerian public and private sectors that are being serviced by graduates of the nation's tertiary institutions are however endemic with corruption; an indication that most of this graduates are either corrupted by the system.

Another goal of tertiary education in Nigeria is to forge and cement national unity; and promote national and international understanding and interaction. Nigeria's tertiary institutions bring students from varying socio-cultural, political and economic backgrounds and lecturers of different political and ideological orientations together in a single academic community thereby contributing to national consciousness unity and interaction. The National Youth Service Corps, compulsory for all fresh graduates of Nigeria's tertiary institutions are also an outstanding contribution to national unity and interaction. Oyedeji (2016) however correctly points out that Nigeria's tertiary institutions are considered "less international" in terms of academic and student diversity. He observes further that many do not have a single foreign teacher. Some have a few students from neighboring countries to Nigeria. There is also insignificant cooperation among Nigeria's tertiary institutions internally and externally even intradepartmental thus making cooperative and collective research effort a far cry impossibility within Nigeria's tertiary institutions.. Internationalization activity is minimal yet crucial for quality upswing. Abinbola (2018) emphasizes this in his assertion that a university is not a good one if it does not have linkages; both national and international. He explains further that if one enters a university and there is nobody from the Republic of Kenya, Senegal, South or North America, nobody from Europe as students or teachers then the university setting is very local and it doesn't help anybody.

Nigeria's tertiary institutions also undertakes the production of textbooks, learned journals, occasional publications, monographs and others to disseminate knowledge. It also engages in research studies in all fields of human endeavor including agriculture, arts, science, social science, education for the purpose of solving human problems. Most of the significant breakthroughs are done by the tertiary institutions or tertiary institution trainedindividuals. It gives short term courses, workshops and conferences to update workers skills in their jobs and to educate the general public. By so doing Nigeria's tertiary institutions are fulfilling yet another goal of tertiary institution as stated in the National Policy on Education which is to promote and encourage scholarship, entrepreneurship and community service.

It is one of the goals of higher education in Nigeria to provide high quality career counseling to students. Relevant as the goal is, Omoniyi (2016) reveals that professionally trained counselors are in short supply in the country. The ratio of students to counselors is abnormally high and there is no sufficient funding for guidance activities in the tertiary institutions. This being the situation, nothing very significant has been achieved in this area.

The provision of accessible and affordable quality learning opportunities in formal and informal education in response to the needs and interest of Nigerians is yet another goal of higher education in Nigeria. The fact that the working definition or meaning of "access" and "quality" is not given in the National Policy document is a major omission taking into cognizance the nebulous nature of these terms. The absence of a working definition in the National Policy document makes a meaningful and realistic assessment of the implementation of this particular goal very difficult. The best that one can do is to make a general assessment based on a general meaning of the terms involved.

Bogoro (2015) points out that with the large proliferation of students in the educational institutions, it becomes difficult to control the quality of the educational system especially given Nigeria's low level income and daunting economic challenges. This is because fewer resources are being deployed for an unprecedented number of students. Lewin (1985:12) enunciates that quality is likely to be grossly affected if:

- few modern jobs are available each year for increasing number of school leavers
- the rewards for access to these jobs are relatively much
- the infrastructure of education are poorly developed
- the labour market depends heavily on academic qualifications
- the system of examination and assessment is heavily biased towards testing cognition are heavily dependent on the recall of information Bogoro argued correctly that there is no gain saying the fact that the conditions that Lewin listed above are all prevalent in Nigeria.

Furthermore ,in recent times ,as shown in Table 4 below, the amount being expended on education has been on the decrease both in real terms and in percentages. The figures in Table 4 indicate that the percentage annual budget allocated to the education sector has continually decreased from 10% to 6.24% from 2015 to 2017.Needless to say that this has profound effect on quality of education.

Table 4: Nigerian Education Budget (2013-2017)

Year	Allocation to education sector	National Annual Budget	% of Annual Budget allocated to education Sector
2017	455,407,788,565	7,298,507,709,937	6.24
2016	480,278,214,688	6,077,680,000,000	7.90

2015	483,183,784,654	4,493,363,957,158	10.75
2014	495,283,130,268	4,642,960,000,000	10.67
2013	427,515,707,889	4,987,220,425,601	8.57

Source: http://www.budgetoffice.gov.ng/

According to Adeniran (2011)"*while some of the private universities are administered admirably, with a clear vision, process, pattern and future promise which justify their establishment, many are being run purely as commercial ventures, with desperation for quick returns. The government universities, for their part, have for sometime been suffering from regularly disrupted academic activities, structural and moral decay, and obsolete curriculum structure that has not fully risen to the challenge of the twenty-first century knowledge economy, campus terrorism, inadequate strategic planning and funding. A n unprecedented level of brain drain through them movement of the well-trained academic in quest of better facilities and remuneration and a calamitous decline i n the quality of university education"*

As a result of the above, our universities are retrogressing into being obsolete in pursuit of knowledge and becoming irrelevant (Jegede 2017). A combination of dwindling funds, dilapidating infrastructure, ageing professoriate, outdated curricula, absence of high tech research, lack of foresight and the absence of strategic planning have combined to erode our universities of their high reputation and international respect they had in the 60's through the 80's.

Paradoxically while the establishments of more universities continue to be directed at opening up access to higher education, the quality of education offered culminate in products that by world standard can barely compare with an excellent secondary school graduate in other parts of the world. No wonder, no Nigerian university is ranked within the top 2000 universities in the world, none is ranked in the best 50 universities in Africa and of the highest ranked 100 universities in Africa, less than 10 are Nigerian.

According to Jegede (2017), a recent UNESCO survey indicated that there are five main factors contributing to the low quality in higher education in Africa. These include:
- depreciating quality of teachers
- research capacity deficit
- inadequacies in facilities for teaching, learning and research
- lack of a regional quality assurance framework and accreditation system and

- slow adoption of ICT for delivering quality higher education

Jegede points out correctly that Nigeria suffers from all of most UNESCO indices of low quality university education as listed above. The total student enrolment in all Nigerian universities grew from over 200 in 1962 to about 1.9 million in October 2017. The stress put on the universities in terms of demand and the limited expansion in physical facilities and academic staff to cater for this demand has taken a great toll on the quality of programmes in the institutions.

Jegede (2017) also reveals that the catalysts for education reform, which include massification, equity and social justice, inclusiveness, expansion, employability, globalization, skills and competencies shortage and national development have continued to multiply. At the same time, issues of demography, funding, physical infrastructure, levels of academic support, qualified academic staff, and local challenges have continued to increase rather steeply. Needless to say that all the above would have significant impact on universities' local and international agendas, including their responsiveness to the demand of delivering quality university education in Nigeria. Similarly, the relevant authorities are not doing enough to arrest the increasing profile of poverty and corruption that is more or less a culture in the country. Incidentally when a substantial proportion of a country's population is poor, it makes little sense to detach poverty from the dynamics of development and tertiary education(UNRISD 2010). In the same vein it is only reasonable to expect low quality in the nation's tertiary education system when corruption and mismanagement are already endemic in the nation.

The Ministerial Strategic Plan 2016–2019 shows that yearly, only about 17 per cent of those seeking placement in higher institutions in Nigeria are admitted(SOURCE!). This is viewed as a significant crisis in the system that requires creative methods of resolution. As a way of attending to this problem, additional federal, state and private higher institutions were established.

Table 1: Ownership of Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

Type of Institution	Federal	State	Private	Total
Universities	40	44	69	153
Colleges of Education	21	49	68	138
Polytechnics	28	41	44	113
Monotechnics	22	2	2	26
Federal Colleges of Agriculture	17	19	-	36
Colleges of Health Technicians &Allied Institutions	19	11	6	36

Vocational Education Institutes and Innovative Enterprise Institutes	-	-	140	140
Totals	147	126	146	642

Sources: http://www.nuc.edu.ng;
http://www.ncceonline.edu.ng/colleges.php; http://www.nbte.gov.ng/- *Cited in The Commonwealth of Learning (2017).*

Yet even with more than 153 universities as at the year 2018, there is still upsurge of applicants into university education. According to National Universities Commission(The National Universities Commission is the superintending and regulatory authority for universities in Nigeria) cited in The Commonwealth of Learning (2017), in terms of ownership, the Ministry of Education owns and funds 40 universities, the state governments own 44 universities, and 69 universities are privately owned. In the same vein, the federal government owns and funds 28 polytechnics; the state governments own 41, and there are currently 44 private polytechnics. The federal government owns and funds 17 federal colleges of agriculture, and the states own 19 (see Table1 above).The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) is the entrance examination board for tertiary-level institutions in Nigeria. The board conducts the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination for prospective undergraduates into Nigerian universities, monotechnics, polytechnics and colleges of education.

The admission statistics from JAMB for 2010 to 2016 indicate that a total of 11,703,709 applications were received, and a total of 2,674,485 students were admitted across the 36 states and the FCT between 2010 and 2015, meaning that on average, 28 per cent of students who applied for admission were admitted across the 36 states and the FCT in a given year (Table2).

Table 2. JAMB Admission Statistics 2010–2016

Year	Number of applications	Number admitted	% admitted
2010	1,513,940	423,531	28
2011	1,636,356	417,341	26
2012	1,632, 835	447,176	27
2013	1,924,393	463,395	24
2014	1,785,608	437,704	25
2015	1,612,247	485,338	30
2016	1,598,330	–	–
TOTAL	11,703,709	2,674,485	28

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria

By implication, every year over a million qualified college-aged young Nigerians are left without a post-secondary education. A further implication of this is that the goal of providing accessible quality learning opportunities in response to the needs and interest of Nigerians is very far from being realized. The phenomenal stress put on universities with regard to access to university education can be appreciated from the figures in Table 2 that shows JAMB Admission statistics from 2010 to 2016. The table indicated that for 2010 to 2016 a total of 11,703,709 applications were received and a total of 2, 674,485 students were admitted across the 36 states and the FCT between 2010 and 2015. This means that a miserable average of 28% of students who applied for admission was admitted across the 36 states and the FCT in a given year. This has created a thousand and one issues which of course has implication for quality.

As can be seen from Figures 1, 2 and 3below, over 70 percent of those who apply to Nigeria's institutions of higher learning cannot be accommodated, not necessarily because   t they are not qualified but due to gross inadequacies in resources and facilities. There is a limit which any one classroom or lecture
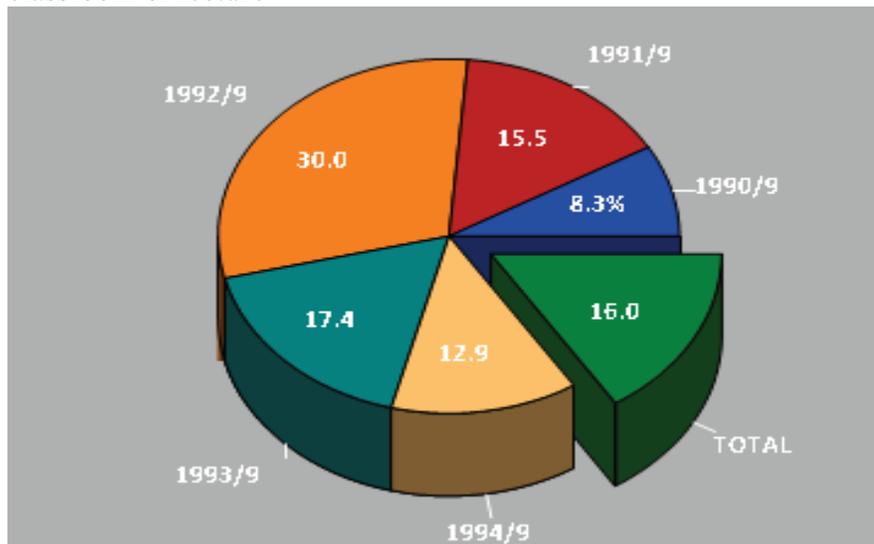

Figure 1: Provisional admissions as percentage of total applications into Universities   (source: Jegede 2017)

Figure 2: Provisional admissions as percentage of total applications into Polytechnics (Source: Jegede 2017)
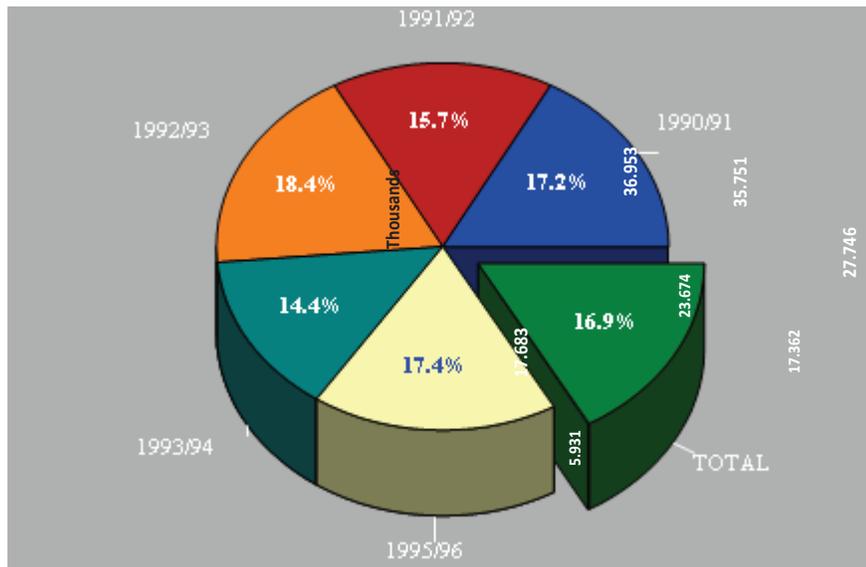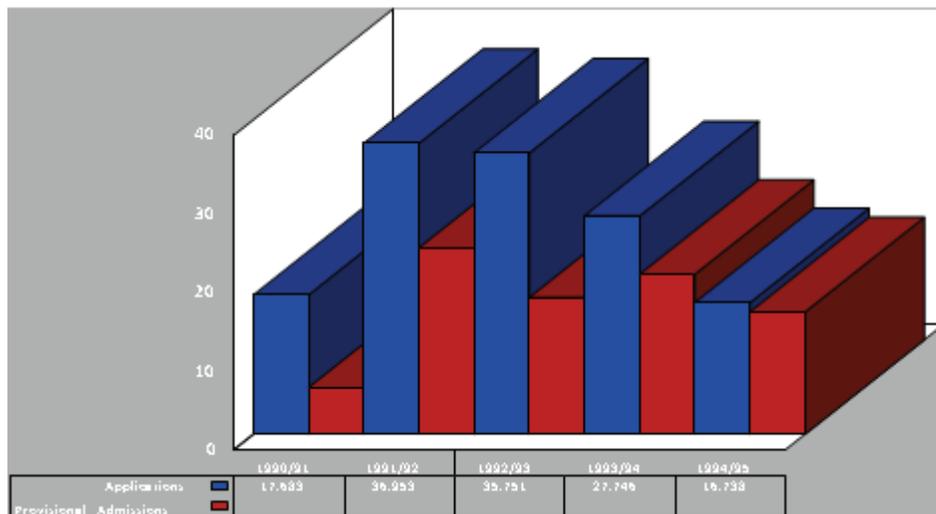
Figure 3: Provisional admissions as percentage of total applications into Colleges of Education (Source: Jegede 2017)

From Figures 1, 2, and 3 above, on the average, out of 1.5 million Nigerians seeking admission (access) to tertiary institutions, only about 26.5 % are successful

One of the factors responsible for this is carrying capacity of the institutions. The National Universities Commission (NUC); the regulatory authority for universities in Nigeria, came up with the policy of carrying capacity having realized that many of the public universities

were overpopulated and the facilities were overstretched. The essence of the carrying capacity policy therefore is to ensure that students are admitted based on the facilities available. According to Divine (2011) cited in Nwogu (2015) these facilities include adequate lecture rooms, well stocked libraries, reasonable staff /student ratio, office accommodation for staff etc He rightly points out that this policy was to enhance quality but has become an impediment to access to university education. According to Adesulu (2014) cited in Nwogu (2015), in 2010/2011 academic year, Nigeria had 112 universities with carrying capacity of 450,000 and 1,493,611 applicants. The admitting capacity was 30.13 per cent of the total number of the applicants. He further states that in 2011/2012 academic year, five additional universities were established and licensed, bringing the number of universities to 117 with 500,000 carrying capacity, amounts to 33.25 per cent and 1,503,933 applied that year. Ironically in 2012/2013 academic session when 11 universities, the total number of universities became 128 and the carrying capacity was 520,000 (29.96%) when a total of 1,735,729 applied for university spaces. As a result of the carrying capacity policy therefore, a good percentage of students who meet the UTME cut off mark cannot access the tertiary institutions in the country.

Saheed (2013) rightly points out that quota system is another means through which some qualified Nigerian youths are being denied access to tertiary education. Quota system of admission into public universities in Nigeria is geared towards assisting the Educationally Disadvantaged States (ELDS) in the country; most of which are in the northern part of the country (Moti 2010 cited in Saheed (2013). Candidates from the ELDS are given special consideration during admission process in such a way that the tertiary institutions assign lower cut off marks to this category of candidates so that they can be given opportunity to close the educational gap between the states classified as educationally advantaged and those categorized as educationally disadvantaged. By this system, it means that a candidate whose state of origin is one of the southern states (considered to be educationally advantaged) who scores 280 out of 400 may not be given admission into the public university while his counterpart whose state of origin happen to be one of the states in the northern part of the country who scores less would be admitted. The obvious contradiction involved in quota system of admission is that some candidates who are nationals of Nigeria are being denied access to public tertiary institutions (even when they are qualified to be given access and despite the fact that it is one of the stated goals of Nigeria's tertiary education to provide accessible learning opportunity in response to the needs and interest of Nigerians---Section-

Sub Section – of the   National policy document) in order to give some other Nigerians access to the same public tertiary institutions. With the quota system of admission in place, it is also obvious that the goal of providing accessible quality learning in response to the needs and interest of Nigerians is not being achieved and it follows logically too that this goal cannot be achieved while the system remains in place. Open and distance learning (ODL) is seen as an excellent solution to tackle this problem of access. The goals of ODL in Nigeria among other things are to:

- provide more access to quality education and equity in educational opportunities;
- meet the special needs of employers and employees by mounting special courses for employees in the workplace; (FGN,2013a)

In pursuit of these goals, the federal government established the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) in 1983. It was suspended in 1984 because the government perceived a lack of infrastructure, but it was subsequently reopened in2002.

NOUN provides functional, flexible, accessible, cost-effective education to the citizens of Nigeria. NOUN's mandate is to deliver university education to the doorstep of every interested Nigerian. It is worth noting that meeting the educational needs of citizens in this highly populous country was beyond the capacity of Nigeria's conventional higher education institutions.

NOUN currently has 78 study centres across 36 states of the federation, with as many as five centres in the mega-states of Abuja and Lagos. NOUN has increased student enrolment from about 16,000 in 2010 to over 400,000 as of July 2017 (Adamu, 2017).

To further strengthen the impact of ODL, the NUC granted permission for the opening of eight distance learning centres in eight conventional universities in Nigeria: University of Ibadan, Ibadan; Obafemi Awolowo University of Ile-Ife; University of Lagos, Akoka; University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri; Modibo Adama University of Technology, Yola; University of Abuja, Abuja; Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso; and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaira (NUC,2017). However, the impact of ODL in Nigeria with respect to solving the challenge of access to tertiary institutions by willing and qualified youths has been like a drop of water in the ocean. This is in line with the observation of Oko (2011) who highlights the fact that more universities are emerging, many colleges and other educational institutions are springing up but admission to government own tertiary institutions are becoming more complicated.

Heller 2001 cited in Prodan et al (2015) explains that an integrated view on barriers to getting Higher Education identifies the following types of barriers:

- financial: tuition fees and living costs, the scarcity or lack of funding opportunities through part time jobs, loans, scholarships and grants, student finance policy;
- geographical: involving factors related to accessibility from remote areas, leaving home, the necessity and discomfort of accommodation and travelling.
- educational: refers to candidates initial preparation;
- organizational: to which extent the curriculum and academic resources are available to students and applicants

Each of the types of barriers to tertiary education listed above is not only prevalent in Nigeria but pronounced. The implication of this is that the goal of providing accessibility learning opportunities to interested Nigerians as contained in the National Policy document is still very far from being realized.

Table 3: Nigerian Education Budget (2013-2017)

Year	Allocation to education sector	National Annual Budget	% of Annual Budget allocated to education sector
2017	455,407,788,565	7,298,507,709,937	6.24
2016	480,278,214,688	6,077,680,000,000	7.90
2015	483,183,784,654	4,493,363,957,158	10.75
2014	495,283,130,268	4,642,960,000,000	10.67
2013	427,515,707,889	4,987,220,425,601	8.57

Source: http://www.budgetoffice.gov.ng/

The figures in Table 3 indicate that the percentage annual budget allocated to education sector has continually decreased from 10% to 6.24% from 2015 to 2017. Needless to say that this has profound effect on the quality of education. (Jegede 2017).

It was recently reported that 38 universities in Nigeria increased their tuition fees as a result of poor funding by the federal and state governments (Omole, 2017). Annual tuition fees at Nigerian universities range from approximately NGN 50,000 to as high as NGN 3,000,000 in some private universities. Such costs have further exacerbated the problem of access to higher education.

In term of cost in higher education, especially as it concerns students, more emphasis is on tuition fees with less focus on other

indirect costs, such as textbooks, study aids and daily living expenses. The cost of textbooks in Nigerian higher education ranges between NGN 5,000 and 40,000 per year.

Students express dissatisfaction about the large-scale practice of being forced to buy textbooks and lecture notes prepared by teachers. The cost of a textbook is NGN 1,200– 1,700 (Youdeowei, Uwandu, & Iruoma, 2016).

Conclusion and Suggestions

Tertiary Education plays an indispensable role in the development of any society. The lesson from the developed countries and the news from the emerging economies of China, India and Brazil are very instructive on this issue. The foregoing assessment of the goals of tertiary education in Nigeria and their implementation shows that tertiary education system in Nigeria is not where it ought to be; and that is to put it in a very mild and modest way. Some other scholars have not been that modest. For Example, Adebayo (2005) quoted the Dean of the School of Agric and Agric Technology of the Federal University of Technology Owerri as saying that Nigerian tertiary institutions are under the siege of decay. Jegede (2017) lamented that Nigeria must declare her entire education system a disaster area needing emergency rescuing strategy.

In order to get Nigeria's tertiary education system to where it ought to be the relevant authorities should consider the following:

Demystify the ambiguous concepts of access and quality that featured prominently in the goals of tertiary institutions as stated in section 5 sub section 80 - 85.of the National Policy document so that realistic evaluation can be possible and to afford stakeholders the opportunity to know what is actually going on .There is also need for a new agenda for tertiary institutions which would address the paradox that exist presently on one hand in which the establishment of more tertiary institutions geared towards increasing access to these institutions is resulting into increasing number of the products of these institutions failing to compete favorably with international standards. On the other hand there is the paradox that exists where the bid to ensure quality by introducing measures such as carrying capacity is resulting into increasing number of candidates who are qualified and are interested gaining access to tertiary institutions being denied such access.

- Internalizing of the nations tertiary institutions by encouraging very active collaboration with other tertiary institution across the continent and across the globe
- Tertiary institutions should be encouraged to operate a dual mode; regular and open distance learning with very strict moderation by the

regulatory bodies; National Universities Commission and Nation Commission for Colleges of Education.

•   .Distance Learning Education as practiced by National Open University of Nigeria should be further encouraged with the NUC constantly regulating the operations to ensure that standard is not compromised while the Universities of Lagos and Ibadan which operate regular and Open Distance Learning should be encouraged to have their virtual learning facilities expanded. This will take care of students who are unable to get admission into regular universities provided that the standard is known both nationally and internationally not to be compromised.

•   Since the public tertiary institutions are oversubscribed because they are heavily subsidized by the Federal or State government as they case may be and they are therefore relatively cheaper than the private tertiary institutions which in most cases are undersubscribed to by students seeking access to tertiary institutions, it will go a long way solving the admission to tertiary institution crisis if government at the State and Federal levels can set up special scholarship scheme for brilliant but poor students go into the public universities with government sponsorship. Well to do and well meaning individuals, religious organizations, non religious organizations, industries etc can be encouraged by the government to sponsor brilliant students who otherwise would not be able to afford the cost of attending private tertiary institutions in the country to do so. Similarly, government at the State and Federal levels should establish students loan scheme that brilliant and qualified students can utilize for their tertiary education in private universities where they can be double sure of gaining access. The government can put in place measure to ensure that the loans are paid back within reasonable number of years after the completion of studies. This however must go with a commitment on the part of government to address the present challenge of unemployment caused among other things by the economy that has shrinked over the years as result of many industries and foreign investors that have folded up or relocated from the country as a result of the challenge of insecurity lack of stable power supply etc. A situation that has resulted into massive unemployment in the country which is quite unlike the 70's, the 80's and the mid 90's when the acquisition of a mere first degree is regarded as a "meal ticket" in the sense of getting employed or self employed immediately after graduation.

•   There is need for government to demonstrate her sincere commitment to the education sector by meeting up the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's bench mark with

respect to funding. This if done will bring a new lease of life to the sector as the challenge of incessant strikes by tertiary institution lecturers when they are supposed to be carrying our researches like their counterparts in other parts of the world will become a thing of the past. In a situation where there is no power supply with which lecturer can work in the library, laboratory or at home, the drive to meet up with the rest of the world will continue to elude the nation. Government should also give TETFund grant to private institutions since the taxes are from the generality of the people and the private tertiary institutions are not just producing graduates for themselves.

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