Historical Development of University Education in Nigeria and Strategies for Sustainable Development

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ABSTRACT
This paper examined the historical development of university education in Nigeria and suggested strategies for sustainable development. Also, the paper looked at current challenges facing the Nigerian universities system. Secondary data were employed in the paper. The secondary data were collected from print and online publications. The paper made some useful suggestions for the sustainable development of university education in Nigeria.

Keywords: Development, University Education.

Introduction
University education is the highest form of education given to adults with the view of collecting certificates after graduation. University education is a form of education with the capacity to transform an individual and society positively through the application of teaching, research and community services. University education is an advanced education in teaching, research and community service inclined. In Nigeria, university education is grouped among tertiary education. Solomon, Ogunode & Jegede (2020), viewed university education as the education that provides post-secondary school education for citizens. University education is an advanced education that develops the manpower of the country. University education is the most advanced education that gives direction to career development.

The history of university education started in Nigeria in 1948 when the first university was established in Ibadan. Jubril (2003), noted that in 1948, the University College Ibadan was founded as an affiliate of the University of London. University College continued as the only University Institution in Nigeria until 1960. The university system began to develop phase by phase. The six universities established during this period 1960-1970 are referred to as first-generation universities. In 1960, the Eastern Region government established its university at Nsukka (University of Nigeria Nsukka). In the West, the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife (formerly, the University of Ife) came to be in 1961; and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria was established in the North in 1962. In 1962, the University of Lagos was born, while in 1962, the University College Ibadan transformed into a substantive university. This made UCI, Ibadan and the University of Lagos became the first two federal universities in Nigeria while the other three were regional. In 1970, the newly created Bendel State established a university known as the University of Benin.

These second-generation universities as they were referred to include the University of Calabar (1975); the University of Illorin (1976); the University of Jos (1975); the University of Sokoto (1977); the University of Maiduguri (1977); the University of Port Harcourt (1977); and Bayero University Kano (1977). They became federal universities by Decree 46 of 1977 which provided for the Federal Government take-over of all universities in Nigeria.
From 1979 and 1983, the following universities were founded: Bendel State University, Ekpoma; Anambra State University of Technology, Enugu; Imo State University; Etiti; Ogun State University, Ago-Iwoye; Ondo State University, Ado-Ekiti; Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Port Harcourt; Cross River State University, Uyo; and Lagos State University, Ijanikin as a result of federal government 1979 constitution amended that transferred university education from the executive to the concurrent legislative list. This means that state governments were free to establish state-owned universities.

The seven Federal Universities of Technology emerged between 1981 and 1985. These were the Federal Universities of Technology Bauchi (1982 / 1982); Markurdi (1981 / 1982); Owerri (1981 / 1982); Yola (1982 / 1983); Akure (1982 / 1983); Abeokuta (1983 / 1984); Minna (1983 / 1984). The Federal University of Technology, Yola, became an outpost of the University of Maiduguri. The University of Jos absorbed the Federal University of Technology, Makurdi as the outpost of the former, while the Federal University of Technology, Abeokuta became a campus of the University of Lagos (NOUN 2012; Okon, 2006).

The fourth-generation universities are those established between 1991 to date. They included more state universities, National Open Universities and private universities. Students' numbers are in scores of thousands. As for Polytechnics and Colleges of Education, they are in excess in number respectively. Presently Nigeria is having 259 federal, state and private universities (NUC, 2023).

Current Challenges Facing University Education in Nigeria

Universities in Nigeria were once regarded among the best in the world due to the quality of teaching, research and community development. The universities were doing well with a high number of international lecturers and students. Borishade in Ogunode (2022), described the state of Nigerian universities in the 60s and the greater part of the 70s as conducive to teaching, learning and research. In a similar vein, Obasi in (Ogunode 2021), disclosed that during the early post-independence era, the Nigeria University system acquired and retained national and international recognition. The learning environment, the quality of learning, as well as the quality of the products of the universities, were all considered good enough within the constraints of a developing nation. However, the prevailing situation in the Nigerian education system shows that all is not well with the system.

Nigeria’s university education is beset more by evidence of systemic maladies rather than salutary breakthroughs. The predicaments commonly characteristic of Nigerian university education since the 1980s, and especially in the 1990s and in this 21st century include obvious inadequacy of funding; low staff motivation; the brain drain syndrome; disproportionate staff-student ratio; and scantly research feats. Many problems are facing the nation's universities. These problems include poor funding, unstable academic calendar, brain drain, cultism, examination malpractice and overcrowding, among others. Most of the identified challenges facing the ivory towers are management-linked in the sense that by putting in place the right political will and commitment to changing things, the future towards a promising academic climate in the universities becomes clearer (NOUN 2012; Sarkinfada, (2020); Sarkinfada, 2020; Ogunode & Sarkinfada, 2023; Ogunode, Obioma & Belloh, 2023; Ogunode, Ayoko, & Orifah, 2023).

For instance, in the area of funding, Babalola in Ogunode (2022), acknowledged that Universities in Nigeria are in crisis as there is less money to spend on teaching, research and community service. Inadequate funding of public universities in Nigeria is a prime cause of other problems that have undermined the quality of university education. Also, Ogunode (2023), lamented the funding situation of Nigerian universities as below international standards.
Moreover, Olamide & Tobiloba (2020), observed that another problem facing the tertiary education system is the lack of proper funding. Statistically, Nigeria ranks amongst the lowest countries in terms of the budget allocated towards tertiary education. While most states give less than 15 per cent of their yearly budget to education, only 6.7% of the Nation's budget for the year 2020 was allocated to the Ministry of Education, a meagre portion of which will be further distributed to tertiary institutions. This is very low when compared to the United Nations' suggestion of 15-20 percent (Ogunode & Onyekachi 2021; Sarkinfada, 2016; Sarkinfada, & Hussaini, 2019). Igbinedion, & Torupere (2019) and Ogunode, Onyekachi, & Ayoko (2023), observed that the university system in Nigeria is in dire need of funds for effective administration which are not available. This inability of university administrators to have access to adequate funds has been identified as responsible for the various challenges the universities are faced today.

In the area of academic staff, punch newspaper reported that federal universities currently suffer a shortage of full-time professors. According to the NUC data, no federal university scored up to 50 per cent in the ranking of full professors. This implies that no federal university has the required number of full professors they require. Some of the federal universities ranked in the top 10 are the Usmanu Dan-Fodiyo University, Sokoto, with 36.44 per cent; Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, 35.80 per cent; University of Ibadan, 29.04 per cent; Federal University of Technology, Akure, 27.28 per cent; Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, 27.25 per cent; University of Abuja, 25.33 per cent; University of Benin, 23.26 per cent; University of Port Harcourt, 21.26 per cent; University of Calabar, 21.20 per cent; and University of Ilorin, 21.12 per cent. The NUC data also puts the number of academic staff in Nigerian universities at 100,000. “The entire system has about 2.1 million students and staff strength of about 170,000 non-teaching and 100,000 academic staff,” the NUC stated. Ogunode, Okwelogu, (2022); Ogunode & Adamu, (2021), also acknowledged that the shortage of academic staff is a major problem in the Nigerian university system.

In the area of infrastructural facilities, Ogunode (2020) and Blueprint (2019), posited that generally, lack of infrastructure such as accommodation and power has remained the major challenge facing many universities across the country. Most campuses of tertiary institutions are laced with decayed infrastructures such as hostels, lecture halls, health centres and motorable roads. They remain issues that have continued to elicit protests in federal and state universities. In most universities, the conditions of students leave much to be desired in both classes and hostels. Students' hostel facilities are an integral part of the welfare system. Due to the high demand for campus accommodation, more students require attention in this regard. What is usually observed is that this situation often lingers on unnecessarily rather disheartening since students need comfortable accommodations to conveniently carry out their primary purpose of learning. Ebehikhalu & Dawam, (2016); Ijaiya & Adewale (2017); Ogunode & Jegede, (2021); Sarkinfada, & Rabo (2022) and Sarkinfada, & M Multafu, (2022) concluded that most Nigerian universities are faced with the problem of infrastructural facilities shortage.

In terms of international ranking, Ogunode & Abubakar (2023), submitted that the performance of Nigerian universities both private and public in the global ranking is not good enough considering her as the giant of Africa and her population. According to Ogunode et al (2022) and Ogunode, Olatunde-Aiyedun & Mcbrown, (2022), “for instance, there are about 220 licensed public and private universities in Nigeria and only twelve were captured in the recent 2023 Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings among the best”. Isaac & Imade, (2020), noted that the low performance of Nigerian higher institutions in webometrics ranking is because of certain Institutional and individual factors that are left unattended to. These factors tend to build up over time until they become almost unbearable. It is important to analyze these factors, their implications and advance measures to provide lasting solutions that will ensure the
sustainable performance of the Nigerian university system.

In terms of the teaching programme, Ogunode & Ndoye (2022), ascertained that the teaching programme in Nigerian universities is poorly implemented due to poor funding which is responsible for the shortage of staff, instructional materials, shortage of infrastructural facilities, poor qualification of lecturers and ineffective supervision. Musa (2017), stated that the majorities of resources needed for smooth implementation are not available in the universities and if available they are not adequate to ensure quality education.

In terms of research programmes, Ogunode, Jegede, Adah, Audu, & Ajape (2020), opined that the level at which research is been conducted in Nigerian public universities is poor and not encouraging. The research performance is below average in many public universities. Charles, Ijueoma & John (2009), affirmed that the Nigerian Tertiary Institutions, Universities inclusive, have three statutory functions to perform and these include teaching, research and community service. While we give much attention to teaching, we committed less effort to research. The Nigerian Universities which should exist as centres for knowledge dissemination, research and knowledge creation have not maintained their full expectations.

In terms of admission, Ogunode, Ukozor, & Ayoko, (2023) and Olamide, & Tobiloba (2020), cited JAMB, which discloses two-thirds of about two million applicants who sought access in 2019 were unsuccessful. Public tertiary institutions are finding it increasingly hard to cope with the admission pressure that seems to become more compelling each year. And while there is significant private sector participation in the Nigerian tertiary educational system, private schools are available to only a minority of the population as these private institutions are not quite affordable. Thus, average Nigerians are left to jostle for the limited number of slots available in public universities.

In comparison, the United States has over 3000 tertiary institutions, France has over 3500, and India has over 4000. Statistics obtained from the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) showed that over 1,662,762 candidates wrote the 2018/2019 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), of which only 585,498 gained admissions into the tertiary institutions. Of the 1,157, 977 candidates who sat for UTME in 2019/2020, about 612,557 were offered admission into various tertiary institutions. Between 2018 and 2020, over three million of the candidates who applied for admission into Nigerian tertiary institutions were unable to secure placement in the universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education. In 2020 over 2.1 million candidates registered for the UTME and Direct Entry programmes. However, a total of 1,456 candidates who scored 300 and above out of the possible score of 400 in the entrance examinations failed to secure admissions to Nigerian tertiary institutions for the 2020/2021 academic session (Allafrica, 2021; Thenigerialawyer, 2021). Olawale, (2018), lamented millions of Nigerians are unadmitted yearly as a result of limited space in universities across Nigeria.

In the area of quality, Oluremi & Oyewole, (2014) and NOUN (2009), stated that concern has been raised about the decline in the quality of education in Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education. This is evident in the quality of graduates produced by these institutions. Punch (2021) reported that Afe Babalola (SAN), the founder of Afe Babalola University, observed that, the quality of education in Nigeria had degenerated to the extent that, many graduates cannot defend their certificates. Babalola also lamented the growing declining standards of education, particularly university education. Also, The Guardian newspaper (2019), quoted the President and Chief Executive Officer of, the Postgraduate School of Credit and Financial Management, Chris (2019), who expressed concern over the quality of Nigerian graduates by submitting that about 95 percent of them are not employable. He noted that the present crops of graduates do not meet the need of the reality in the workplace and called for urgent attention from all concerned to address the trend. It was observed that graduates from Nigerian universities are faced with the problem of unemployment upon graduation (John,
2018). Ogunode & Adah (2022) and Pitan & Adedeji (2014) also affirmed that the products of Nigerian universities have been reported to be poorly prepared for work. The performance of these products seems to be connected to the quality of knowledge impacted on the students by the lecturers who taught them in their various universities.

In terms of leadership, (Ogunode 2020), maintained that the appointment of weak administrators in the Nigerian public universities is a big challenge facing the administration of public universities in Nigeria. Many university administrators appointed to head public universities are not qualified and less exposed to handling the administration and management of universities in Nigeria. Udida, Bassey, Udoña, & Egbona in Ogunode (2020), submitted that some individuals appointed as vice-chancellors of some universities are weak, not competent and lack administrative potentials; such appointees must possess administrative qualities and must lead by example. The leader must have integrity, must be knowledgeable, and practice modern types of management leadership styles. He or she must be visionary and ready to adjust to situations in the system. The performance of the administrator should be sustained through the proper utilization of material and human resources in the achievement of institutional goals and objectives. A lot of higher education system managers do not poses the charisma or good human relations needed for effective and efficient leadership. As a result of the poor leadership and ineffective style of administration, a lot of programs or activities are not carried out in such institutions such as the provision of grants for research and publications, staff welfare is neglected, no adequate control of staff and students, no vision for the university. Such leaders also do not have the zeal for supervision and monitoring of institutional activities. This can affect the system's performance in that, workers can result to a nonchalant attitude toward work and hence no sustainability or continuity of good track records of performance in the system. Also Nwachukwu, Stella & Obaoda (2018), concluded that the lack of institutional leaders’ values like integrity, effectiveness, competence, honesty, accountability and fairness explains the unsuccessful and ineffective management of universities in Nigeria.

Ololube (2016); Ogumraku (2016); Okoli, Ogbondah & Ewor, (2016); Olayinka (2018); Okebukola (2018); Ogunode, Ugochukwu. & Jegede (2022); Ogunode, Oahunene, Olatunde-Aiedyin & Tope Gloria (2022); Ogunode & Ibrahim (2023); Ogunode & Agyo, (2022); Ogunode & Musa,(2022); Sarkinfada, & Kyari, (2022); Sarkinfada, & Babayo, (2022) and Ogunode & Garba, (2023), also identified strike actions, brain-drain, corruption, poor supervision, poor motivation of staff, indigenization of principal officers, autonomy problem, poor accountability, low stakeholder involvement, political influence and Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System (IPPI).

Development of an Implementable Strategic Plan for University Education

To ensure the all-round development of the Nigerian university system, there is a need for formulation and development of an implementable strategic plan. Ogunode & Zalakro, (2023), maintained that to ensure quality in Nigerian Universities, there should be proper planning and provision of adequate infrastructure, high-quality and well-motivated staff, admission of qualified students and inspirational leadership. Ogunode, Yiolokun, & Akeredolu, (2019), noted that for Nigerian universities to move forward, there must be an effective strategic plan. Institutional and system planning is critical for the restoration of quality in the system. The plans developed must be linked to realistic budget plans. Through planning, issues of uncontrolled growth in the number of students, programs, and institutions, could be addressed. Regional and national development needs could be met through regional collaboration as well as by improvement of the efficiency of the system (Moja, 2000). Strategic management planning is a process designed to move an educational institution through the steps of understanding changes in the external environment, assessing organizational strengths and weaknesses developing a vision of a desired future and ways to achieve that mission, developing and implementing specific plans and motivating that implementation so that necessary changes can be made. Some
reasons for applying strategic management planning in tertiary education are that the institution needs to know its dynamics, decision-making styles and barriers to change and the institution must develop a climate that is open to change and responsiveness to the external environment while still maintaining a clear sense of mission (Andrea, 2005). Strategies for University Education sustainable development in Nigeria Should involves development of implementation master plan for university education such as: adequate investment, the appointment of competent administrators, effective supervision, corruption control and autonomy approval

**Adequate Funding**

The federal government should increase investment in the university system. A new funding model should be formulated for the funding of the universities. Olamide, & Tobiloba (2020), suggested that a policy should be made that stipulates the compulsory increase of funds to be channeled towards tertiary education in Nigeria. This policy may also perform the advisory role of stating how the funds should be spent and enforcing it. Lawmakers in Nigeria can also mirror efficient foreign systems and adapt them for use; for instance, Exchange programs, which are a "foreign investment" in the quality of local education, can be encouraged via a revisit of the National University Council framework. The livewire of every virile organization is funding. Higher education in 21st-century Africa requires a lot of money both in cash and in other resources for effective functioning. Billions of naira are needed for buildings of lecture theatres offices, laboratories, workshops, hostels of residence for students, etc. The workshops and laboratories require costly machines and chemicals for use by students. Incidentally, poor funding has been said to be the bane of Nigeria's educational planning, especially its higher education (Bassey, 2002).

**Appointment of Competent Administrators**

Appointment of credible and competent leaders is a must if the Nigerian universities must be fixed. Leadership is a key to institutional development. Great universities today across the world are led by leaders with great vision and character. Nigerian universities need effective leadership to sustain the development of Universities education. According to Udida, Bassey, and Udoafia, (2009), the leader must have integrity, must be knowledgeable, and practice modern types of management leadership styles. He or she must be visionary and ready to adjust to situations in the system. The performance of the administrator should be sustained through the proper utilization of material and human resources in the achievement of institutional goals and objectives. The sustainability of the universities' education in Nigeria depends largely on the capacity of the leaders. So, university administrators should be selected based on what they can offer the system. Daniel-Kalio, (2019), also noted that the criticality of good leadership in the management of Nigerian universities cannot be over-emphasized. For instance, the issue of gross underfunding of the educational system in the country rendering the university system incapacitated is not going to be over very soon from the look of things. It has been there even in the times of the oil boom in Nigeria. Therefore, to achieve any form of improvement in the face of dwindling resources, the system will require a prudent and resourceful leader to optimally manage the available resources of the university. When the leadership, management and governance of the university are effective and universities are granted some level of autonomy, free from political interferences and internal due process is followed, then most of the challenges of both policy implementation and leadership in universities will be surmounted.

**Effective Supervision**

There should be effective supervision of the universities in Nigeria. Funds allocated to the system should be seriously monitored by the various anti-corruption agencies and regulatory agencies. Egwa (2016), stated that effective supervision of activities within tertiary institutions should be enforced to attain quality assurance in tertiary institutions. Supervision involves the use of expert knowledge and experience to oversee, evaluate and coordinate the process of improving teaching and learning activities in school. Close monitoring and supervision of teachers propels them to implement educational policies and reforms. Based on these supervisions, recommendations are made such as the provision of adequate facilities and human resources. Supervision creates awareness of sound education philosophies. Igwe in Egbo (2007),
described supervision as a process in which the policies, principles, rules, regulations and methods prescribed for implementing and achieving the objective of education are carried out. Teachers are influenced, stimulated, coordinated, and commanded to carry out their assigned tasks to maintain standards. For quality education to be realized at the tertiary levels of education supervision is highly crucial as it boosts the morale of teachers.

**Curb Corruptions**

Another thing that can bring more development to the Nigerian University Education system is the fight against all forms of corruption and fraud practices in the system. There is a need to holistically fight the corruption practices in the University environment. Also, Godwin (n.d), recommended the enforcement of all constitutional provisions on corruption. Making anti-corruption agencies to be result-oriented by ensuring that suspects are prosecuted on time according to the provisions of the law and enforcement of work ethics among tertiary institutions’ employees and authorities and inculcation and sustenance of integrity among staffs and leaders of our tertiary institutions. Opara (2023), concluded that no meaningful development can take place in educational institutions, especially the universities, under the system of corruption practices. Corruption can destroy educational institutions if not fought violently. So, the government and the school administrators should deploy human and material resources to fight all forms of corruption in the university system.

**Allow Autonomy**

Government should grant autonomy to the universities. This will allow them to develop at their pace. Ogunode & Abubakar (2020); Azenabor, (2022) and Onyekachi & John (2023), submitted that the government should implement the university autonomy Bill of 2004 and grant autonomy to public universities and free them from the shackles of external interference which is currently impeding universities development in Nigeria. The Universities should be allowed to conduct their admission just like their counter from other Countries. Centralized admissions through JAMB, where candidates now write JAMB examinations and are later subjected to another examination by the various universities should be stopped. The government should remove federal universities from the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) platform and grant them full financial autonomy.

**Establishment of Higher Education Commission**

There is a need for the establishment of a commission of higher education commission. The commission will be saddled with the responsibility of formulating policies and concentrating on the development of higher education in Nigeria.

**Conclusion**

This paper discussed the historical development of university education in Nigeria. Current challenges facing university education in Nigeria were examined and possible implementation suggestions were made to aid the sustainable development of universities in Nigeria.

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