RESTRUCTURING NIGERIAN HIGHER EDUCATION (COLLEGE OF EDUCATION) FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This study assesses the goals of college of education, namely, development of high level manpower, scholarship and community service, and found that colleges of education have not been able to achieve close to average. Problems range from social, political, financial as well as personnel issues. Specifically, they include problems of infrastructure, funding, staffing, record management and external interferences. Results include low quality outputs, poor state of infrastructure, poor international competitiveness, and hence the search for strategies to reconstruct, restructure and rebuild the system to respond favourably to the challenges of development. To redeem the system, the study prescribes that students and staff personnel need be taken as priorities from henceforth. Also, inter-national collaboration for students and staff exchanges, and expansion of access to qualified candidates, among others, be prioritized.

Keywords: Restructuring, Higher Education, College of Education, Sustainable Development.

Introduction

Higher education is the education given after secondary education in colleges of education, polytechnics, monotechnics, universities and other institutions offering correspondence courses (FRN, 2014). According to the document, the goals of higher education includes the development of relevant high level manpower, development of intellectual capability of individuals and acquisition of physical and intellectual skills. Others are to promote and encourage scholarship as well as community service. Higher educational institutions pursue these goals through teaching, research, generation and dissemination of knowledge which they achieve through a variety of programmes such as certificate, diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

Specifically, in recognition of the pivotal role of quality teachers in the provision of quality education at all levels, teacher education shall continue to be emphasized in educational planning and development.

Teacher education contributes to the production of highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of the educational system. Also to encourage the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers, to help teachers fit into the social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals, provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to changing situations and also to enhance teachers' commitment to the profession (Adeyemo, Adesope and Ajayi, 2009).

The practice of tertiary education in Nigeria so far has not met the expectations of the above goals and objectives due to a number of factors such as limited infrastructure, poor funding, poor staffing, poor record keeping and socio-political interferences. These problems have resulted in low quality outputs, lack of international competitiveness and comparability of outputs. This pitiable and unacceptable condition has necessitated the investigation into how the Nigerian college of education system can be restructured in order to meet the expectations of the stakeholders.

Problematic Issues in the Management of Nigerian Colleges of Education

So many factors converge as bottlenecks hindering effective and efficient performance of Nigerian colleges of education. For a better and broader treatment of these issues, we discuss government factors (including those of regulatory bodies which are agents of government), social factors; technological issues, college internal factors and family issues.

Government and Regulators

Government

- *Inadequate budgetary allocation (underfunding):* Over the years, government has grossly underfunded education to the extent that their effort falls far below the UNESCO

recommended annual budget proportion of 26%. The consequences are grave. There is a decreasing trend over the years". In 2018 the federal budget is 5.5%.

- *Policy inconsistency or policy somersault:* Generally, we note some discontinuity in national policy between one political dispensation and the other. If one government starts an education programme or project, another incoming government will abandon it and start a new one which it may also not complete. There are, therefore, many abandoned projects. In some other cases lobbying and influences of political heavyweights and influential traditional rulers make government to backpedal on enunciated policies (Stephen & Chika, 2013).

- *Political Interference:* Party politics and personality clashes often make funding and implementation of educational policies difficult or impossible. In other cases, government engages in playing politics with the educational system to score political points. Renaming of educational institutions has often led to public resistance and disruption of academic activities. For example, during the governor Rasheed Ladoja regime the Oyo State College of Education, Oyo was renamed as Emmanuel Alayande College of Education which led to a lot of protest both within and outside the College.

- *Localisation of academics and student admissions:* College of education and management are supposed to be a universal (worldwide) phenomenon. This means that there is no rationale in limiting recruitment of staff and management officers to people from the contiguous communities of the college. This is common in Nigeria and this practice has resulted in low quality performance and inefficient operations. The problem also stretches into student admissions. According to Breton (2003) in Stephen and Chika (2013), the world is moving towards improvement of higher education and so he states that "… one of the essential components of the cultural world of college education internationalization practitioners is how to improve student and lecturer mobility and give this its true meaning in today's world".

- *Inadequate infrastructure:* Poor funding, personal interest of management and high level of corruption have led to a state of inadequate infrastructure in most of the higher institutions in Nigeria and this has hindered adequate performance of Nigerian colleges of education.

Regulators

Education regulators in Nigeria include the National Universities Commission (for Universities), the National Board for Technical Education, NBTE (for Polytechnics), the National Commission for Colleges of Education (for Colleges of Education) and the Federal Ministry of Education, as the overall controller of education in Nigeria. There is also the Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) for the teaching profession while the NERDC regulates curriculum development and management. Problems emanating from these bodies include:

- *Poor Supervision and Monitoring*: Their accreditation exercises are often stage-managed and no efforts are made to put the made-up issues in place even after the exercise is completed.

- *NCCE imposes a carrying capacity rule:* This means that the regulator defines the number of students that a college of education could admit during each session based on the facilities available. This limits the number of students admittable with a large overflow of un-admitted candidates. The Committee of Provost (CP) has not been very helpful in this matter.

- Inadequate manpower resulting in ineffective regulation of the teaching profession has left many uncertificated teachers teaching in Nigeria's tertiary education system especially in college of education.

- Curriculum reform lethargy has left the Nigerian system less dynamic and apparently insensitive to curriculum matters due to the boogey of bureaucracy on the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC).

Examination Bodies
Nigeria's examination bodies for various levels of education include: the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), the National Examinations Council, NECO (for the secondary school level), the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) for entrance examinations into tertiary institutions. As feeder institutions to the college of education level, failures on the part of these institutions have negatively reflected on the college system. Some of the problems include: examination malpractices (and leakages), inadequate monitoring of administration of examinations, especially in corruption-ridden 'special centers' and in secondary schools whose outputs feed the college system with half-baked or poorly-prepared candidates.

The Society: Negative Impact on Students
College staff and students live in and relate with the society. The life pattern and behavior of the society will surely influence college performance. The problem here starts from before the candidate is admitted. Most secondary school students (who are inputs into the college system) get polluted by the society and the environment as well as by family and peer group factors. Some of these problems include: examination malpractice, lesbianism and gay life, academic laziness, unwillingness to study, bullying and fastidiousness, unbridled desire for money and immorality, cultism and intimidation of others, robbery and stealing, telling lies and escapist mindset. Some others are results/documents falsification, indiscipline, indecent dressing and corrupt music, pornography and cyber crimes.

College Internal Factors

These internal factors manifest in lack of trust and regard for college authorities, pressure from teaching and non-teaching staff, inadequacy of facilities such as libraries, laboratories, textbooks, un-conducive learning environment, over-crowding, dirty hostels, etc. We also have compromises on academic standards, cultism and cult violence, wrong placement of students into unwanted courses, peer pressure and deficient curricula which have negatively impacted on products' employability after school.

Technological Factors

Prominent are dangers of misuse of information communication technologies to commit fraud and other unprofitable foibles common to youths, distractive and negative life styles (habits). Others include: pornography, cyber-crime among the male students, documents manipulation and forgery.

Family Problems

These cause poverty leading to gullibility, naivety on the part of the younger ones, desperation for admission which leads to crime, over petting and pampering, low quality primary and secondary schools attended, high expectations from students, poor monitoring and control, nonchalant attitude to curbing adolescents' excesses and forcing students to study some courses they do not like.

Causes of Poor Performance of College of Education Graduates and Non Recognition of Nigeria's Academia Effort

1. **Shallow Teaching**: Lecturers are not deep; they rush through lectures and do not bother whether their students understand what was taught or not.

2. **No Monitoring of Lecturers' Teaching**: Lecturing is a teaching activity. Academic freedom does not imply that a college teacher does what he likes in the class. There is too much freedom to the extent that lecturers' class activities are not checked, assessed or monitored. The consequence stares us in the paper.

3. **Over-crowding / Overpopulated Lecture Rooms**: Lecturing facilities -classrooms, learning materials as well as class/building fittings-lighting etc, are not adequate. There are not enough lecture theaters. Public address systems are almost non-existent. The lecturer most of the time is frustrated with the excess student number swooping into lecture rooms during lectures. Dearth of facilities may make some students not attend lectures when they could not locate lecture venues especially once there is a shift in venue.

4. **Lack of Practical Demonstration**: At the secondary school level, those who take the General Certificate of Education [GCE] examinations settle for alternative to practical as against the practical tests taken by regular SSCE candidates. This handicap is extended to the Nigerian college system where science and technology students neither use nor touch,

not to talk of practicing with, practical equipment. It may therefore not be a surprise that a student who made distinction in chemistry may not know well how to titrate. Graduates of agriculture and related areas may not have visited nor practiced in a farm throughout their staying in the college.

5. **Lack of Housing (living) Facilities**: The reality that some lecturers and students live too far away from the college environment and have to shuttle to school every day and back cannot make for a credible academic exercise. Lecturers in big cities like Lagos, Ibadan, Abeokuta and Ilorin suffer a lot in their effort and desire to go to work. Some, especially in Lagos leave their places of residence about 5am everyday to arrive at the college environment about 9am, lagged out, tired, wearied, hungry, etc, what will such a person teach? At about 3/4pm he has started rushing home to arrive about 9/10 pm. When will he prepare the lectures, do research and publish papers? Yet, if you do not publish, you perish in the college system. This same situation applies to students some of who sponsor themselves and could only attend classes once/twice a week.

Requirements for Sound and Effective Academic Work in the College System
For a college of education to be so called and respected, certain conditions and facilities have to be in place. Failure to meet these conditions and set in place these facilities will cause problems to arise. In the Nigerian college system, different types of services are expected from the system, including:

Student academic services (or student academic needs)
To enhance the teaching-learning activity and improve students' learning and academic performance, the following things need to be put in place as part of students' academic services: lecture halls, good lecturers, well-furnished and well-equipped libraries, well-equipped laboratories (for sciences), technology workshops, mini-markets or supermarkets, business laboratories, (for economics, business education), agricultural demonstration centres and agricultural farms and practical entrepreneurial apprenticeship experience while in school.

Practical training of students of agriculture can be carried out in demonstration farms for piggery, fishery, snailry, grass-cutter farming, etc. Entrepreneurship centres can be used to teach students to learn carpentry, furniture making, events management, fashion designing, interior decoration, computer appreciation, metal works, sign writing and other crafts.

The students should be properly guided towards the teaching practice periods. Non professionals should not be allowed to supervise during the exercise.

Staff Academic Services (Needs)
Well stocked libraries with relevant and current materials, laboratories, demonstration schools (for Adult Education Lecturers), agricultural extension stations, effective research facilities, ICT skill-acquisition centres, demonstration centres for micro teaching should be available in the college environment.

Non-Academic Services: For Students

General students' welfare include – hostels, catering, safety/security, unionism/ activism, work-study programme, recreation and sporting facilities, social interactions, social networking, counseling, student outreaches – debating, conferences, facility visits/excursions, religious issues, etc. should be introduced in the curriculum.

Non-teaching Staff Services

These are enhancers for greater productivity and they include accommodation (within and around the campus), medicals, transportation, family welfare, recreation and social networking, consultancy, preparation for retirement and pension, handsome remuneration and welfare packages, home ownership programmes, cooperative facilities, upfront bulk payment of allowances, etc. should be in existence.

General Services (Physical Infrastructure)

We expect focus on infrastructure such as buildings, aesthetics, sanitation, civil works, event centers, roads, electricity, water, healthcare, recreation and sports etc. We also expect supporting facilities like business centers, supermarkets, trading malls, etc, to be set up in areas close to campuses to enable the college community have easy access to them.

Suggestions, Solutions and Policy Options

Having diagnosed and analysed the problems of college of education and management in Nigeria, we attempt suggesting ways of improving the situation, especially by generating new ideas that can be put into practice to improve the system:

Education franchising/cross border education

This concept means that entrepreneurs in education or existing educational institutions can enter into franchise agreements with renowned and specialized institutions. For example, the College of Education, Lanlate can be allowed to establish a sandwich programme for the needy students that the regular college of education cannot accommodate. The advantages of this include:

a. Improvement in quality of education and training especially in the areas of specialization of the franchisor.

b. It will also create opportunities for collaboration and exchange of staff and students among colleges. It will also create job opportunities.

c. E-learning will be enhanced and promoted; colleges will be able to meet the objectives of SDGs number 4 and will help reduce social tension.

Introduction of access programmes

The problem of backlog of qualified but not admitted candidates in Nigerian college system can be alleviated if colleges of education can introduce and properly manage

access programs such as pre-nce programme. Candidates can be surer of formal college admission through this mop up outlets.

Remedial programmes

Colleges can also invest in remedial programmes where they properly/adequately prepare candidates for admission. This will solve the problems created by inadequate and poor teaching and learning in secondary schools. It will also save parents and children from patronizing unscrupulous education vendors and hawks in 'special centres' who trade in marks and fake certificates.

Establishing more institutions

College of education facilities should be expanded. A situation of admitting less than 20% of over 1 million candidates sitting for JAMB examinations annually is unacceptable. It is a time bomb waiting to explode. Conditions for establishing college of education should be made easier. Better recognition should be accorded other levels of tertiary education to create veritable platforms for absorption of teeming population of waiting candidates. In all, however, regulatory authorities should ensure that quality and standards are not compromised.

Re-orientation and counseling

Students need to change their disposition towards education. The present "cash and carry" attitude must be stopped and the spirit of honesty and hard work instilled in them. The principle of KYC (Know Your Customer/Client) must be imbibed by colleges. They need to effectively monitor the attitudes, inclinations and behaviours or lifestyles of their students so as to nip in the bud their slips into bad behavior. College managers should make the campus environment busy and active to get students engaged to distract them from negative inclinations.

Regular counseling programmes should be organized to inculcate good habits into students. It is excess freedom and idleness together with the nonchalant attitude of college administration that make some students to stray. The situation is akin to absentee parents who do not have time enough to monitor and guide their children and wards so they gradually go wild and become ultimately uncontrollable.

Student allocation to hostels

One thing that can create attachment for students is to be allocated halls of residence whether they physically live in them or not. This model, practiced at the Federal College of Education Osiele, Abeokuta makes every registered student to become psychologically attached to the system. With identity card, a student can always go to his assigned hall of residence to play games, enjoy recreation, use the Hall Library or Reading Room, use the lobby, enjoy sporting activities and visit or interact with other students who sleep in the halls, etc. The belief here is that students can use these facilities during examination periods and perform better academically especially in the case of off- campus students. Nigerian college authorities are advised to adopt the model as it will reduce incidences of cultism and unnecessary distraction for students.

Conclusion

College as *ivory towers* and communities of thinkers reside to advance the cause of the society and of the society of people is in serious dilemma, but not totally irredeemable. No serious person desires to get to the north by travelling south. Nigeria should halt the current trend of counting numbers of colleges, which portends growth without development. Enough of flimsy excuses and poor attention given to teacher education in a third world country like Nigeria which is not redeemed by mere wishful thinking. *If wishes were horses…*

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