



RE-WRITING THE PARADIGMS IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract:

From eutaxy to entropy. In recent times, it has become a consistent phenomenon not to expect to see a Nigerian University feature in the first one thousand position in the world ranking of universities. This is a red flag that should bother all stakeholders in the Nigeria's education sector. History has it that in the 1960's, through to early 80's Nigerian universities were among the trailblazers in the world. It is a known fact that universities in this part of the world had exhibited unrivalled merits and scholarship at inception and had occupied the top echelon of academic practice in Africa and the world, producing world-class scholars and professionals. Our universities today struggle for recognition in Africa, especially in the public purview where they once excelled with seamless efforts. Could this be as a result of epistemic impasse caused by abject disregard for excellence which had suddenly set in on the part of those who were supposed to teach knowledge, research knowledge and market knowledge? Or as a result of other factors extrinsic to the universities that had wrought this pestilence and had brought about a pernicious decline both in academic and administrative activities? Whatever the case may be, it is obvious that urgent measures should be introduced to reverse this obnoxious trend.

Keywords: entropy, ranking of universities, epistemic impasse, excellence, decline

1. Introduction

In his parable of quantum insanity, Albert Einstein, a legendary physicist, averred that:

"Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results."¹

In recent times, our universities had consistently been on a default playing mode, reeling out discordant tunes from a broken disc, such that one is prone to ruminate on a number of debilitating questions like, 'Why are we crises prone?' 'Why do the

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*structures/curriculum in our universities remain so pedestrian after many years of existence? 'How can we find funds to run a university?' 'How can we motivate staff to give their best at all times?' 'How can we tackle corruption and criminalize the culture of quid pro quo?' 'Why does the gap between the town and the gown keeps widening by the day?'*²

Marching on the same spot for decades had wrought untold destruction on our image in the global educational circles and this has only translated to our inability to attract values and maintain gold standards that used to be in our repositories. Someone once said that known and acclaimed theories and philosophies work greatly in other climes but pale into insignificance on Nigerian soil. Perennialism, essentialism, progressivism, reconstructionism,³ and other notable –isms that come by way of educational philosophies have all been deployed consciously or unconsciously in fashioning education policies for Nigeria at different times, but it is difficult to see notable influence on delivery in our educational arena. No doubt, institutional weaknesses, lack of professionalism, skewed, inadequate and inappropriate manpower, all had constrained our educational policy formulation.⁴

Though education in Nigeria has brought about rapid industrialization, modernization, self-awareness and some form of socio-economic progress, it is disconsolate to admit that with the immense potentials of the nation, coupled with her image as *'giant of Africa'* and her pedigree as *'the most populous black nation in the world,'* we are yet to fly above liminal regions and have not developed beyond the level of latent potentials. In the process, smaller nations have overtaken us in actualizing the full gains of education. The translation and application of knowledge to advance the society remains tottering, while the socio-economic progress expected of a nation with such an intimidating pedigree is commensurably low. It has become necessary to investigate existing models and actions of the various stakeholders in the educational investments, most especially in our universities, with a view to charting the way forward.

2. Justification

2.1 Background of Study

While it is the consensus that our universities are lately losing quality and prestige in the global circles, it has been difficult to catch up with past reputations as a result of repeated antediluvian practices that have become effete over time and have consistently been yielding frail results basically because they had become out of tune with contemporary realities. A change of this cyclical narrative in managing the universities in Nigeria would require a radical change of paradigms. In this context, it is apt to study the present paradigms with a view to redesigning and realigning them for instant and positive results, especially as the corrosive effects on the entire educational sector and in HEIs are being felt at their highest limits. At this juncture, it is only natural to start considering new ideas that have the capacities to rejig and rejuvenate the entire university system in Nigeria.

In this paper, we shall attempt to probe the corrosive patterns and practices in our universities and underline their effects on the system. Our focus shall dwell on *'what we*

do and what we fail to do as universities, and our scope shall be restricted to public universities, as it is a verifiable truth that they remain, by and large, territories for ethical compromise and quality concerns. We shall foray into modern ways of administrative and academic practices and see how it might be difficult to achieve excellence with the effete and regressive styles that our universities had stuck to for decades. As linchpins of campus operations that occupy definitive spaces and entrench synergy and stability through effective management practice, and as merchants of knowledge, it has become exigent to appraise the work-culture, disposition and practices of both the administrative class, the academic class and other stakeholders, identify what went wrong and advise on the means of keeping in tandem with global best practice towards forging new paradigms.

2.2 Review of Literature

There is no doubt that though, a corpus of books and internet materials had interrogated the failures of HEIs in Nigeria from diverse perspectives, not many had addressed the need for a broad-based treatment of the lesion. The challenges which are legion are in most cases, only mentioned, condemned, and subjected to the usual whims of placing all blames at the doorsteps of the owner-government; while all stakeholders are actually culpable for the monstrous excrescence our universities are passing through. Extant paradigms are variously analyzed and reprobated through the kind of conflicts they had generated in our universities over time. While writers like Fatile *et al* (2011)⁵ and Holton (1998)⁶ emphasized dialogue to ease the tension caused by multiculturalism in the search for global peace and organizational harmony, Akeusola *et al* (2012)⁷ considered conflict in the Nigerian perspective, complementing Kehinde O. Osakede *et al* (2009)⁸ on the obvious failure of management and communication in conflict control and resolution. It is one thing to write about conflict, but another to critically analyze the core problems with a view to delimiting conflict and finding a permanent solution to the intermittent resurgence of overarching dissonance in our university system. Fact is that the present framework in the universities needs overhauling as it no longer works for contemporary realities. Thomas Kuhn (1970)⁹ posited a radical reform and recalibration of thoughts to advance understanding and a major change in the way one views a challenge. That is substituting old realities with new realities, like Galileo's impactful breakthrough discovery on the shape of the world, or like Ptolemy's astronomy giving way to the superior Copernican's astronomy. That is paradigm shift.

3. Methodology

A descriptive survey is conducted to validate our statement that the present framework in our universities has become otiose and antithetical to the modern client-driven, business-oriented system, and that new paradigms should be introduced to encourage best practice. Secondary sources of data collection remain relevant textbooks, the Internet, and researched publications.

4. Administrative Paradigms

With the present state of affairs in the universities and the attendant prolapse in the system, it has become visibly inevitable to crave for a paradigmatic shift. New ways of practice, new conceptions and new solutions have to be devised to tackle challenges engendered by traditional practices that we shall be mentioning:

4.1 Generalist Myth

The fissiparous policy introduced from inception to keep the university community together in a *'unifamily and unifellowship'*¹⁰ form, and the erroneous step to dichotomize along the *'cerebral'* and the *'all-comers'* lines for academic and administrative practices created the generalist myth, where it is believed that all that was required for an administrative job is evidence of minimum level of scholarship. This has its lineage in colonial officialdom. During that time, the empire emphasized some level of education for clerks and other ancillary officials in a platform where it was highly difficult to get literate personnel. In the present age, it is becoming increasingly necessary to professionalize, as the job is becoming more challenging and is consistently shifting from the *'learn-as-you-work'* perspective to acquisition of new competencies. The Fulton Commission which was inaugurated in 1966 to re-appraise the Royal Civil Service, and which have prompted significant changes in the public service since 1967 rejected out rightly, *'the cult of the amateur'* or the generalist class, because, as amateurs, they lacked professional education and formal training¹¹. Following this report,

"...the Public Service Review Commission rejected 'the cult' of the generalist and called for civil servants to be 'professionally trained in management'¹²" (p.442)

It is jaw-dropping therefore, to note that decades after the condemnation and effacement of the generalist means of recruitment and operation, it is still being considered as a viable option in some institutions where management have largely failed to sponsor or encourage acquisition of skills and professionalism. This is anachronism; a form of traditional management which has its foundation based on longevity and institutional experience (i.e. a newbie who joins an organization, learns from bosses and peers, becomes competent and replaces the first-line supervisor who transfers, retires, displaced or dies). The contemporary workspace culture no longer entertains the conception of administrative practice as an Art whereby it is learned through experience and longevity, but as Science, where training and re-training is germane for knowledge update:

*"Then, Administration was regarded as an Art and not a Science; one was **educated** for it, never **trained**. With the present complexity of problems that are handled by civil servants, **learning by doing** has become out of date as the only method of training. **Professionalization** of the service (is) considered to be the answer, if problems are to be expertly handled. (Emphases mine).¹³ (p. 193)"*

According to Professor Adebayo Adedeji,

*“What African Governments need in future years are not **intelligent amateurs** in administration but officials who possess specific skills in administration and management (e.g. personnel administration, budgeting, planning and financial management etc.)¹⁴”*
(p.193)

The basic requirement to complement the formal training of the present-day administrator is professionalism which is acquirable through on-the-job training and re-training to become professional administrators. However, most administrators stop short of venturing further to acquire modern skills and technics, contented with the rituals of waiting from paychecks to paychecks, and vegetate in the system. To nurture top-notch officers, it is important for universities to invest in its officers, and for individuals to invest in themselves, as knowledge acquired would inevitably be used to benefit both the person and the organization.

4.2 iSMART Education and e-Administration

Remaining useful and eliminating redundancies have been key factors used constantly by new-age Managers to stay on top of the game. New competencies enhance prospect on the job, ensure relevance, and boost productivity. A reflection on the relationship between technology and administration reveals that in the contemporary workspace, latest technologies are being used for business goals and enhanced service-delivery. In corporate Machiavelli, the mantra has always been ‘*Don’t work hard. Work smart.*’ A tech-savvy officer is more useful and preferable to an analogue officer who has little or no contribution to make in form of value addition.

The multidisciplinary advantage presented by iSMART education,¹⁵ (i.e. integrating for Synergy in Management and Relevant Technological Education) and its affective influence on the quality of service-delivery in the administrative space should be cultivated to the fullest by management of our universities as they have the utmost advantage in this area. The Registry of Nigerian universities should endeavor to harvest and harness what every discipline in their universities have to offer as well as the interconnections among disciplines to advance the Registry. For instance, there are ways to deploy expertise learnt by someone who studied science, humanities, arts, counselling, technology and any other field in administrative practice as the practice is like a compost that makes use of knowledge from many fields. Such knowledge manifest through writing, interpersonal communication, conflict resolutions, recommendations, mentoring, comprehension and psychological traits that may become useful to address sundry challenges on the job. Courses in these areas are therefore relevant and germane for value-addition in the practice. Also, technology remains a great influence on administrative practice when it comes to effective and efficient service-delivery. This is a form of operation that:

“...accepts, process data and transmits information electronically, and produces result in form of information with a minimum level of human intervention. (emphasis mine)”¹⁶ (p.151)

Technological advancement and its introduction into administration have changed the manners of delivery and the entire work culture in most universities. In this aspect, private universities in Nigeria appear to be ahead as though, most public universities proclaim to having migrated to e-operations, they have instead remain largely stationary, rooted to elementary forms of e-services and unwilling to explore the extensive possibilities offered by the services to full advantage. For instance, most public universities are contented with conducting meetings in a ‘project-and-view’ quasi-paperless environment, marrying both the traditional hard and soft copies together, and have been reluctant in foraying beyond that; not engaging in biometrics or looking at other opportunities. Old Professors are usually suspicious of the new opportunities and found the confidentiality level circumspect. And with their Luddite mentality, they force their opinions on the management which in most cases they had helped to install. In private universities, the situation is different. These institutions are more driven by new ideas, more client-centric and meteoric in embracing new ways. The older universities need to embrace e-administration fully to join in the re-writing of the principles and paradigms of university administration. It is obvious that the traditional siloed approach would no longer suffice, and that the opportunities presented by the all-comers iSMART framework should be tapped to benefit the system in a synergized e-environment.

4.3 Combat Paradigm

The rabbit-duck philosophy of Wittgenstein (1953)¹⁷ stresses the difference between perception and interpretation. It is being deployed in this instance to stress optical switch rather than optical illusion or ocular deception as used by some scientists. The emphasis here is on the interpretive tendencies, the perceptions and misinterpretations. It is an ambiguous manner in which a rabbit or a duck is seen, and what is immediately associated with the image. It is two different ways of seeing: ‘seeing that’ versus ‘seeing as’. As at the first contact, our clients see (that) officer of the university. Subsequent interactions make them (clients) see ‘that officer’ as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ (i.e. see as).

A new client to the university seeing an officer for the first time is complaint and neutral. He is, in the first instance, prone to see the officer as officer (no tag attached); and a negative or positive interface between them defines a lasting perception for the client. If the front-desk officer turns out to care less about institutional responsibilities and becomes unruly and uncouth in his/her approach, the client goes away with that branded impression, and this may portend a relational disaster for the university. If the first contact plays out in this manner, *ceteris paribus*, the client who may be a student, a parent or someone *in loco parentis* holds on to the negative image about the organization for a longtime, possibly forever, and automatically view every officer of the organization in this mode.

The image foisted on an organization courtesy of individual conduct or misconduct defines whether the client sees a rabbit or a duck; and this ultimately mirrors the paradigms of the organization in his/her mind. Officers represent in all cases, the image of the university. With them, the university floats or sinks. Behind that resolute desks, they should be made to know that their primary job is to exude positivity and ‘*sell the university*’ not only to outsiders, but to everyone. Their mantra should be to learn how to make people amiably contented, even if not happy. Officers, therefore, are viewed by outsiders, as the paradigm, the ‘standard practice’ and the faces of the university. Unfortunately, not many officers of our universities are sufficiently trained to know the importance and implications of their actions or inactions, and the implications on their organizations. That ‘*student-boss, superior-inferior*’ impulse has eaten deep into the psyche of most of our functionaries in the universities that they do not care a hoot about the impression they give, and are least client-centric. This has been a great challenge to the advancement purposes of most universities in recent times, as they unwittingly amass belligerent and nonfan alumni base that are not positively disposed to their *alma mater*, courtesy of impudent and unsavory experiences they had while in universities. This has doused the spirit and the zeal to give back to their former schools.

4.4 Paradigm Paralysis

One of the attitudinal glitches that had hindered growth in our system is the inability or refusal to introduce new ways of doing things. In most cases, new wave managers brimming with vibrant ideas and propensities are muffled and made to jettison such ideas with the cliché: ‘*That is the way we have been doing it.*’ Or ‘*Wait for your time.*’ The inability to see beyond the current mode of thinking and the unwillingness to explore new ideas or entertain new models to solve challenges have largely made our workspace a closed system. The posture that no matter how brilliant your ideas are, as long as your immediate boss does not buy into them, they die with you, is a popular one in our circles; and this lack of cognitive flexibility have consistently blocked creativity and discouraged strategic alliances.¹⁸ The result; we keep rolling on the same spot for decades, like a cranky computer that has refused to boot.

4.5 Traditional versus New Management Style

Traditional style of management operates on the premise that Managers are the think-tank while the employees are the doers. It works in accordance with the ‘*top-down approach*’ whereby the top management sets the goals for the lower level management to implement. The corporate goals are therefore only achieved through the cerebation of the top management class who ‘*have the solutions*’ and direct the lower-level employees to actualize. Since management is getting things done through balanced involvement of people, most organizations have started introducing a ‘*bottom-up approach*’ where alternative suggestions are encouraged to get everyone involved and make the achievement of the corporate goals participatory and all-embracing. This enhances emotional investments. It is believed that people would be more committed if they participate in the planning and running of their organizations.¹⁹

Since management is a social process and organizations are only 'frameworks' driven by people, management, which is 'getting things done through other people' (p.13)²⁰ should, therefore, be preoccupied with interpersonal relations in order to get the best out of these people. This is the proclivity of the new management style which most of our universities are yet to adapt and adopt. A shifting paradigm in management style has been proven to enhance delivery in policy formulation and in back-office administrative tasks. Sadly, our universities are still glued to the traditional manner which is more or less a function of longevity, institutional experience, and other otiose practices that are incompatible with modern challenges. The new public management style which is more result-oriented is a mixture of business motivation psychology, putting customers first and making organizations compete in a market-oriented, performance-based environment. To maximize efficiency, infuse entrepreneurial spirit, eschew red-tapism, cut cost, reduce classic command, encourage autonomy, sublimate team work and encourage creativity over hierarchy, there is the need for a revolutionary overthrow of the present paradigms and the adoption of private-sector theorems where remunerations and promotions are performance-based. It is only when this state is achieved in our universities that we can start to enshrine efficiency and ensure best practice in a neoliberal economy.

5. Academic Paradigms and Others

Universities are citadels of learning and communities of scholars, students and facilitators. They are 'factories' where knowledge is manufactured, disseminated and marketed. In the same vein, universities are viewed as the culmination point of knowledge where learning acquired at pre-tertiary institutions are honed, perfected and released for socio-economic and cultural advancement of the community. In view of the prodigious place occupied by HEIs especially in a developing culture like Nigeria, it therefore behoves on scholars, stakeholders and *aficionados* of higher education in Nigeria to throw up concerns about the rapid descent of qualitative education in these institutions, the churning out of quantity as against qualitative graduates and the general poor academic performance at our HEIs, with a view to deciphering the false steps, and push for the cancellation of defective paradigms:

5.1 Teaching and Delivery of Knowledge

A diachronic analysis of the state of our universities since independence would reveal a downward trend in standards since the 60's, and 70's when Nigeria was blessed with few numbers of universities. This trajectory has shown that in the present state, our universities are ill-equipped to play the roles expected from them owing to series of defects which are human, physical, material and financial. These inevitably have impacted on the process of teaching and learning in these universities. Citing other scholars, Ajibade *et al.* (2010) in her study on the teaching-learning process, broke the scope of studies in this area to three categories *viz*:

- a) Purpose of the university;

- b) Nature of university teaching; and,
- c) Professional development of university teachers.²¹

The purpose of education in every culture is holistic, as recorded in the Nigeria's National Policy on Education (2008, Section 8, no. 59)²² and as a result, the method of delivery is important in order to achieve effective and efficient learning environment by ensuring the transition from a 'consumer' mode to a 'producer' mode of learning with emphasis on 'construction of knowledge' and 'negotiation of meaning.'²³ This proclivity not only ensures innovation and productivity but also ensures the production of employable and apprenticing graduates. Sharpening the pedagogical skills of lecturers in our institutions would enable them to deliver knowledge accurately and efficiently, such that it would facilitate the personal development of the learners and would be useful to them and to the entire nation. Thus, it is not enough to be top-flying scholars in Science, Technology or Humanities, and to have this knowledge locked up in the pate. It is more important to know how to deliver the knowledge effectively and become exemplary teachers. Universities need to emphasize training on this line in order to break the barrier between learning and knowledge-delivery. Also, it has been widely acknowledged that pedagogical methods seem to have reached a complimentary stage in Finland, and that the Finnish-inspired teaching methods thrives better than other methods in counterpart nations in terms of enhancing the proficiency rate of students in content knowledge and problem-solving skills. It is obvious that the traditional method of teaching and knowledge delivery in this part of the world cannot be said to have been roundly successful in optimizing learning in most instances, thus, the need to try out a new pedagogical method that is more supportive and collaborative.

5.2 Quality Assurance

Quality assurance stipulates procedures for internal and external assessment of programmes, provides general principles for assessment of education, training, research and administrative practices, and assesses the strategic plans of universities. It is the introduction of measures that would ensure and assure quality and standards in the intellectual products of universities, making sure they conform to minimum academic standards. Quality assurance is carried out internally and externally, with the external regulatory body being the National Universities Commission (NUC). Areas of concern include the modification of curriculum, strategic planning, human resource availability, adoption of ICT, effective supervision of activities and accreditation of programmes.²⁴

Quality Assurance practice is a noble idea that should ensure conformity to standards if followed diligently and with honesty of purpose. The single most important activity of the external regulatory body is the accreditation visitations to universities which in recent times appear to encourage lobbying over enforcement of standards. In some cases, composition of membership and the demeanor of members appear to suggest a 'job-for-the-boys' project where enforcement of standards is subjugated to *quid pro quo* in order to have positive reports. Standards purchased through 'the brown envelope' is unsalutary and compromising to academic culture. The backbone of academic activities remain the assurance of quality in academic practices. It would be highly disconsolate if

this culture is compromised. A situation whereby private universities maintain names of full-time lecturers in government universities on their staff lists as full-time staffers, and everybody suddenly turns a blind eye just to get accredited would certainly not ensure the quality that we all desire.

5.3 Brain-Drain, Brain-Gain, Military Gangsterism and Black-Market Democracy

Human capital flight and lack of human development hit the nation hard from the early 80's till present. The migration which is mostly as a result of economic downturn and the pursuit of a better life caused the nation a core portion of valuable individuals who have gone further to contribute in no small measures to the socio-economic development of the receiving nations. The human loss through this mode is comparable to the loss experienced during the obnoxious slave trade in the 19th century with the only difference being that this has been a willful migration. Our youth population and our *crème de la crème* of the intellectual world departed in flocks as economic migrants and as people in search of better climes where scholarship is handled more expertly, and with due attention. This is as a result of nonchalance from government and stakeholders:

“The pecuniary report from our universities in Nigeria is saddening. The ivory towers can no longer boast of solid financial base to sponsor projects or initiate veritable community services. It is increasingly becoming a herculean task to even pay the salaries of the staff as a result of the dwindling subventions from government. Both the administrative and academic staff no longer have the benefit of adequate training on the job to facilitate good role performance. Computers, photocopiers, and in the case of the academic staff, reagents, Bunsen burners and other scientific appurtenances have become rare luxuries in our universities. Our libraries are filled with ‘Lugardian’ books that bear little or no relevance to present-day scholarship.” ²⁵

Years of failures of our successive governments in tackling the challenges of providing viable education to the populace has gradually affected the tertiary education sector and our universities. Successive governments have not given this sector the attention it deserves. Inadequate funding birthed bad lecture rooms, bad laboratories, sub-standard infrastructural facilities, unethical practices, grumpy workforce and unscholarly environment. This putrescence, this rot, this monumental disdain for academic culture was quadrupled during the military era which held our political space hostage for more than three decades. The result, a culture of impunity was entrenched on our campuses, merits, sacrificed for patronage, criticisms muffled, and university education ostracized and visited with incessant clampdowns on perceived hot-headed ideologues amongst the university lecturers. In the process, the academia became highly dichotomized and politicized.

The trauma continued under the successive civilian governments where military governments were replaced by civilianized juntas. Least attention was given to education, while mediocre and selfish apparatchiks were entrusted with its affairs. Paltry budgetary allocations, (i.e. between 4% and 7% for more than three decades-the lowest

in Africa) were earmarked for the sector, as education was consistently starved of deserved attention.

The resilience of the Nigerian spirit is however, constantly exhibited in the groundbreaking achievements of diasporas' academics who have vouchsafed developmental and globally acclaimed services to the receiving nations to prove that given a conducive environment, Nigerian academics could soar and be counted as forerunners in the comity of nations. To return on track, practices should be reviewed, samples followed and sound academic culture inculcated. Attempts should be made to find a permanent solution to stop the consistent inconsistencies on our calendars, whereby strikes and industrial disputes incapacitate academic activities for months over conditions of service and provisions of basic academic needs. Government, students and all stakeholders should begin to show more interest in achieving standards through building proper clouts and practices for academics. There is urgent need to overthrow the bad paradigms and encourage the diaspora to partake in the onerous task of re-shaping and re-inventing extant paradigms.

5.4 Fetish Administration

Internally, nothing is more destabilizing than for the chief executive of a university to run a bottle-corked, comprador-styled, closed-system administration, where transparency is sacrificed for undue secrecy. It is not only an invite for information epidemics but also a tacit validation of corruption and shady deals. An open system of administration encourages good inter-relationships and healthy co-existence, while the opposite fans the embers of distrust, suspicion, impunity and quadriplegic mishaps. Most executives in the university assume a higher plane as soon as they become one, deliberately creating a gulf between themselves and those they supposedly lead, deeming it unnecessary to bring them along and abreast of developments. This, in most cases, is counter-productive.

5.5 Misuse of Research Grants

Research grants are grants that fund research in specific areas of academic disciplines for groundbreaking knowledge discoveries and innovative projects with high potential impact. Such funds are granted either by government, corporations, and foundations to recipient, institutions, business or individuals. They are non-repayable sources of '*free money*'. In the past, such grants had been of great assistance in generating ideas leading to the upliftment of the living standards of the nation and the immediate community. It is therefore alarming to note that in recent times, allegations of misuse, abuse and misappropriation of such funds have gained traction, especially with regards to Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), which happens to be a foremost grants body that has facilitated overwhelming impact on career performance of intellectuals in Nigerian universities. The scheme which came into being in 2011 had assisted greatly to provide facilities to tertiary institutions in Nigeria, while also making available, financial assistance to staffers in these institutions for training and development, conducts of research and publications, provision of instructional materials and equipment, erections of physical infrastructure for teaching and learning, and provision of assistance in any

other area essential for the improvement and maintenance of standards. In the light of the recent allegation of impropriety, mismanagement and misuse of the opportunities provided by TETFund, it is unbelievable to note that the body which came into being (first, in 1993 through Act No. 7, amended by Act No. 40 of 1998, and later repealed and replaced with TETFund Act 2011)²⁶ to stem decadence and corrosion in tertiary institutions is gradually being entrapped by corruption, as it was claimed that funds meant for research have been used to build houses, purchase cars and squandered on personal needs.²⁷ Though this alert sounded by TETFund was dismissed as *'hasty generalization'* by ASUU, it remains a cause for concern in a society that lives in deprivation of basic needs.

5.6 Other Stakeholders

The primary clients of our universities are the students. In the business of knowledge-dissemination, knowledge acquisition and knowledge-marketing, students formed the epicenter of the activities, hence, it is important that nugatory practices from this class of people would adversely affect the polity. The youthful population who are representatives of the future of the nation have been highly culpable over the years for deconstructing academic culture and putting it to disrepute. It is the consensus that our value-matrices have ruptured across all known cleavages due to series of rude interventions of bad cultures and practices from the western world; and that youthful *élan* or overzealousness had played a part in charting a negative course for our youths in the universities. This is so as many of them allowed themselves to be distracted by inanities and serious anti-social practices, especially cultism. The numbers of cult groups in our universities have become overwhelming to the extent that female groups have joined in the acts of thuggery, brigandage and blood-letting, wasting lives at the slightest prompts or provocation, carrying out bestial carnages at will. It is sad that as we speak, membership of deadly cults has even extended to some staff members who might be found useful to cover tracks and compromise ethics of academic practice. While some universities apprehended cultists and accomplices and subjected them to the law of the land, our justice system has not been helpful as it has set free a number of them and abetted them to escape justice. Such students oftentimes returned to their campuses to complete their studies and continued to abet and encourage criminalities. A case in study is the Obafemi Awolowo University massacre which came about as a result of a putsch against anti-cultism students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, on 10 July, 1999, leaving five people dead.²⁸ Feud by rival gangs destabilize universities on a regular basis and terminate academic activities. It should be noted that parents also share a humongous part of the blame in the anti-social manners of their wards as most parents are lackadaisical and drop the bridle as soon as their young wards gain admission. Nowadays, most parents fail in their duties to bequeath good manners to the wards and such wards usually end up joining bad gangs when confronted with *'unbridled freedom'*.

Host communities also contribute in some cases, to the failure of academic practice and academic culture in our universities. A case where the communities are hostile to the universities not only show insensitivity to the importance of education but also reify the

level of ignorance of members of such communities. A community desirous of education should encourage the setting up and provision of hospitable environment for the universities rather than fighting the universities over gazetted land mass acquired by the universities. Cases also abound where the host communities took up arms against students in the past. The university idea is undoubtedly, still remote to some communities who see it as high-nosed and elitist propaganda with no benefit for their communities. The university is therefore surrounded and mangled by anachronistic hosts. Unfortunately, the prevailing situation whereby the influence of town-gown initiatives is not being felt does not help the matter.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Professionalism

For a good administrative framework in our universities, time has come to imbibe the modernist/postmodernist culture of building and investing on professionals rather than encouraging an amateurish and unskilled workforce. Training and re-training is germane to achieve a solid work ethics and to remain relevant in a highly competitive global space.

6.2 Technophilia

The COVID 19-induced pedagogic adventure of online teaching through blended learning and reversed classrooms have provided an alternative means of knowledge delivery in a pandemic year. Even in the midst of technological dystopia, universities in this clime have been able to experiment with this pedagogic alternative and were successful to a large extent, presenting a viable option for the traditional, physical, in-person learning mode. Developing a virile culture of technophilia is germane to counter our penchant for technophobia. The use of computer technology has come to enhance service-delivery in all ramifications. The inventions make delivery smart, quick, neat and does a whole lot more within a limited time. It provides opportunities for an expansive creativity and finesse. In the contemporary world, new realities are designed and determined by new technologies. The multivalent opportunities provided by e-operations and iSMART framework should be explored with a view to further enhancing the work culture. We should stop working hard and start working smart.

6.3 Anti-combative Approach

The pugnacious approach of which most staffers are guilty and remorseless should be tackled decisively. Until the orientation is changed, and our public universities start to run like the client-centric business ventures, they would continue to reap the needless losses foisted on them by unfriendly staffers who carry on like hostile bulldogs.

6.4 New Management Style

It is high time we start embracing new styles and try out new ways in order to tackle new challenges and focus on new realities. New modes of operations, new ways of delivery

in administrative practice and in teaching/learning process would go a long way in enhancing our profile. Quantum insanity is real.

6.5 Quality Reassurance

It is disconsolate to note that though the nation had been an adroit player in the university enterprise for decades, we are yet to totally play according to the rules. We flout fundamental principles with impunity, and still expect to be compared with puritan practitioners in the global space. We need to debenture our present to secure our future. We must re-assure quality in our academia.

6.6 Corruption

Corruption, overwhelming and destructive by nature, has continued to entrap every facet of our lives in captivity. It is sad to note that the academic fabric is not immune from this vermin as it is a microcosm of the larger society. Until things are set right both by the government and every stakeholder, it might be difficult to reclaim lost territories in HEIs. Government must be ready to do the needful by injecting adequate funds to power and to rejuvenate this sector. Leaders in the universities should be encouraged to float open-door policies in running their domains while staffers with criminal indulgencies should be punished to serve as deterrents. Universities should be adrenalized to float town-gown initiatives in order to be seen as relevant to the host communities and the world. Decisive move should also be initiated towards achieving a complete autonomy in our universities. It is after these steps have been taken that one can start to talk of entrenching global best practice and enviable academic scholarship comparable to other academic cultures the world over.

7. Conclusion

We have endeavored to emphasize the need to adopt new models in running our universities in Nigeria. Re-writing the corrosive paradigms in the nation would require all hands on deck as they do not serve the nation in good stead. It is therefore, the corporate social responsibilities of stakeholders to look back with a view to re-inventing the university culture as the present modes are damaging, demeaning and do not represent the drive and purpose of the average Nigerian youth. Our universities are *'localized, provincialized and ethnicised'*.²⁹ Only few universities were set up devoid of impulse. Most of them were established to fulfill political agenda rather than out of honest will for intellectual aggrandizement. Public universities are left in deplorable states and the government-owner pester them with inadequate funding. A situation whereby less than ten per cent (10%) of budgetary allocation of the nation had consistently been used for decades to service the education sector- one of the lowest in Africa- says a lot about the belief of government in the education enterprise. Given this unwarranted frugality, collapse of quality, best practice, and ethical standards become inevitable. The festering proliferation of private universities are testimonies to a failed public education system. Lip services to self-regulation of our public universities play a

role to further bring down the academic culture. Autonomy has assumed an abbreviated meaning in the Nigerian context, as universities claim autonomy and are still being majorly financed by the government. Exposed by lack of funds, decline in minimum standards of practice set in, and some lecturers are left impervious to decorum and good practice as they trade sex for marks, accept bribe and engage in criminal indulgences. Half-baked interns with good grasp of subject areas but without modern teaching skills populate the institutions and engage in the process of churning out half-baked students. The non-teaching staffers are also not left out of the malaise as they clog the system with unprofessional layabouts. It is glaring therefore, that to reverse the extant obnoxious paradigms, an expansive treatment would have to be initiated from the symptoms to the lesion, and obverse practices should be enthroned. There is urgency for a change of paradigms to be inclusive in the standard global academic culture. This is no mean feat, as it requires the aggregate efforts of all stakeholders in the system to neutralize the foundational model problems.

We have been able to identify the paradigmatic glitches in extant practices in our universities and have emphasized the need for cultivating newer models. The structures and practices which compromise excellence demand re-writing in order to move at par with other universities and achieve global relevance. It is clear that we cannot afford to remain static in a globalized and highly competitive world where change is most constant. Re-writing, re-inventing and deconstructing our effete paradigms will provide us with opportunities for academic success and for global best practice.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interests.

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Mr. Kamal Adetunji Bakare is an astute professional with over twenty years' experience in the field of University Administration in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. He has served in many units in the registry and is presently, head of the Academic Staff Establishment of the University. He is also a PhD student of Literature-in-English, and a connoisseur of knowledge. He has contributed articles published by Global Journal of Human Resource Management, Global Journal of Political Science and Administration and the British Journal of Education respectively.

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