

Federalism, Politics and Corruption in Nigeria: Implications for Higher Education

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Abstract

This study examines some of the current developments in the university system in the educational sector in Nigeria's federalism. Methodologically, the study uses secondary data based on content analysis. The paper notes that Nigerian universities have greatly expanded in terms of number but have stagnated over the years in terms of quality, skills and entrepreneurial usefulness on the part of the products. Hence, the products of these institutions are mostly found to be unemployable and less competitive in relation to their counterparts from other climes. This is a paradox of growth without development in the higher education sector in the country. It is against this backdrop this study is undertaken to critically examine the main challenges facing the higher education advancement in Nigeria. It is observed that the nature of Nigerian politics, the wrongful application of the federal principles and the pervasive corruption in the country have negatively impacted on the higher educational advancement in Nigeria. The study recommends among other strategies surgical and clinical operation for the advancement of the country's higher educational system, which requires fighting the pervasive corruption in the Federation headlong, granting true autonomy to the universities and depoliticizing the educational system. Corrupt and immoral university staff and their accomplices in crime should be prosecuted and jailed to serve as a deterrent to others. Finally, the environment in which the students undertake their studies is greatly a source of concern and thus requires overhauling. For the nation's higher education to progressively advanced, it must be qualitative and internationally competitive.

Keywords: Federalism, Politics, Corruption, Nigerian Higher Education

1. Introduction

In contemporary times, most nation-states tend to depend more on human capital for their needed development in virtually all spheres of human endeavour. Human beings, in most cases, acquire competences and capabilities through learning. Learning which is a continuous process is best acquired through education and training. They both promote rapid development and are two distinct aspects of manpower development processes. Therefore, any nation hoping to record appreciable development must invest meaningfully in its human capital, especially the youth. Thus, higher education remains a major source for training skilled manpower for the industries and other areas of a given nation's life.

It is against this backdrop, this article attempts to critically examine the development of higher education in Nigeria from the perspective of federalism, its politics and the pervasive corruption in the country. The specific objectives include to: (i) examine the Nigerian federal system vis-a-vis its educational policy; (ii) discuss the politics of education in the country; (iii) analyse the impact of corruption in Nigeria's educational development; (iv) examine the challenges the federal system, politics and corruption pose to the nation's educational development; and (v) to provide strategies towards overcoming the identified challenges.

To fully achieve the above stated objectives, this article is divided into eight broad sections. Section one contains the foregoing introduction while section two focuses on the conceptual clarification of the subject matter. Whereas section three discusses the federal principles and the development of higher education in Nigeria; section four analyses the role of politics in higher education in the country. In section five, the paper examines in detail the impact of corruption on educational advancement while section six focuses on the discussion of the challenges to higher education in Nigeria as evident in the preceding two subsections. Section seven attempts to provide strategies for achieving higher educational development in Nigeria, and the final section concludes the paper.

2. Conceptual Issues

2.1 *What is Federalism?*

Nigeria adopts federalism as a form of government under the British Colonial rule in 1954. Federalism simply means an institutional arrangement whereby authority and functional competences are shared among different levels of government (Leff, 1999:210). For many scholars, the idea of federal arrangement is to enhance management of diversity in the political order of those unions involved. Some scholars have regarded this as the sole rationale of federalism (Elazar, 1993, 2001; Mitra, 2001; Shastri, 2001; Osaghae, 1990; 2002; Suberu, 1998;

Watts, 1999; Oyovbaire, 1985; Benjamin, 2012). In Watts' conception, federalism involves the combination of shared rule for some purposes and regional self-rule for others within a single political system so that neither is subordinate to the other (Watts, 1999: 110). Thus, the function of federations is not to eliminate internal differences, but to preserve regional identities within a united framework and to manage it in such a way that regional differences are accommodated. But how well this is done has in practice depended often upon the particular form of the institutions adopted within the federation (Benjamin, 2012).

Federalism has also been associated with other “virtues” such as promoting “justice, equity and equality”, “justice and stability”, “freedom, self-determination and democracy” (Gagnon, 1993; 2001; Norman, 2001; Stepan, 2001; Weinstock, 2001). These goals are attainable through sharing of authority and competencies between levels of government and protecting identity and autonomy against domination. According to K. C. Wheare (1963), federalism consists of a central (federal) government, regional (state, region, and province) and sub-regional (local, community) government; each of these is independent within respective spheres of power and responsibilities defined and allocated by the constitution. The various levels of government are also involved in coordinating relationships with one another. It unites the separate levels of government within an overarching system designed to protect and advance the authorities of all of them. Therefore, a federation is an institutional pillar of vertical separation of powers aimed at providing mutual check and control between different levels of government in particular, and the political system in general (Nnoli, 2003:141).

In Nigeria, the main reason for the adoption of a federal arrangement was the sociological complexity of the society, its ethnic and geographical diversity. This simply means that federalism in Nigeria provides accommodation, an institutional arrangement which gives the component units equal and coordinate *jural* status. In line with this, Ekeh (2000) notes that the differences between the South and the North and between majority and minority ethnic groups in Nigeria quickly led to the choice of federalism in 1954 as an avenue for allowing the different regions of Nigeria to rule themselves in their own unique ways. The choice of federalism arose from domestic circumstances of differences in the histories of pre-colonial and colonial times.

This isolated experience provides a strong basis for the increasing appeal of federalism as a mechanism for dealing with the problem of pluralism and territorially-distributed differences. Minority advocates in Nigeria share the general belief that in multi-ethnic societies such as Nigeria, federalism creates opportunities for mutual co-existence between ethnic majorities and minorities. Also, federalism in Nigeria derives from the belief that it ensures freedom for minorities against domination by larger groups. It allows each group to retain its distinctive characteristics while remaining part of a larger political system; in addition of being an important spur to economic development. However, the latter is yet to manifest meaningfully because of the inability of the Nigerian state to practice true federalism on one hand, and because of consistent poor leadership on the other hand, which in the last three decades has failed to eliminate or minimise the pervasive corrupt practices in the country. Therefore, Nigeria's federal system is beclouded with the challenge of how the various components of the union can accommodate each other in terms of resource distribution as well as power sharing among them. Besides, one common challenge confronting federal states is the tendency towards centralisation, which has been apparent in Nigerian federalism. The phenomenon has manifested itself in several ways.

There is increased capacity on the side of the Federal Government to unilaterally alter, in its own favour, the existing distribution of power between it and the regional governments and, indeed, the various levels of government. Also, there has been an increasing withdrawal to the Federal Government, of functions previously allocated to the state governments which is even more apparent in the educational sector of the economy.

Consequently, there is poor advancement of higher education in the federation. This challenge of poor advancement in the educational system has caused the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) to go on strike frequently. In classical federations, federal and states' tertiary institutions do not go on strike at the same time, because they are differently managed by different bodies; and they do not have the same working conditions as we have in Nigeria. In short, the most useful features of federalism are yet to be reflected in the administration of Nigeria's higher educational system; rather discrimination, mediocrity and favoritism have marred the development of higher education in the country.

2.2 *Politics:*

Politics can be called a science in that it consists of a body of verifiable and systematic knowledge, gathered by observation and experiment (Cartline, 1926). This is because the predictions which the political scientist makes as the result of his observation and experiment are sufficiently-accurate to rank as scientific laws. But in the words of Harold Laski (1920): “Politics does not possess the axiomatic quality of Mathematics. In its equation the variables are human beings whose uniqueness prevents their reduction to law in the scientific sense of that much abused word”. According to Laswell (1958), politics deals with organisation of power, with “who gets what, when, and how”. Politics is equally concerned with the attainment of justice, with the building and sustenance of the good polity, no matter how it is defined. Political life represents some interactions of these two faces of politics, whereby the organisation and distribution of power is informed by some particular conception

of justice. On the other hand, the enhancement of justice is determined by the realities of power (Elazar, 2001). In Nigeria, party politics has not endured enough as ought to be, which reason may have contributed to the low level of the nation's political culture. This fact is alluded to by the frequency of political party high turnover and its associated conflicts. The practice has been such that since the colonial period, in every republic that has existed, it is either new parties are formed or old ones are re-enacted in forms but devoid of any identifiable ideological standard. Since most of the parties and their members lacked clear ideology, the issue of cross carpeting by politicians has become the norm rather than the exception. Hence, within a space of four decades the nation has had over a hundred political parties that have existed and withered away. More worrisome with this mode of politics is that most elected Nigerian leaders are more oriented to politicking than engaging in governance even after they have assumed office (Benjamin, 2010). This practice invariably affects the way policies are made virtually at all levels of government. In advance democracies, the art of politicking stops soon after election of candidates into office, the rest is about governance until the time for the next election. In Nigeria, the good, the bad and the ugly are engaged in a fierce battle of their lives to control the organs of governance and in most cases it is the bad people who usually emerge 'victorious' in a political race that is heavily polluted with money and influence peddling. The polity still retains the old nature of zero-sum game of politics, to the extent that politics is usually built around personalities rather than institutions, which has contributed immensely to Nigeria's poor educational policy system.

2.3 *Corruption*

Globally, corruption is an ancient human phenomenon. Indeed, public notables have abused their offices for personal gain; both the wealthy and common citizens have sought advantage by corrupting those holding power or controlling access to perquisites. The exercise of discretion especially forms of discretion that facilitates or bars entry to opportunity, is a magnetic impulse that invariably attracts potential abusers (Roberg, 2009:1). Perhaps until avarice and ambition cease to be human traits, corruption will continue to flourish. Although corruption is a common phenomenon, yet it is sometimes difficult to define. It has taken a lot of space in the field of social science literature, particularly in political science. Most political science definitions include the state and typically emphasize the misuse of public office for private end. Thus, according to Nye's classic definition: "Corruption is behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private-regarding (personal, close family, private clique) pecuniary or status gains (Nye, 1967:419)." In formulating his definition, Nye recognised that corruption also has much broader moral meanings: "a change from good to bad." These vague and less technical aspects have mostly been ignored in political science.

In Nigeria, the question of whether the misuse of public office for private gain constitutes corruption varies significantly depending upon the context. The social morality of behaviour figures much more prominently into popular assessments of corruption than any technical definition (Smith, 2007). Ordinary Nigerians make decisions about so-called corruption in the context of deep loyalties to kin and community that often trump the relevance of bureaucratic rules and state laws. Social morality and notions of appropriate civic behaviour remain rooted to a significant degree in institutions other than the state, in part because of the failure of the state to deliver its promised benefits (Smith, 2009: 290). Nevertheless, rising expectations about the state, and about democracy and development, are part of a process in which the relationship between social morality and governance is changing. Rather than separating corruption and morality, it is necessary to sort out how they fit together in Nigeria. The emergence of the post-colonial state is central to Nigerian experiences of corruption, and that the expectations and disappointments generated by the state permeate Nigerians' collective imagination about corruption. Many of the narratives of discontent that appear moralistic and less directly about official corruption per se are, in fact, heavily influenced by experiences with and expectations of the state.

2.4 *Higher Education*

In the context of this paper, higher education implies any form of education above secondary school level where students are taught specialized subjects, enabling them to become professionals in their chosen fields. Therefore, higher education institutions otherwise referred to as post-secondary or tertiary institutions will include the universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, technical colleges and other institutions of higher learning. However, for the purpose of this study, our main focus is on the universities in Nigeria with a focus on the public ones.

Nigerian universities are creatures of law. Each Federal or State University is established by an Act or a Law enacted by the Federal or State Legislature. The Private Universities are incorporated as legal entities and thereafter licensed by the Federal Government to operate as universities under the Education (National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions) Act [cap.E3 LFN 2004]. The enabling laws of all universities specify the powers, functions and responsibilities of the various constituent bodies and functionaries of the universities (Oshio, 2013). The legal framework for university governance in Nigeria is provided by the Federal Government as two main statutes- (i) the enabling Law of each university which established it; and (ii) the

Universities (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act No. 11, 1993 as amended by The Universities (Miscellaneous Provisions)(Amendment) Act No. 55 of 1993; The Universities (Miscellaneous Provisions)(Amendment) Act No. 25 of 1996; The Universities (Miscellaneous Provisions)(Amendment) Act 2003, otherwise called The Universities Autonomy Act No. 1, 2007 and The Universities (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Amendment) Act 2012.

The latter Act 2012 enables principal officers of the Universities, namely, Registrar, Bursar and University Librarian, to remain in the university system on completion of their terms. This is also the case with the Vice-Chancellors, Deans and Heads of Departments and academic Directors after serving their respective terms. This distinction is important because their counterparts in the civil service are forced to retire by law after their tenure of maximum of eight years.

Ideally, the University should, among others, make optimum contribution to national development by diversifying and intensifying its academic and research programmes. They should also focus on developing high level manpower to meet industrial and national human capital requirements (Owofemi, 2013). Thus, as a centre of learning, advances knowledge through the instruments of teaching, research and community service for the ultimate good, wellbeing and development of society. A critical function in this regard is the development of the human capacity without which no society can make meaningful progress. In Nigeria, the management of higher education is a constitutional function exercised by both the state and federal governments on one hand and the private sector on the other. More importantly, it should be noted that the development of tertiary institutions in Nigeria has not been subject to any rigorous planning. Universities, polytechnics and colleges of education have been set up indiscriminately and haphazardly. Most private interests that moved into the education sector are doing so essentially because the sector still remains a viable venture to be tapped economically. To this extent, the realities of higher education have largely comprised the twin issues of underfunding and a lack of focus.

Higher education has, therefore, been in a state of paradox. Little wonder, most Nigerians believe that the sector requires surgical operation and intensive care. Today, the universities are greatly loosing focus. They are fragmented into rival unions each trying to pursue its own individual interest at the expense of the overall interests of the university. The universities are held in low esteem and, as a result, morale is low and several members of staff are always looking elsewhere. The universities have ceased to build people up. They do not enhance the career prospects of academic staff, and students who graduate from the university have little or no hope for the future. At the moment, the universities have lost their integrity, credibility and professionalism (Ekejiuba, and Saro-Laka, 2013).

The greatest asset of any nation is its human capital. Natural capital, where it is in abundance in any country, is supposed to facilitate the development of human and physical capital. The great economist and Nobel laureate, Robert Solow, famously attributed sustained long-term growth of any nation to its innovation capability. Research and Development (R&D) incidentally is the engine that drives innovation in addition to other factors like the culture, leadership and entrepreneurial nature of the people of the country (Nigerian Tribune, Tuesday, 27 August 2013). Yet, in Nigeria, the potential drivers of knowledge, innovation and technology (KIT), especially R&D, are accorded very low recognition. The nation's research institutes are poorly funded and staffed. The universities that should be the leader of innovation and invention are struggling for survival in the midst of poor funding, empty laboratories, outdated books and journals and poorly motivated lecturers. There is therefore little or no incentive for R&D. The amount given out to staff by some universities to support research is so little that nothing serious can come out of such research efforts. The unfortunate situation was aptly captured recently by the Nigerian Tribune in its editorial:

The private sector and the rich individuals in the society are not helping matters. There is little interaction between the academics and industries. Little wonder then that technical capacity and technological capability are so low in Nigerian industries, leading to the low competitiveness of products made in Nigeria and Nigerian firms in the global arena. The high net-worth Nigerians are busy acquiring mansions in different parts of the world, buying the latest jets, cars and yachts and thinking about the next government contract to corner rather than investing in tertiary institutions to promote R&D and improve the competitiveness of Nigerian universities to attract and retain the best brains from within and outside Nigeria in order to put the country's name on the global innovation list. This should be at the heart of the transformation agenda for this country. The government should not just mouth the slogan, but as the famous Nigerian saying goes, "we must put our money where our mouth is" (Nigerian Tribune, "Editorial: Giving Research its Deserved Priority" Tuesday, 27 August 2013).

Speaking further on the same subject, a former Pro-chancellor of the University of Lagos, Babalola (2013) charged university authorities to adopt a pro-active leadership style and take concrete steps to beef up their internal revenues. His words:

“When I took over as Pro-Chancellor of this institution (UNILAG), I found two major problems: funding and leadership. I knew that government alone cannot fund education. I have found that, contrary to UNESCO’s advice that governments should set aside 26 per cent of their budgets for education, no government in the country budgeted more than 8 per cent. It is therefore the duty of the university to beef up the internal revenue of the university” (Babalola, 2013).

Babalola also advocated a proactive leadership, “preferably with business-like approach of private sector entrepreneurs, who would be able to raise money, stamp out corruption and promote orderliness in the university.” He also challenged the big names on the list of the university’s alumni to seek funding for their alma mater.

3. The Federal Principles and the Development of Higher Education in Nigeria

The federal principles in Nigeria's federalism are those guidelines put in place constitutionally or agreed upon in principle to resolve or minimise the challenges inherent in the country's political system. The principle means that the composition of every government in the federation and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such manner as to recognise the need for national integration and the promotion of national unity. The original draft of what gave birth to the federal principles has since been entrenched in the 1999 Constitution as follows:

The composition of the Federal Government or any of its agencies and the conduct of their affairs shall be carried out in such manner as to recognise the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity and to command national loyalty. Accordingly, the predominance in that government or in its agencies of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional group shall be avoided. The composition of a government other than the Federal Government or any of the agencies of such government and the conduct of their affairs shall be carried out in such manner as to recognise the nature and character of the peoples within their area of authority and the need to promote a sense of belonging and loyalty among such people (FRN, 1999; FRN/CDC, 1976: ix).

The above provision was necessitated in attempt to resolve the problem of representation. The problem of representational equity in the country began with the challenge of an unequal North/South duality (Ayoade, 1998: 106). The effort to resolve this regional imbalance metamorphosed into the protracted states creation phenomenon in Nigeria's federalism. As it is the creation of states has not resolved the problem of imbalance between the north and south, rather it has since weakened the south against the north and also weakened the states against the federal government. This then became the rationale for other methods such as the adoption of the principle of federal character for the promotion of a sense of belonging in the country by eliminating or at least minimising domination resulting from imbalance in appointments and establishments of public institutions. Whilst the federal principle of federal character may be applauded for helping to reduce the factors of mutual distrust and rivalries in Nigeria, it has nevertheless been greatly abused by successive regimes in the country. Over time, regional imbalance has been nurtured and exaggerated to a point that centralisation has become the rule rather than the exception. It is against this background that public universities in Nigeria are being established, essentially to reflect the federal character in terms of its numbers and distribution, location, appointments of principal officers, admission of students as well as its funding policy.

The establishment of university started in Nigeria in the late 1940s beginning with the University College in Ibadan, which became the University of Ibadan. As it were each regional government established a university using its available local resources. Consequently, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University), Ile-Ife and University of Nigeria, Nsukka came on board as the first generational universities in Nigeria. Later on University of Lagos, Lagos and University of Benin, Benin City were established. Today, Nigeria has experienced rapid growth in the number of government owned tertiary institutions, especially the universities but public funding and resources have been thinly spread. There are over 120 universities in Nigeria, with a common curriculum, which is academically-loaded but hardly provides any opportunity for entrepreneurship and self-sustenance. Thus, over the past two decades, universities have continued to produce unemployable graduates with little or no entrepreneurship skills and weak in global competitiveness. This has been aggravated by the ever-depreciating and decaying infrastructure as well as obsolete equipment and facilities. Also, no appreciable and significant reforms in curriculum restructuring to link study with work and industry. This scenario has also pulled back the much expected industrial and technological take-off (Obioma, 2010). Stagnated system of funding and rewarding university teachers has often led to complaints of inadequacy as well as incessant industrial strikes and epileptic school calendar among states and federal universities in the country. For instance, in 2013 public university students were at home for six months (July - December) due to one of those usual industrial disputes between the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the Government.

At a time, government shifted policy to establishing specialised universities of technology and agriculture with poor planning, faulty implementation strategies, coupled with official corruption, which imparted on this reform policy thereby posing a number of challenges. Such challenges include: poor and inadequate equipment and facilities; low capacity of academic and qualified staff; low enrolment as prospective students shield away from agriculture and technology courses. The other challenge is that these universities began to run conventional courses couched in technology. For example, such terminologies as law technology, business technology, language technology, management technology and the like became the norm in order to attract students (Obioma, 2010). All of these aggravated the various challenges confronting higher education in Nigeria, which resolution is not yet in sight.

The structure of most federal systems is fashioned in relation to their constituent units. It is an important aspect of federalism. Likewise, the functions of each tier of government and its constituents are clearly defined as a way of principle of separation of powers. Thus constitutionally (1999), education is placed under the Concurrent Legislative List, as stated thus in paragraphs 27-30 of the 1999 Constitution:

Paragraph 27: The National Assembly shall have to make laws for the Federation or any part thereof with respect to university education, technological education or such professional education as may from time to time be designated by the National Assembly; Paragraph 28: The power conferred on the National Assembly under paragraph 27 of this item shall include power to establish an institution for the purposes of university, post-primary, technological or professional education; Paragraph 29: Subject as herein provided, a House of Assembly shall have power to make laws for the state with respect to the establishment of an institution for purposes of university, technological or professional education; and Paragraph 30: Nothing in the foregoing paragraphs of this item shall be construed so as to limit the powers of a House of Assembly to make laws for the State with respect to technical, vocational, post-primary, primary or other forms of education, including the establishment of institutions for the pursuit of such education.

In Nigeria, the nature and character of the federal system is sometimes a problem itself. For instance, admission into Federal Universities in the country today is based on a tripod formula of 45 per cent by merit, 35 per cent by catchment and 20 per cent by educationally less developed states (ELDS), which are mostly from the northern states. This formula is wrong on all sides. What it translates into is that if an academic department is allocated a quota of 100 candidates by the National Universities Commission (NUC), only 45 out of that number will come by merit. As many as 35 will be those from states contiguous to the university's location while 20 will be decided on a basis that will ensure even educational development among the federating states and nationalities in the country. The implication of this admission principle is ominous.

Paradoxically, a higher proportion of the students are admitted on the basis of ascriptive criteria rather than achieved performance or individual ability (Nwabueze, 2013). This is hard to rationalise in a nation's university system that is bedevilled by declining standards, examination malpractices and global non-competitiveness. The challenge of global non-competitiveness is supported by the fact that in the last two decades, none of the Nigerian universities has come out among the first 200 universities in global ranking. It is an unfortunate issue for a country like Nigeria that has all the resources to develop its higher education to the best level in the world, yet is found to be far below many nations that do not have half of the resources Nigeria has.

The 20 per cent of ELDS is as officially claimed to encourage educationally backward states to 'catch-up with the rest'. The ELDS states are mainly the 19 Northern States. The tragedy of this principle is that it has no way of encouraging candidates of Northern origin to apply, let alone being considered for admission in universities located in the southern part of the country. The experience is that over the years, Northern candidates do not come forward to avail themselves of this reservation. The rational thing often done by admission authorities is to share the 20 per cent between 'merit' and 'catchment' and other considerations and thereby sacrifice quality for state of origin by increasing the overall proportion to be admitted by 'discretionary' and criteria other than merit. This compromise discriminates further against meritocracy while favouring candidates that hail from the states contiguous to the university and officially designated as within the catchment area of the university (Nwabueze, 2013).

Even if the candidates from educationally disadvantaged states were to be coming forward to claim their reserved quota, that would be possible only through denying some more qualified nationals of the chances, which they are entitled to by merit. Some will argue that this is a price that we all collectively must be prepared to pay in an unevenly developed multicultural society in order to garner mutual inclusiveness and social integration. But this means dropping the admission cut-off point so low and sometimes ridiculously low in relative terms to accommodate the 'disabled' candidates. The foregoing are issues that emanated in the nature of

Nigerian federalism in operation. The painful thing in the system is the adoption of certain principles such as the 'federal character', 'quota system', 'catchment areas' and 'educational less developed states', which have all been over abused to the detriment of Nigeria's educational advancement. The phrase 'catchment areas' is more or less a synonym for indigeneship, in university admission system. This is an aberration in a country that is anxious not only to foster unity but to catch up with the advanced world.

The fundamental question that arise from the above borders on the immorality, the injustice and inequality created by the nation's educational policy among Nigerians; and the associated impact this has on patriotic feeling given the inevitable sense of alienation and relative deprivation by candidates who suffer reversed discrimination from educationally well-off states. For example, before the advent of the new admission policy when admissible minimum score by Federal Universities was 200 points, an ELDS candidate with that score would be admitted while his counterpart from non-ELDS states with a score of as high as of 250 may not make it into the admission list (that is if the merit cut-off for admission into the programme is above 250 points). The argument against this is the same against the federal character principle and ethnic and regional balancing which politicises choice, valorises mediocrity and treats merit with disdain. Thus, admission policy in Nigeria limits the space for open competitiveness, while catchment affects a university's cosmopolitan vision and the mission to become a nationally and globally respected centre of intellectual excellence and distinction. The effect of this policy is that every overt drive to engender national unity has been largely farcical. For instance, the provisions for federal character and quota system have mainly in practice helped to promote geopolitical consciousness. The foregoing partly explains the big gap between the north and south in terms of educational development.

4. The Role of Politics on Higher Education in Nigeria

The crisis in the Nigerian university system and the frequent conflicts over the years, between the Federal Government and ASUU are the consequences of a dysfunctional, over-centralised governance system, characterized by pervasive politicisation of the educational system. Also, there is multiplicity of contradictions and the expropriation (with impunity) of the common wealth by the privileged political class in the polity. There is now a disconnect between governments at all levels and the citizens they are expected to serve basically due to the negative consequences politics with its twin sister, corruption is impacting on most helpless Nigerians. Closely-related to the foregoing is the politicisation of the headship of the ministry and the accompanying changes. The frequency of changes at the ministry usually brings with it new policy frameworks and pronouncements. For instance, at least nine persons have being in the helm of affairs at the Ministry of Education between 1999 and 2014.

In addition, the educational sector has not been given the desired priority. For many years the federal annual budget on education remains very low (usually between 10 and 14 per cent), which is far less than the 26 per cent recommended by United Nations Educational and Scientific Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). Given the parlous state of governance over the years, allocating 26 per cent of the nation's budget to education is not likely to create a sufficient condition for improving the quality of education. Doing just that is likely to fuel the culture of corruption within the circles of politicians and bureaucrats put in charge of the sector (Sekoni, 2013:16). Already, the level of corruption among the bureaucracy is so worrisome, that many believe that it will only take revolution to reverse. Therefore, reforming education in Nigeria will involve new strategies to ensure highly motivated learners or teachers, favourable learning conditions; qualified teachers; and dedicated school administrators, etc. There is the tendency to think - the way most federal politicians and administrators do- that promising to throw money at these challenges may be enough to keep citizens inspired to learn. It actually goes beyond that. What must happen before the right percentage of annual budget is allocated to education is to possess the right ideological framework for governing the country at all levels: federal, state, and local. Put simply, there is a need for political parties and their leaders to provide leadership in creating development vision and mission that can inspire and mobilise citizens. Such vision must include measurable and visible milestones that citizens can identify with. Of course, this requires that the political leaders possess the political will to be able to put the national interest above their class or group interests.

Very recently, the Chairman, Development Policy Centre (DPC), Ibadan, Professor Bimpe Aboyade (2013), describes the current educational system in the country as worrisome. Similarly, Suswam, the Governor of Benue State (The Nation, February 12, 2013), lamented that Nigerian Universities were producing half-baked graduates because of the ASUU incessant strikes, pointing out that such mediocre graduates constitute problems for the Country. The institutional decay and educational decline that started with increased unitary governance under the military, which has become an abiding aspect of federal governance in the post-military era has created a situation where states and local governments no longer have the powers to raise taxes to fund their own development. It is a policy that has killed the zeal for the states to generate their own internal revenue. By depending majorly on the federal statutory allocation, many states and local governments have also sought and obtained support from the federal government in their direct and indirect efforts to alienate citizens. The result of

decades of institutional decay and a national journey without destination under post-military rule is the failure that abounds in all levels of education in Nigeria (Sekoni, (2013: 16). In this regard, Akande (cited in Sekoni, 2013: 16) once observed that, "Nigeria has no educational system with adequate philosophical objectives as a backbone. It can be seen therefore that the major purpose of most Nigerian educational institutions is administration of an examination orientation." This implies that Nigerian educational institutions must be reformed urgently and given a goal that is larger than running elaborate examination boards.

The constraints beclouding the Nigerian universities can hardly be fully discussed without a mention of the politicization and the attendant corruption that had come into play. For instance, in the appointment of vice chancellors to the various campuses, a lot of politicization and corruption are involved. In contemporary times, it is almost impossible for any professor to become Vice-Chancellor in most Nigerian universities no matter the experience if such professor is not from the locality where the university is located. Nothing has debased and dishonored Nigerian universities more than university professors hawking their curriculum vitae before every top politician in the land (Akinkugbe, 2001; Ade-Ajayi, 2002:5). In Nigeria, there is the saying that whoever pays the piper dictates the tune. In fact, it does not seem to matter much who pays the piper, it is he who engineers the appointment who dictates the tune that he will make the university to dance to.

Nigeria is currently faced with laws and various supervisory agencies for higher education thereby resulting in a huge bureaucracy. In Nigeria, the National University Commission (NUC) is the coordinating body of all universities in the country, which at its creation, was meant to be an advisory committee to act as consultant to the Federal Government, but has over the years be transformed as the weapon of its centralised control. With time the NUC has become an omnibus bureaucracy at the Federal Capital Territory, with expertise often inferior to those of individual universities, but all the same acting as the real experts in a Ministry supervising the work of its parastatals. Supposedly an autonomous body, the NUC itself operates as a parastatal of the Federal Ministry of Education. It prescribes terms of accreditation of universities, facilities, faculties and departments, a uniform law for all universities, insisting, for example, on a collegiate system for all, irrespective of historical background, age, size or complexity (Ade-Ajayi, 2002:5). In the name of prescribing minimum standards, the NUC started to prescribe the same curricula in every subject for every university, in complete defiance of the power of the Senate of individual universities.

In addition, the NUC and other related bodies set up to play regulatory role and advisory role have become as experience has shown, a cog in the wheel of progress in the life of universities. For instance, it has become a practice for some time now for the NUC to either withhold funds. In short, the history of the NUC clearly demonstrates logic: the growing trend towards the re-appraisal and redefinition of the role of higher education and its subsequent control and coordination. Meanwhile, the NUC has become a sprawling bureaucracy that sometimes constitutes a cog in the wheel of progress on the university system. This logic is to be understood within the context of the struggle between several conflicting and constantly shifting interests within the state itself and its institutional arms, the universities, and society (Benjamin, 2002: 125). The NUC was originally tasked with liaising between the universities on the one hand, and the state and its agencies on the other. It was also meant to make available funds to universities. However, in contemporary times, the role of the NUC has drifted towards an increasing control of higher education in response to major changes in the structure and construction of state and society.

5. Impact of Corruption on Educational Advancement in Nigeria

The general global perception about corruption in Nigeria is that it is a common place phenomenon. It is widely acknowledged that corruption and corrupt practices are endemic and systemic in both public and private sectors of Nigeria. The country has consistently appeared on the rating of Transparency International as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Corruption has had debilitating effects on the country as it has had elsewhere. Corruption is encountered in the routine processes of government both in public and private sectors, and it pollutes the business environment generally. It undermines the integrity of government and public institutions and one of the main sectors where this ugly phenomenon has become well pronounced is that of education. It is more or less a norm for parents to pay their way to seek admission into higher institution for their children, and pay agents to write examinations for their wards. In many of the nation's educational institutions, marks are awarded to students not by merit but according to how much money they have paid to some dubious lecturers or their agents; in some cases marks are awarded on the willingness of the female students to offer their body with some lecturers who are morally derailed; while some others receive unmerited marks due to their membership in cult associations with some lecturers. The latter is already happening at all levels of education in the country.

Today, corruption is in several dimensions in Nigeria and indeed, it defines the nation. "The Nigerian factor is corruption", which everyone, from ordinary citizen to elite politician, takes into account in all interactions with the state, but also in many other arenas of political, economic, and social life. Expectations of corruption infuse everyday experience. Whether one is a motorist approaching a police checkpoint on a public highway, a businessperson looking to secure a contract, a parent anticipating a child's entrance into secondary

school, a patient seeking treatment for an illness, a traveler applying for a foreign visa, or even an adolescent involved in a romance, the specter of corruption looms large. In Nigeria, corruption has become an endemic virus that has afflicted the country pervasively. The very expansiveness of 419 as a descriptor for all things corrupt, whether political or personal, economic or moral, attests to the pervasiveness of corruption and its centrality as a metaphor for modern life in Nigeria. Discourses about corruption take many forms and are expressed in numerous idioms. Stories about corruption dominate newspaper headlines, energise ethnic nationalist political propaganda, animate witchcraft accusations, enliven church sermons, spark marketplace debates, and stimulate village gossip. Moreover, corruption and its associated discourses of complaint cut across contrasting institutions and competing moral idioms (Smith, 2007). No other sector is this being imparted upon negatively more than the educational sector.

The recent arrest of two young men, who identified themselves as undergraduates of a Nigerian university, for involvement in a N2.05 billion fraud is a typical evidence of the collapse of values in every facet of the national life (Nigerian Tribune, Friday 27 September). It is also a sad commentary on the orientation of present-day Nigerian university students. The two young men were said to be members of a syndicate which specialised in breaking into the database of financial institutions. According to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the accused persons transferred funds from the Union Bank, Marina, Lagos branch to several accounts in other banks. Landed property, furniture, cars and a huge amount of money were reported to have been recovered from the suspected fraudsters. Yet, Nigerian undergraduates of the past epitomised poise, dignity, knowledge, integrity and seriousness. Their conduct in the community was edifying and their views were always respected. In their various institutions, they constituted strong pressure groups whose stand on issues was always taken seriously by the government. They were always abreast with contemporary issues and played noticeable roles in shaping public policies. They were not seen simply as university students but as leaders in the making. Similarly, the university students' unions were, in the past, a vibrant and potent force within and outside their campuses. They kept the university administrations on their toes and operated as if they were constitutionally vested with the power to oversee the conduct of government business. The likely reaction of university students was usually considered in the formulation of certain government policies.

The undergraduates of today are not only unconcerned about events and policies designed to determine their future, they appear to be oblivious of goings-on in their immediate vicinities. The abuses that have become so pervasive in the society have not been attracting their attention. The wilful mismanagement that puts their future in jeopardy does not appear to mean anything to them. Today, Nigerian undergraduates are active partakers in all forms of anti-social behaviour. Their involvement in brazenly criminal activities has become a common occurrence. In short, the mental and physical energy that should have been channelled to positive ends is being committed to various forms of criminality, including cultism, fraud, hacking into computers, internet fraudsters, armed robbery, etc. The cultists and armed robbers among them bear arms and kill fellow humans without a pang of conscience. There are those who live lavish lifestyles with the proceeds of their nefarious activities. The point should, however, be made that Nigerian undergraduates of today are a product of the decay that manifests itself in every segment and stratum of the society.

The level of decadent in the education sector is the by-product of the unprecedented corruption in the land. The prohibitive cost of governance has eaten so deep into the nation's budget that what is allocated to education boils down to pittance. Worse still, evidence abound that even the pittance is hardly utilised by the universities for the purpose it is allocated. Some have further argued that the rot in the education system is more pronounced at the secondary school level because the final examinations are conducted by external bodies. Those who mark the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) papers do not know the individuals they are assessing, so it is difficult to award marks on cash-and-carry basis (Uwah, 2013) as the case in tertiary institutions. In tandem with the above, a recent article by a feature editor in a popular national daily reveals that:

Many of the graduates working in banks today have obtained master's degrees. Most of them leave home by 5am and get back by 10pm. They go to work most of the weekends. I had all along wondered how they squeeze their master's degree programmes into such hectic schedule, until I heard a banker instructing a "surrogate student" to ensure that he made an 'A' in the exam he paid him to write on his behalf. One of my colleagues boasted recently that in the last 10 years he had written at least 50 master's degree theses for different 'clients' at a fee of N250, 000 each (Uwah, 2013).

Also, worried by the systemic corruption in Nigeria's university system, the Independent Corrupt and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) through the Chairman, Ekpo Nta, recently shed some light on its intervention in the tertiary institutions and its fact finding study designed to address the problem in a holistic manner. According to Nta,

The Commission had to intervene in the high level of corruption in the universities in

order to ensure that the tertiary institutions in the country met the basis of higher education management and conform to international best practices, undertook a study known as “University System Study and Review” (USSR) – to look at the numerous vices in the tertiary institutions. The study was carried out in three universities as a pilot study. Nta listed some of the findings of the study to include: abuse of stipulated rules, policies and procedures in terms of admission, examination management, recruitment, promotions, contract awards, infrastructure among others. It was found that within approved institutions, unaccredited courses were taught which resulted in the production of graduates from such approved institution not being eligible to do National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) or go on for post-graduate training. Consequently, fake NYSC members abound. Have you ever wondered who were the ‘customers’, let me call them customer because I don’t want to call them candidates or Corps members. Quite a number of them were produced from approved universities but were not eligible to be called to camp. So, they had to find a way of misinforming their parents that they were at the NYSC camp, which, based on the findings, remain the most serious challenge in the system (Oluwalana, 2013).

The current Director-General of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) recently alluded to this appalling situation when he said:

Some universities have been sending “graduates” to the scheme who can hardly speak English. The quality of these graduates is so appalling that employers who can’t find any use for them are left with no choice but to send them back to the NYSC. The NYSC has also discovered that some universities send “graduates” of courses not accredited by the National Universities Commission. Also, some universities collect bribe from Nigerians interested in the NYSC scheme and send them in large numbers for national service, straining the NYSC budget and making planning impossible for the NYSC scheme (The Guardian Editorial, Tuesday 26 February 2013).

Nevertheless, the NYSC Director-General’s comments and that of ICPC Chairperson posed serious challenge to the government and the university community to critically examine the Nigerian higher education system and initiate measures to improve the quality of its output on one hand, and the level of corrupt practices that are going on in Nigerian university campuses on the other. It is no secret that Nigerian universities rank poorly even within Africa. Thus, there is an urgent need to boost the quality and performance of academics, a question which, no doubt, is tied to good remuneration, among other things. Many Nigerians sadly have resigned to the reality that universities are unable to retain their best products as lecturers, a bad departure from the 1960s and 1970s when Nigeria attracted international faculty members, and lecturers routinely published their research in the best academic journals in the world. On the side of corruption, the relevant bodies in the country must endeavour to intervene in the high level of corruption in the universities “in furtherance of its statutory mandate of engendering a new culture of ethical discipline in all facets of the nation's life.

6. Challenges to Higher Education in Nigeria

6.1 Challenges from Recurrent Strikes

For sometimes now, Nigerian tertiary institutions have witnessed diverse kinds of industrial disputes, which had been affecting their academic plans over the years. The situation is such that students only know when they enter into the institution without knowing when they will graduate because of incessant industrial disputes, which factor makes the operation of the university system in the last two decades to be a sort of crash programmes (Benjamin, 2002: 134). The university calendar has severally been truncated through frequent and usually protracted strikes by university teachers. Obviously, university shutdowns cannot be the context for quality education; but it is so in Nigeria because it has become a recurring decimal since the fourteen-year democracy (1999 till date) in the country. The main cause of frequent industrial disputes is the usual lukewarm attitude of the governments (States and Federal) of not honouring trade union agreements, coupled with the usual neglect of the educational sector. Consequently, most universities have had the challenge of brain drain, for greener pastures abroad. The problem of brain drain is further compounded by a number of laws and agencies that ostensibly undermine university autonomy in the country (ibid: 134). Unfortunately, Nigerian lecturers are quick to compare themselves with lecturers in the developed countries but they fail to understand that in those countries lecturers do not seize every opportunity they can to miss classes and abdicate their duties like the experience of Nigerian universities. They have failed to do their job in the manner they should, and therefore, more funding will not correct their lack of commitment.

The paradoxical drop in the quality of higher educational in Nigeria has inevitably led to the increasing educational exodus to other countries by Nigerians anxious to escape the bedlam at home, and also the growing agitation for remedies, tinged with nostalgic glances at the brighter days. The present situation is quite dramatic when viewed against the background that there was a time when Nigerian scholars had disdain with foreign degrees, which were once viewed by Nigerians who were trained in their own countries. Indeed, it was mainly those who failed to gain entry into Nigerian universities on account of weak grades that found refuge in foreign universities in the 60s and 70s (Olukotun, 2013). Today, Nigerian educational institutions in most cases are shadows of themselves, deprived of the vital ingredients of credibility and worth of the past.

The educational policies in the last two decades have been far from encouraging; many Nigerians have finished schooling without education; got certificates devoid of merit much less distinction. At best, the multiplying tertiary institutions in the country have mass produced the upsurge of barely literate graduates, who have become unemployable even in the ministries and other government agencies. In recent times, it has been said that the quality of education in the country leaves much to be desired, as most graduates from Nigerian higher institutions are being rejected by companies on grounds of inadequate knowledge of their subject areas. The deplorable development had prompted some concerned government officials to declare that 80 per cent of Nigerian graduates are unemployable (Owofemi, 2013), adding that the situation had compounded the problems of youth unemployment in the country.

In Nigeria, more focus has been on the challenges facing the universities, yet not much has been achieved. Thus, it is important to note that a society can only be reinforced in the values it promotes. Quality education is a function of quality instruction undertaken by capable and motivated teachers in a pleasant learning environment (Olukotun, 2013). But in the country today, teachers spend very little time imparting knowledge. In some instances, the teachers are not even qualified to teach; resulting in the half blind attempting to educate the blind. These woes are deepened by the low prestige ranking of the teaching profession aptly captured by the aphorism that the teacher's reward is in heaven; an axiom which may have meaning perhaps only in the Nigerian society, because in other climes, teachers are among the best paid professions.

6.2 Poor Environment Challenge

Closely related to the above, is another challenge in the area of poor educational environment. It goes without saying too, that crowding students into unhygienic and dilapidated buildings in the name of educating them constitutes a disincentive to any serious learning and certainly to quality education. Usually, Nigeria as a nation launches big projects and erects imposing buildings and utilities but leave them to rot. Public schools bear the brunt of this lack of a maintenance culture deriving from the negative folk philosophy that government's property is nobody's property. Again, this unpopular saying seems not to have any relevance in most societies except perhaps in Nigeria. As it is today, the first generation universities which were created on the grand scales of the world's best campuses are today shadows of themselves. The decay is evident as well in the scarcity of teaching materials, the breakdown of equipment and the hand-to-mouth situation that exists with respect to support services (Olukotun, 2013).

6.3 Growth in Tertiary Institutions and Admission Challenge

The phenomenal growth in the establishment of universities (from 5 in the post independent era to about 129 (comprising 40 federal, 38 state and 51 private universities), in a bid to provide for higher education has invariably posed some challenges to the educational system in Nigeria. For instance, relative to the past, there is rapid increase in the enrolment into the universities. This notwithstanding, many qualified candidates are yearly left out without admission. In recent years, less than half of those who apply for admission usually get admitted.

6.4 University Autonomy Challenge

The established universities were set up under laws to guide their operations. These laws also spelt out their functions. The governments, in formulating these laws, ensured that universities operate in line with the tradition of related institutions all over the world by granting them autonomy in internal organisation and administration as well as academic freedom. Unfortunately, the developmental conception of Nigerian universities cum the role of the National University Commission as well as the role of the government particularly during the protracted military rule are among others, obstacles which have contributed in no small measure to the lack of adequate autonomy in Nigerian universities (Benjamin, 2002: 123). Also, the almost sole proprietorship of their funding primarily from the government renders the issue of university autonomy much more problematic.

6.5 Funding Challenge

The Federal Government's practice of paying lip service to the educational sector, noting that the country has never met the 26 per cent annual budgetary allocations recommended by UNESCO. The highest the FG has allocated to the sector is 13 per cent. Thus, it is being argued that proper funding is at the heart of improving

education standards and delivery; its lack has been the source of the myriad of challenges besetting the sector. Other challenges include poor wages in terms of salary and attendant benefits, and poor funding system. For some analysts, the period 1999 till date, has never witnessed a smooth ride (Abah, 2013).

The foregoing is tending to weaken the spirit of commitment and dedication on the part of the university lecturers, which impact negatively on the higher education sector in Nigeria. Even where Lecturers are available, poor and irregular salaries have practically forced them to seek other survival strategies outside of the lecture rooms. To understand the magnitude of poor funding of public universities in Nigeria, the recent revelation from the National University Commission (NUC) suffices. According to NUC (through its Deputy Executive Secretary), "only 14 per cent out of the total budgets allocated to public universities was released in 2012." Further details revealed that about N80 billion was allocated to federal universities, out of about N400 billion (Noboh and Alheri, 2012) allocated to education. With the 14 per cent of the budgeted amount in 2012, it therefore follows that only about N11 billion was released for all the federal universities in the country. In a sense, the level of decay in the education system is an indictment on policy makers and those saddled with the task and responsibility of implementing policies in the education sector. Underfunding has indeed created further challenges in the system. These comprise inadequately funded research activities; inability of the institutions to meet the welfare and academic needs of the staff and the students, respectively.

6.6 *Infrastructure/ICT Challenge*

Non-availability of modern infrastructure is a challenge that affects the quality of higher education graduates. Laboratories, libraries, classrooms, workshops, hostels, power supply, and ICT related issues are not available and, where available, they are inadequate and ill-equipped. For instance, in one of the public universities in Benue State, it was recently observed that lecture rooms, having the size of a one-bedroom apartment, accommodated over 400 students. It was also gathered that during the inspection by the National Universities Commission's (NUC) accreditation team in 2012, students were instructed to vacate the lecture rooms to prevent the team from seeing the real situation. This is giving a facade picture as against the reality on ground. This is the common feature in many of the public universities especially those owned by the states; apart from over congested class rooms, most students hostel rooms accommodate between 8 to 10 students for a space meant for only two students (The Guardian, Thursday, 26 September 2013). However, institutions like Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board and tertiary institutions in urban areas are developing ICT facilities even as their counterparts in rural areas are far behind in this regard.

7. **Strategies for Achieving Development in Nigerian Higher Educational System**

Apart from the ad-hoc policy programmes being put in place in the education sector, far-reaching reforms of this sector cannot be achieved without a national dialogue that allows each part of the country to spell out what it hopes to achieve for its citizens in a highly competitive global market. This includes making conscious efforts by the constituent states to develop available resources in their respective domain and put it to meaningful development. Importantly, Nigeria is a federal state and the 36 states in the federation need not run the same educational pattern all through in terms of remuneration and administrative systems. The 36 states are differently endowed with resources in an unequal quantity and dimensions; therefore we must do things differently and in fact pay differently according to the resources available to each state. So, there is no reason why federal universities must be run at the same wave length with states universities. Likewise, there is no reason why both the states and federal universities must go on strikes at the same time. For the system to continue to operate that way means we are not practicing federalism but unitary system of government.

In Nigeria, it is high time we evolved an abiding policy on education. If we must make Nigerian universities the think-tank and the repository of skills and knowledge that they should be (Benjamin, 2002), Nigerians must imbibe those essential ideas upon which universities are founded under the new circumstance.

There are no easy solutions to transforming the quality of Nigerian universities. But solutions must entail abandoning orthodoxies and taking hard decisions. Certainly, the country needs to increase opportunity for technical and vocational training. More of the young people should be trained to acquire skills for which they can find ready use in the economy, especially as innovators or small business creators. Nigeria also needs to spend more on teacher training and salaries at the primary and secondary school levels so that we can have secondary school leavers who are easily trainable for jobs or who can gain far more from university education. There is currently a crisis in the education sector, which has a negative economic impact that is comparable to the damage the nation's inadequate power supply does to productivity. What is surprising is the absolute lack of appropriate response from the government. Indeed, there is the urgent need for Nigerian Universities to:

- Develop a proper labour strategy to ensure that graduates from higher institutions are equipped with the required knowledge, skills, entrepreneurial drive and attitudes to meet industry and business requirements.
- Develop competencies and skills that align with industry and national demands, focusing on the

establishments of industrial parks, centres of excellence and small medium enterprises (SMEs) projects as engine of growth.

- Incorporate entrepreneurial learning to support and nurture talents in business conceptualization, development and establishment. This will reduce the general dependence on paid employment and enable the implementation of business solutions and innovations while creating more employment opportunities within the system.
- Develop policy framework and intensify avenues for increased collaboration with both industry and government. On its part, Government needs to associate more with the organized private sector in finding lasting solutions to the low funding of Nigerian universities. To address their funding gaps, university administrators should look inwards and use resources at their disposal to generate additional revenue for their institutions while policymakers ensure a predictable, stable funding regime and consistent regulations for long-term strategic partnerships to thrive.
- Admission and appointments into key positions in the universities in the country should be based on merit anchored on skill, experience and qualifications.

8. Conclusion

Nigerian tertiary institutions especially the universities have greatly expanded in terms of number but have stagnated over the years in terms of quality, skills and entrepreneurial development. Consequently, the products of these institutions are mostly found to be unemployable and many may not be able to compete internationally with their counterparts from other nation states. If Nigeria desires to meet with global competitiveness, a surgical and clinical operation is required in the country's educational sector. Of course, this will require fighting the pervasive corruption in the Nigerian Federation headlong, granting true autonomy to the universities and depoliticizing the educational system. Corrupt and immoral lecturers, university administrators, and their accomplices in crime should be prosecuted and jailed to serve as a deterrent to others. They perpetrate a heinous crime on the nation. This measure must be free of sacred cows if Nigeria would seriously want its educational system to be transformed.

Importantly too, the moral, and the environment the students undertake their studies are greatly a source of concern. For the nation' higher education to enhance development it must be qualitative. Thus, quality education should prioritize continuous assessment, and punctuality undergirded by sanctions that drive home the point about earned achievement and lifelong learning. Quality education cannot be built on decrepit and ill-clad foundations. Nigeria must reinvent the educational landscape as best as it can through the tradition of specially designing centres of excellence and innovation while retaining the ideal of expanded access. Moreover, Nigerian lecturers must embrace their place as architects of the future and do all they can to impact on their students in the best way possible.

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