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Education and Regeneration of Traditional Values in Nigeria

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CHAPTER TWELVE

STAKEHOLDERS AND TERTIARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: AN APPRAISAL

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Abstract

The main objective of this chapter is to assess the contributions of stakeholders to development of tertiary education in Nigeria. Anchoring this chapter on functionalist theory, it posits that stakeholders are expected to play an active role in the development of tertiary education in Nigeria. Some of the roles which the Family/Parents are supposed to play include the socialization of students by being role models for them to follow: Religious institutions on the other hand, should play the role of inculcating in them the spirit of honesty, sincerity and consideration for other fellow human beings among other things. The paper points out that due to the neglect of the desired roles by the stakeholders, our tertiary institutions have become breeding grounds for gangsterism, cultism, prostitutions and some of their products might turn out to be half-baked graduates. The chapter concludes by making recommendations that can change the tide of the ugly situation. Among some of the recommendations is that government should stop paying lip service to the issue of educational development and funding and perform in a manner that guarantees adequate funding and management for the sustainable development of education to achieve their desired objectives.

INTRODUCTION

In all human society, education has always remained the bedrock of development. Education is the most important factor in the wheels of progress or growth of nationhood, communities and individuals. To a larger extent, the economic status of a society or that of the individual is determined by the standard and/or quality of educational attainment; and this is only possible through the adoption of effective policies and sustainable educational system. For effective environmental or societal development, people must be trained to enhance their positive contributions to societal growth. The quickest means for one to acquire the necessary skills that will enhance productivity is through systematic education. This is so because, it is only skilled manpower that can effectively utilize available resources.

The design of Nigeria's educational policies since independence in 1960 has always been to provide for societal and individual needs. Little wonder, every government in power in Nigeria, (military or civilian), recognizes education as the major factor that can bring about change in terms of socio-economic and political life of the people. However, the execution of these beautifully designed policies has always created problems for policy makers and educational managers in the country. For example, the policy of "Universal Primary Education (U.P.E) could not achieve the desired objective under the military era of President Olusegun Obasanjo, and this led him to introduce "Universal Basic Education" Policy as a civilian President.

According to Akor (2004), education at all levels in Nigeria has gone through turbulent times as a result of inconsistency of our political leaders and educational managers who are at best quacks in the system. A great number of educational policy makers and administrators can hardly boast of the least professional qualification in education.

Presently, Nigeria's educational institutions are experiencing decay at all levels. According to Obanya (2002), the decay in the Nigerian educational system can be traced to government interventions in the management of educational institutions. Due to deteriorating nature of our tertiary institutions within the last few years, certificates offered by Nigeria's institutions especially at the tertiary levels are viewed with suspicion, particularly by the international community.

According to Uchendu (1993) the problem in the country is that the nation has not paid sufficient attention to educational planning in her national planning as she should do. Uchendu further opines that there should be a very close link between national planning and educational planning. The former is a process whereby a nation adopts a plan of forecasting its needs, of measuring its economic or human resources and setting up a frame work to meet them while the latter helps to achieve a set of objectives.

The broad aims of higher education as provided in the National Policy on Higher Education (NPE 1989: 26) include:

- (a) The acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value-orientation for the survival of the individual and society.
- (b) The development of the intellectual capacities of individuals to understand and appreciate their environment.
- (c) The acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which enable the individuals to develop into useful members of the community.
- (d) The acquisition of an objective view of the local and external environment. These goals as provided in NPE can be pursued by higher educational institutions through teaching, research, dissemination of existing and new information, pursuit of service to the community and serving as a store house for knowledge.

Due to the prevailing negative trend in the educational system and tertiary institution in particular, it is now difficult, if not impossible, to achieve the above stated aims and objectives of higher education in Nigeria. This is so, because, due to the neglect of roles by the stakeholders, our educational institutions have now become a breeding ground for gangsterism, cultism, prostitution and turning out half-baked graduates that can hardly defend the certificates awarded by the tertiary institutions.

It is our belief that the systematic participation of stakeholders in the development of critical aspects of tertiary institutions in the country would check the continued drift towards total decay. This paper intends to look beyond the ideal roles of stakeholders and critically appraise the contributions of the various stakeholders in the development of tertiary institution in Nigeria.

THEORETICAL ISSUE IN EDUCATION

Functionalism was the dominant theoretical perspective in sociology during the 1940's and 1950's. The basic premise of this school of thought is to look at the functions of the various institutions in the society or their purposes. To the functionalists, everything in the society is shaped towards a purpose.

One of the main concerns of functionalist theory is to explain how social life is possible. The theory maintains that a certain degree of order and stability are necessary for the survival of social system. According to Haralambos and Holborn (2000), functionalism is therefore concerned with explaining the origin and maintenance of order and stability in the society. From the functionalist point of view, society is compared to a biological being which has various parts such as eyes, nose, legs, etc and each of these parts perform different functions for the well being of the animal. The early

school of thought asserted that the various organisms in the animal are inter dependent and inter-related and that they are all working for the general well being of the animal.

To the functionalist position, society is regarded as a system made up of interconnected and interrelated parts performing different functions. This means that everything that happens to one part will equally affect the other parts. From the functionalist perspective, social institutions within society, for example, the military, judiciary, police, school etc are the equivalent of animal parts like eyes, nose, legs etc. According to this view, the function of any part of society is its contribution to the maintenance of the society as a whole.

The above theory is relevant to the role of stakeholders in the development of tertiary education in Nigeria. According to Uchendu (1993), education is a process which provides the youth and adult with knowledge, skills and values that the society considers essential.

For the aim and objectives of National Policies on Higher Education to be achieved, the stakeholders must perform different functions or roles for the overall benefit of tertiary education in general. The stakeholders which include, teachers, parents, government, private sector, students, communities, etc are those institutions, structures and individuals that have significant interest and concern at stake in the management, welfare, prosperity, and the development of tertiary education in Nigeria. Such interest may include that of maintaining expected standard of education, producing well-grounded graduates etc. For them to meet these expectations they must perform different functions at the same time to enhance the development of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. If any of the above mentioned stakeholders neglects its role, it will affect tertiary education negatively. As a result, the government, parents, teachers, communities etc all have one role or the other to play to bring about qualitative tertiary education in Nigeria. If the government neglects or abandons its role for the private sector or vice-versa, the over all tertiary education in Nigeria will be affected. This is so because tertiary education in this view is seen as the "complete system" while the various "stakeholders" are the "different parts" that make up the complete system.

Based on the above submission it is clear that functionalism as a theory is relevant to the explanation of the role of stakeholders in tertiary education in Nigeria. Then, the relevant question at this juncture is, what are the roles of stakeholders in tertiary education in Nigeria?

The answer to the above question will be the next aspect that this paper will focus.

THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS IN TERTIARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

According to a World Bank Report (2001) operations in the education sector can be greatly improved by increasing stakeholder's participation. Such participation can increase the relevance and quality of education, improve ownership, build consensus, help to reach remote and disadvantaged groups, mobilize additional resources and boost the institutional capacity.

In the Nigerian context, major stakeholders in tertiary education are parents/families, local communities, organized groups at ward and village levels, parent-teacher association, teachers and other organizations, the private sector and the three tiers of government, students, religious body etc (Akor, 2004). In order to achieve the goals and objectives of the national policies on higher education in Nigeria the energies of all these stakeholders should be harnessed and complemented in a massive way.

According to Obanya (2002), the private sector is a powerful section of the society and a strong stakeholder in education. The private sector is a sure source of funds for education at the micro and macro levels. Since the private sector consists of the potential largest employer of labour (in a free market economy), and big end users of the products of the nation's educational system they should have a say in what happens to education at the tertiary level.

Part of the roles of the private sector in the development of tertiary education in Nigeria should also include, contributing effectively through funding, scholarships, training, publication of educational materials, library development, data collection and analysis, transportation, accommodation, water supply, information technology etc.

In order to tackle the educational ills at the tertiary level, the private sector can perform four specific roles as highlighted by Obanya (2002). These roles include:

- (a) Policy articulation-broadening the base of participation, building analytical capacity etc.
- (b) Strengthening capacity-for the management of the system at the local, school and systems levels.
- (c) Targeting resources (financial, human and material) to areas which are likely to have the greater multiplier effect.
- (d) Broadening opportunities-especially for the disadvantaged and other marginalized groups.

Government as a major stakeholder in tertiary education has a major role to play. It should not just play the role of a watch-dog passive role alone but, must be seen as an active participant in the development of tertiary education. It should not play the role of policy formulator alone but should

also back it up with will-power to implement educational policies. As a major stakeholder, government should employ certain strategies to effectively mobilize the development of tertiary education. According to Ajayi and Adesina (cited in Ayo-Sobowale, 2003), the following strategies could be used to mobilize the private sector, communities and individuals in the funding and management of tertiary education:

- (i) Identifying and recognizing the wide-range of non-governmental organizations, village development associations, social and philanthropic organizations as well as eminent individuals.
- (ii) Private corporate bodies and organizations should be encouraged to make education one of the social services that should be provided to their community.
- (iii) Government should nominate people to occupy positions in the community, since government should know that social, political as well as cultural interests motivate the individuals and groups and their effects on them cannot be played down or neglected.
- (iv) Press conferences by various local governments disseminating information in promoting tertiary education.
- (v) Organization of workshops, publicity and offering grants.
- (vi) Increase in the percentage of the Education Tax from the profits of companies and organizations and if used judiciously would assist education not only at the tertiary level but at all levels.

Students who are the most important stakeholders in tertiary institutions should play an active role in policy formulation and guidelines. Students should participate in the formulation of policies which would influence the determination of fair rent in hostels. Students should be involved even before the commencement of construction work on hostels. For the existing University-owned hostels, consultation at the level of University-parents forum and with the students union should lead to an agreeable rent regime between students and the school authority.

The home occupies a strategic position in the all round development of the students. According to Telma (cited in Ayodele 2005), home is the foundation and others are blocks: Outside parents, others are just builders. The role of the home/family in the tertiary education cannot be over emphasized. It is the role of the home/family to socialize students by providing models for them to copy. The role models from the home /family help to stabilize students while they are in school. It is also the role of the home/family to regulate and organize the sexual desires of students even before tertiary schooling age. It is the role of the home/family to help the students to develop a personality that they will carry on to tertiary institutions. In addition to the above roles, the home /family also plays the

function of protection to the students. Part of the protective functions include economic, physical and psychological functions. In summary, the basic role of the home/family is to train up the students right from home and give them directions in life. This view is supported by the Holy Bible where it is asserted that: "train up the child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6 KJV).

Another stakeholder in tertiary educational institutions is the religious organizations. It is the role of the religious organizations to inculcate the spirit of honesty and consideration for others in the day-to-day lifestyle of students. The teachings of good moral, discipline and above all, the fear and obedience to God by religious organizations help to shape the character of students while in and out of the school.

Lecturers also occupy a very important and strategic position as stakeholders in the tertiary educational institutions not only in Nigeria but worldwide. The role of the lecturers is not just that of imparting knowledge to the students but also playing the role of disciplinarian. In this vein, then, lecturers in tertiary institutions are supposed to be role models and good examples for students to copy. In other words, lecturers are supposed to live and practice what they teach the students. Little wonder, Ofoyeju (2004), asserted that "a father (lecturer) that sends a child to buy him cigarette and still tell the child not to smoke is a joker".

The local community as a stakeholder in tertiary education should not only play the role of agitator for localization of tertiary institutions in their locality. They should also play the role of providing infrastructure and contribute to physical development in tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria. The local community should provide a good network of roads (that can link institutions to their immediate community), water, electricity supply, land and accommodation for staff and students as an alternative to staff quarters and hostels in school premises. It is also the role of the local community to create an enabling environment that can guarantee peaceful existence between the school community and their host community.

In spite of the noble roles of stakeholders in our educational institutions as enumerated above, there are lots of challenges, problems and prospects for tertiary education in Nigeria. The question is, what are the problems and prospects of tertiary education in Nigeria?

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

Due to shift and neglect of roles by the stakeholders, our educational institutions, especially at the tertiary level is now a breeding ground for gangsterism, cultism, prostitutions and turning out half-baked graduates that can hardly defend their certificate.

According to Ayodele (2005) in a newspaper article titled, "parents are

guilty", teachers blame the soaring rate of indiscipline in the school on the abdication of roles by parents. Parents are no longer challenging the school. Once they have bought all necessary school materials or paid fees, they believed they have done everything for the child. Modern day parents are always busy running from pillar to post to accumulate wealth while they pay little or no attention to the upbringing of their wards. According to Telma (cited by Ayodele, 2005), "home is the shelter and if parents are not there, where do children really anchor". Spending quality time with their wards enables parents to curb the excesses of the students. The soaring rate of indiscipline in the school can be attributed to lackadaisical attitude of parents.

In most cases, it is what is commonly referred to as "Nigerian factor" or political consideration that often determined the setting of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It is a common knowledge that most communities that agitate for location of tertiary institution in their communities lack essential basic amenities that can enable such schools to run effectively. According to National University Commission (NUC 2003), the remote location of some higher institutions within areas without efficient public transportation system makes it difficult for students to live off-campus. The stress occasioned by poor hostel accommodation on and off-campus contributes to the degeneration in the quality of learning and display of anti-social behaviours in students. In corroborating the display of anti-social behaviours in students, Adegboyega (2005) asserted that some of the citadels of learning have indeed become dens of robbers and harem where all kinds of characters cohabit.

According to the publication of the New-Age Newspaper (2005) captioned "things are happening in our citadels," cultists have taken over in some of the Universities and also there is so much of sexual harassment in the campuses (Adegboyega, 2005). Although there is some debate about this regarding who is actually harassing who especially with some of the female students wearing see-through mini-dresses that reveal effortlessly. There is also a public out-cry that some lecturers literally award marks to undeserving students for a fee or some other payments in kind. The above view is supported by the Vice-Chancellor of University of Abuja (2005) who asserted that "we are surprised to learn that some lecturers in the University of Abuja exhibit this unethical and unprofessional behaviour of going to the homes of some students to give them lectures for fees".

Government as a major stakeholder in tertiary education is only paying lip service to the problem facing tertiary education in Nigeria today. It is a common knowledge that most of our tertiary institutions owned by the government are under funded. Infrastructural decay, obsolete teaching and learning materials are part of the problems facing tertiary education in Nigeria

today. Instead of government to address these problems they are busy granting licenses to private operators of tertiary education. The implication of this is, not too far from now, the fate of government owned tertiary institutions will become like that of public owned primary schools that are currently facing problems of quality of service and of their products. Since most of the operators of private tertiary institutions are either people in government or friends to government, the future of Nigerian students is bleak. This is so because, the majority of Nigeria students cannot afford the high fees charged by the private operators of tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion we want to assert that leaving our tertiary education along the route of negligence, decadence and collapse is a choice we may all live to regret sometimes later. This is so because, except the stakeholders and government in particular do something very fast to address the ugly situation in our tertiary institutions, the future of this great country is bleak and heading for doom as the youths (students) who are supposed to be leaders of tomorrow will be ill-equipped for leadership roles.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter has been able to establish that there are prospects for tertiary education in Nigeria if all the stakeholders are fully involved in the development of education at the tertiary level. We, therefore, recommend that:

- (1) Government as a major stakeholder in tertiary education should not shy away from its responsibility in the name of privatization of education. Rather, government should be actively involved in the areas of adequate funding and infrastructure development.
- (2) Private investors in tertiary education should ensure that only professionally qualified people are engaged to manage their institutions to avoid distortions in academic and non-academic programmes.
- (3) Private tertiary institutions should go into exchange programme with relevant public institutions to enhance quality of teaching, learning and research.
- (4) Service providers in the areas of hostel accommodation, water supply, food, electricity, transportation, information technology etc should be given incentives and strictly supervised by authorized agency to provide better services at affordable rates for students, staff and other consumers alike.

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