EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA

Papers in Honour of Professor John Iheukwumere Nwankwo



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CHAPTER 31

MANAGING TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS FOR NATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

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Introduction

The goals of tertiary education in Nigeria are to contribute to national development through high-level work force training, develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of individual and society, forge national unity as well as promote national and international understanding (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). These goals are to be achieved using human, physical, financial and other resources to conduct activities such as teaching, research and community services. Therefore, effective management of available resources is very essential.

Castell (2001) observes that tertiary institutions are subjected to implicit and explicit pressures. The implicit pressure is from the host society while the explicit pressure emanates from the universal functions of the institutions. These generate contradictions in their roles. The distinctive character and achievement of each tertiary institution lies in how these contradictions are managed. Tertiary institutions, if effectively managed can lead to a nation's political, economic and social transformation.

Studies (Badat, 2001; Barnett, 1994; Henkel, 2000 and Scott, 2000) have indicated that the missions of tertiary education in transforming the nation are becoming increasingly difficult to achieve because of student activism and political interference in tertiary institution administration. Students' militancy on campus has been recognised as one of the most visible perennial problems in developing countries like Nigeria (Badat, 2001). Such incessant riots have often led to the closure of some institutions in Nigeria. Closely connected to this are drug abuse/addiction and examination malpractices. This has adversely affected the scope of programmes as school calendars are often truncated to account for the time lost. This has often affected the quality of students turn out and influenced the political, social and economic transformation of the country.

On the otherhand, political intervention in the management of tertiary institutions erodes academic freedom and autonomy. Government's appointment of Vice-Chancellors, rectors or provosts, dismissal of staff and students without prior consultation with the institution's authority,' taking decision affecting the conditions of service of tertiary institutions' staff, have drastic effects on the operations and performances of the institutions.

Nigeria is a large multi- ethnic country which attained its independence in 1960. Military rule and civil strife have been a recurring feature of its history. Nigeria is regarded as having a great economic potential, with natural endowment in oil in the South, Groundnut in the North and Cocoa in the West. It is surprising to know that an average Nigerian lives on about one dollar per day (UNESCO, 1999). The problem of the country includes high level of corruption, insensitive leaders, insecurity and high rate of unemployment, yet the number of tertiary institutions keep on increasing. Tertiary education has expanded drastically since independence. This is because education is regarded as a pillar of development in any nation (Lebeau, 2000). Even with increased number of tertiary institutions and general expansion of tertiary education, the transformation of individual and the nation is far from what is expected (Ogunsanya, 2000). The problem lies in the management of tertiary education. This study therefore tends to examine the role of effective management of tertiary institution in political economic and social transformation of Nigeria.

Tertiary Educational Institution and Social Transformation

Tertiary institutions have been regarded as key institutions in the processes of social change and development. The most explicit role they have been allocated is the production of highly skilled labour and research output to meet perceived economic needs. But during periods of more radical change, tertiary institutions have sometimes played important role in helping to build new institution of civil society, in encouraging and facilitating new cultural values, and in training and socializing members of new social elites (Mkandawire, 1998).

The ideas of tertiary institutions as an agent of societal change has found expression in varying ways in earlier modernising societies of democratic and authoritarian persuasions. Examples include the part played by tertiary institutions in the modernisation of Japan, the incorporation of the universities into the socialist project of the Soviet Union, the collapse of communism in the late eighties in Central and Eastern Europe as well as the demise of the apartheid regime in South Africa (Kruss and Kraak, 2003). In Nigeria, Academic work appears to be buffeted by all sort of external forces (Ogunsanya,2000). Tertiary institutions with all its great potentials may not be able to achieve its objectives if all these external forces are not well managed. There is need for autonomy and academic freedom to ensure adequate management of the affairs of institutions without any undue interference.

Tertiary Institution and Economic Transformation

Tertiary institutions' roles in generating economics transformation are classically embraced by human capital theory. Thus, its roles in producing professionally qualified class teachers, lawyers, doctors, businessmen and women, engineers, pharmacists, and dentists cannot be over emphasised. The question is whether and how such production is transforming the society. Are universities now performing it in new ways? Have curricula been revised? Are different kinds of graduates being produced?

According to Brennan (2004), inadequate data is a great problem in the economic transformation of any country. Few of the developing countries appear to possess reliable statistics on graduate employment. Churning out graduates with new skills and aspirations may provide a potential for transformation in the long term rather than visible change in the short term (King, 2004).

Tertiary institution curriculum are now been geared toward development of self-employment (entrepreneurship). Many graduates now establish small businesses rather than waiting to be employed by existing enterprises. Thus, small business solution might make sense to new graduates in the absence of other option and in the light of the opportunities available in fast-changing and only partially regulated economies.

What is observed worldwide is a connection between the development of self-employment and the increasing precariousness of traditional employment. The International Labour Organisation (ILO), 2001 report noted that in spite of progress in many countries, poverty has emerged in the transition economies affecting low wage earners, the unemployed, the elderly and workers whose wages are not paid. It warned that:

> Casual work and working without an explicit contact of employment is increasing worldwide and has been noted in many countries which are liberalising product and labour market, such as Argentina, Brazil, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Self-employment is growing faster than tradition employment which remains relatively small, accounting for an average of around 12% of the workforce in most countries. In the US, self-employment occupies only 7% of the workforce compared to 23% in Italy, 25 in turkey and the republic of Korea and 26% in Mexico between 1990and 1999, part-time work increased in the EU from 13% of the workforce to 16%. In Latin America about 25% of all workers are self-employed' (ILO, 2001, p. 9).

The high unemployment in Nigeria calls for effective management of tertiary institutions interms of curriculum, teaching, research and community service toward development of entrepreneurial skills to effectively transform the nation economically.

Tertiary Institution and Political Transformation

Tertiary institutions at times serve as the protected space where dissident ideas could grow and social network develop. It might also take the form of providing a base for resistance to a military regime, perhaps through popular (student) uprisings. In Nigeria and South Africa for example, certain institution can be said to have played sub-sector roles of potential political impact, through training programmes in peace and conflict management (Lebeau, 2004).

The notion of protected space refers to campus based political activism and has been employed in different context. In these countries (Nigeria and South Africa), academics often occupied the forefront of opposition movement because, while unionism and political parties were usually banned or controlled, academics freedom could not be challenged without closing the universities.

The political role of the tertiary institutions might be important after the moment when people, network and ideas formed in the tertiary institutions spread into the wider society and provide the human recourses to fill new political leadership roles in the society. In Nigeria, tertiary institutions have played major role in undertaking policy research for new regimes, in providing

personnel for the governing and administrative apparatus and consultancy service to government and enterprise.

Consideration of the tertiary institution in social, political and economic transformation raises question of whom, what and where. Who gets higher education (the access question)? What do they get (the curriculum question) and where does it lead them (which is frequently seen as a labour market question but is also a political and status question, more generally, a placement question)? To these three questions should be added the question of research and the issue of students' unrest arising from poor financing and drug abuse among others. These are questions which need to be answered by the managers (Brennan, King and Lebeau, 2004).

The curriculum question is related to the question of research. The relationship between the two is often seen to be central to the inner working of tertiary institutions. Therefore are questions of what get taught and what is researched. The role of tertiary institution in labelling particular aspects of knowledge is valuable enough to be investigated, passed on to others and preserved for future generation may be at the heart of question about the impact of tertiary institutions. Certainly, it has profound implication for management of tertiary institution toward social change.

If academic disciplines are essentially ' a way of life' involving distinguishable world view and values (Maasen, 1996), then curriculum question become essentially centred around the kind of people tertiary institutions produce to meet a variety of cultural, economic, political and social needs. Brennan (2004) observes that placement question is central to the long-term impact of higher education. Placement of graduate in 'top' labour market and political position provide opportunity for the values and worldviews of these people (formed out of an interaction of social origins and socialisation) to have a powerful effect on the future direction of the society. Depending on the characteristics of the graduates, the economy may be more efficient, the state may be more benevolent, and the culture may be richer. Of course, some graduate may not occupy 'top' labour market or political positions. Again, depending on the characteristic of the graduates, they may be frustrated or contact with this situation. Depending on the circumstance and context of their society, they may form a source of opposition and dissent and spearhead the process of societal transformation.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to distinguish between the economic, political and social transformation in relation to effective management of tertiary institutions. In most countries it is possible to find pocket of activity in higher education (sometimes in the private sector) that appeared to be having an immediate economic relevance. As far as its economic role is concerned, higher education is generally responding (with varying degrees of enthusiasm) to pressures from outside, partly the state but sometimes the labour market itself. The roles of tertiary institutions in political change appear to be complex and contradictory. In some cases, the political effect of this protected space had been evident at the time of regime change, especially where student were involved.

The management of the tertiary institutions in processes of social transformation is also a mixed and complex phenomenon. In general, it could be argued that tertiary institutions contribute a lot to social transformation as they do to economic transformation. The economic,

political, social and culture roles of tertiary institution are all connected. There is therefore the need to effectively manage these institutions for them to achieve these objectives.

Recommendations

To effectively manage tertiary institution toward national transformation in Nigeria, the following are recommend:

i. There is need to change or modify the curriculum (in terms of quality and standards) to suit the existing needs of the society.
ii. There is need for diversification in terms of privatisation.
iii. There is need for change in access policies, student profiles and experiences.
iv. The academic must be ready to respond to change.
v. Government must make provision for tertiary institution in terms of funds and other resources needed to effect this transformation
vi. The issue of brain drain has to be tackled to enable the country benefit more from the skill of the product of these institutions.

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