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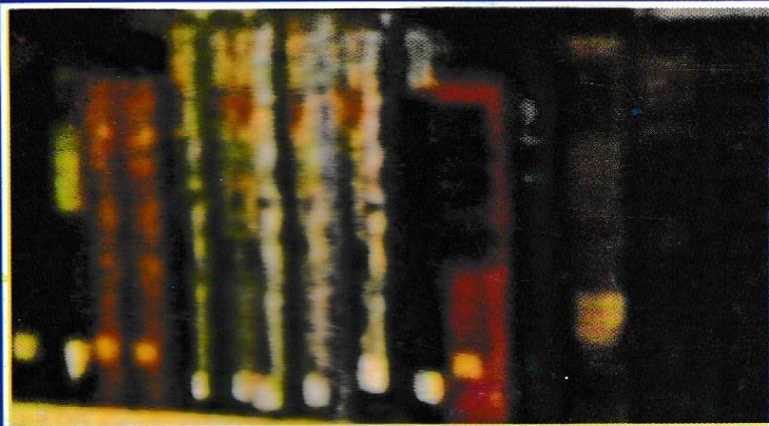
TOWARDS TRANSFORMATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: A PRACTICAL REALITY

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Education in every society is obviously known to be an indispensable tool for nations' economic growth and development. Education in general and higher education in particular, are fundamental to the construction of a knowledge economy and society in all nations (World Bank 1999). Webster's Universal Dictionary and Thesaurus (2010), define education as a process of learning and training, instruction as impacted in schools, colleges and universities. In the light of the above, education therefore means a process by which an individual gains knowledge, insight, develop attitudes or skills. It could be described as a process of passing-on cultural values and skills for the development of human knowledge.

The National Policy on Education in Nigeria (FGN, 2013) defines higher education as post-secondary education comprising universities, polytechnics and colleges of education including such institutions as may be allied to them. Higher education is concerned with the conventional roles of teaching, research and community service so as to develop manpower and disseminate knowledge needed for a meaningful living. Higher education provides the training needed for most skilled occupations and professions in the society. For almost a century, higher education has become an instrument for social mobility - a way for individuals to obtain the skills they need to improve their income level and status.

The Mandate of Higher Education in Nigeria

Education has been adjudged as the bedrock of development all over the world. The role of Higher education is most essential among the levels of education. There are different institutions that constitute higher education (HE). These are colleges of education, polytechnics, monotechnics, universities and those institutions offering correspondence courses. It is necessary to describe these institutions with their goals for clarity.

i. **Colleges of Education:** The colleges of education are responsible for the training of teachers to feed the primary and secondary tiers of the educational system. The

importance of colleges of education is derived from the fact that quality of trained teachers largely determines the quality of the secondary and primary school products.

ii. **The Polytechnic and Monotechnic Education:** The word 'polytechnic' is used generically to cover the polytechnics and the monotechnics/specialized institutions. The polytechnics offer a variety of technical, technological/business programmes to the level of National Diploma and Higher National Diploma (HND).

While monotechnics/specialized institutions are single-discipline technical institutions for National Diploma and Higher National Diploma. The general goals of this category of higher education include provision of instruction and training in engineering, technologies, applied science, business and management leading to production of trained technical manpower.

iii. **University Education:** This is the peak of higher education. The responsibilities of conserving, upholding and disseminating knowledge fall squarely on the university by ways of teaching, carrying out research and provision of extension and community services. University education is meant to drive a knowledge-based economy and to provide knowledge used in solving problems faced by humanity (Usoro, 2011).

Based on this obvious significance of higher education to national prosperity, the general goals of higher education according to Robbins reported in Anya (2013) should include:
1. Instruction in skills;
2. Promotion of the general power of the mind;
3. Maintaining research in balance with teaching should not be divorced from the advancement of learning and the search for truth; and
4. Transmitting a common culture and common standards of citizenship.

In relation to these general goals of higher education the FGN (2013) stated that the goals of higher education in Nigeria shall be to:
(a) Contribute to the national development through high level relevant manpower training;
(b) develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society;
(c) develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environment;
(d) acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;
(e) promote and encourage scholarship and community service;
(f) forge and cement national unity and
(g) promote national and international understanding and interaction.

Based on these national goals of higher education in Nigeria, institutions of higher education in Nigeria are generally focused on teaching, research and community service, with the aim of promoting national unity, develop skilled manpower and advancement in science and technology that would not only improve the national economy but capable of putting the country in an advantageous position to compete favourably and benefit significantly in the competitive globalized economy.

Trends and Development of Higher Education in Nigeria

The establishment of higher educational institutions in Nigeria was in quest of meeting the global needs of providing manpower that would contribute positively to the nation's development (Abdulkareem, Fasasi and Akinubi, 2011). This was tailored towards producing high level relevant manpower training, self-reliance, national utility through the establishment of both conventional and special universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and monotechnics in different parts of the country by the federal and state governments, private organizations and individuals (Abdulkareem, Fasasi and Akinubi, 2011). Higher education in Nigeria has gone through various reforms and witnessed considerable level of growth that has serious policy implications for the country. Utomi (2008) observed that the demand for higher education in Nigeria has led to phenomenal expansion and tremendous growth in the number of institutions and student population in the last two decades. This tremendous growth in the demand for higher education had resulted in serious stress in the human and infrastructural resources in the institutions and this has really taken a negative toll on the quality of services provided by the institutions and the comparative quality of the products.

In the present day globally competitive knowledge economy, revising of curricula should be an unending undertaking. Clark (2001) suggests that the curricula of higher education in Nigeria need to be changed every two or three years to ensure that the content of their teaching reflects the speedily advancing frontiers of knowledge. This is because employers consider the quality of graduates to be inadequate. A study of the labor market for graduates found that employers believe Nigerian graduates are poorly trained and unproductive on the job, and shortcomings are particularly severe in oral and written communication, and in applied technical skills. Teaching in higher institutions in Nigeria is based on traditional pedagogy and conventional curricula, and falls short of many standards in these areas.

Proliferation of illegal higher educational institutions is another issue of great concern. According to Joshua (2012), as at March, 2010, Prof. Julius Okojie, the Executive Secretary of NUC, did say that thirty-four universities were operating illegally in Nigeria. They are unlawful as they do not have the pre-requisite federal government approval. These included satellite or offshore campuses of foreign higher educational institutions operating in the country and private institutions established by rich individuals and religious organizations. These institutions are neither recognized by NUC nor listed by Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB). They only admit

candidates who had a level of minimum pass in UTME but could not meet the cut-off of other higher educational institutions.

These illegal institutions have emerged to meet the needs of Nigerians who are desperate for higher education but are denied admission by the 'approved universities and other higher educational institutions'. The beneficiaries of such higher education, on completion of their studies, cannot be enlisted for the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme. It is common knowledge that participation in the NYSC programme is a requirement for admission into postgraduate programmes and/or employment. The graduates of the unrecognized institutions cannot further their studies or gain employment in Nigeria. Their degrees and other qualifications become worthless as they are not recognized at home and abroad for whatever purpose. These illegal institutions dent the image of the country.

The establishment and the running of higher education is capital intensive, the reason why the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) prescribed 26% of national budget for the Educational Sector. A review of the Nigeria's budgetary provision for education shows that Education is inadequately funded. In view of low resource allocation to education, the allocation to the sub-sectors of Education is lacking such prioritizations as would make for a knowledge-based nation. Inadequate funding is one of the major problems plaguing higher education in Nigeria. The weakening financial condition of higher educational institutions has assumed a pathetic dimension that many institutions find it difficult to provide the essential materials for teaching and learning, and the day-to-day running of the institution. It has also become difficult to make money available for research and attendance at learned conferences.

The fund is not only inadequate but is never released as and when due. Mostly affected are infrastructure (buildings, roads, power, and water resources); knowledge facilities (library, computing facilities, and teaching aids); research funding; recreational facilities; and welfare packages for lecturers, administrative staff, and students. A number of higher educational institutions (government owned) have remained on their temporary sites for decades because the government has failed to back up its initial promise with adequate funding. The various unions in these higher educational institutions have embarked on series of industrial actions in an attempt to rescue the situation. The outcome would always be that the government fails on their part to keep to its promises, even when such promises were documented in the form of memoranda, signed by both parties.

Transforming Higher Education in Nigeria
Undeniably, education in Nigeria has suffered much neglect noticeable in the form of scarce funding, lack of infrastructure, inconsistent government policies, disruption of the school system, poor budgetary allocation, obsolete equipment, low

interest in research, lack of conducive operational environment among others, which have also heightened the level of brain drain in the country as many of the lecturers moved to different parts of the world in search of greener pastures. These and more contributes to the complaints by employers of labour within and outside the country that most graduates from Nigerian higher institutions are not properly trained to fit into the world of work in terms of desirable knowledge and skill.

Often, these challenges faced by higher education in Nigeria are blamed on the government especially for the expected role the government is supposed to assume in the running of higher education in Nigeria. However, it is worth noting that higher education in Nigeria would not experience the change we all desire if other stakeholders, especially teachers, administrators and curriculum planner are not making consistently meaningful contribution towards the transformation of higher education in Nigeria. Therefore, to what extent would higher education in Nigeria experience transformation given the governments' support, if the teachers, administrators and curriculum developers do not work towards transforming in practical reality, the delivery of the curriculum through an effective teaching and learning process?

Meaning of Transformation

Transformation is a process of changing from one state to another. Oxford Dictionary of Current English (2006) defines transformation as marked change in nature, form or appearance. Transformation could be applicable to an individual, organization, product or service. When related to education, transformation is characterized by quality, focuses on process and the enhancement and empowerment of the learner. Higher education is supposed to empower students with specific skills, knowledge and attitudes that will enable them live and work in the knowledge society.

Higher education in Nigeria could have transforming experiences through:
1. Re-ordering of the curriculum content
2. Effective instructional delivery
3. Increased students' engagement
4. Improved human resource management
5. Institution-Community/Industry Partnership

1. Re-Ordering the Curriculum Content

What is needed in higher education system is a re-ordering of the curriculum content, that is, (the intended curriculum) and an enrichment of the achieved curriculum, and for the implemented curriculum to focus on relevance and functionality. The achieved curriculum is the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are achieved or learned while the implemented curriculum is the translation of curricula intentions into reality in classrooms, laboratories, workshops, playgrounds and other settings for learning, while not losing sight of the language provisions in the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2013). Following this, there should be a

flexible curriculum. Curriculum rigidity must give way to 'curriculum liberality'. Such curriculum must be relevant to both individual learner's needs and societal needs at large.

Designing a curriculum that is responsive to the learner's endlessly changing requirements will necessitate not only a greater emphasis upon individualization, but a willingness to restructure the ends and means of instruction, and to place a much larger reliance upon both technology and the available learning experiences in the outside community. The reality of a knowledge-based economy, in which producing, disseminating, adapting, using and applying knowledge are the key factors of economic growth and competitiveness, requires that the higher education curriculum and its implementation must be dynamic and be relevant to the needs of the society in a rapidly changing world. Employers believed that, academic standards have fallen considerably over the past decade and that a higher degree is no longer a guarantee of communication skills or technical competence. As a result, higher education graduates are commonly viewed as half-baked.

The products of higher education sector are expected to be provided with qualitative higher education that would make them worthy in character and in learning. To transform the products of higher education institutions from low to high quality suitable for career development, the role of private and corporate organizations, as well as professional associations need to be reviewed. Enhancing in the synergy between the industries and the higher education institutions will make the higher education products more useful to the industries and more marketable upon graduation. Playing complementary role, the industries can provide facilities for instruction as well as contribute to curriculum development which would make it possible for the institution to turn out graduates that can meet the demand of the labour market and compete globally.

2. **Effective Instructional Delivery**
   Teachers are the foundation of quality; they hold trust for the implemented curriculum of formal education and therefore, are at the centre of the educative process. It is a widely known that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. However, the effectiveness of any skill-oriented educational process depends largely on the quality of teaching and learning process in the classrooms, workshops, laboratory and other places.

   The current tradition of teaching and learning in higher education does not engage the student with reflective style of thinking. The system, while stressing teaching, has an underling philosophy of producing rote learners and who are mere conformists who rarely are inclined to be exposed to the type of education that will help them develop awareness of development related issues and the savior-faire in terms of knowledge, values, attitudes, skills and behaviors that ensures sustainable

development. Nevertheless, the goal of every higher educational remains the making of persons who have the aptitude to create products characterized by creativity of thought and imagination. Creativity forms the bases of knowledge capital, which in turn provide for the transformation of education hence, the importance of being creative in teaching, which is the practical utilization of the brain in thought and activities.

Higher education could experience transformation if the training of its citizens would also include the use of educational innovations to develop skills, gifts, abilities and capabilities of citizens, so they can function and ensure innovation and transformation of the world in which they live. It is important that teachers should not just be aware of current shifts in education delivery but utilize them towards the transformation of higher education in Nigeria. To attain transformation in the teaching and learning process, there is the need for a shift in instruction delivery from the old perspective to a new perspective. Below is a table showing the change in instructional delivery.

From	To
Teaching-centered	Learning facilitation centered
Teacher centered	Learner centered
Reproductive learning	Productive learning
Behaviourism	Constructivism
Timed-based	Outcome-based

TEACHING CENTERED TO LEARNING FACILITATION CENTERED

The emphasis is now on the learning activity and learning process of the learner. Educators are no longer the fountainhead of information since technology can provide students with access to an infinite amount of array of data and information. The roles of the educator therefore changes to one of learning facilitator. The educator assist student to access information, to synthesize and interpret it and place it in a context-in short to transform information into knowledge.

TEACHER CENTERED TO LEARNER CENTERED

In teacher centered, the teacher is the primary source of knowledge for learners. In a learner centered environment, the focus is on the strong points, preferences and learning styles(s) of the learner(s). The focus shifts towards the instructional design of conducive learning environment, in which effective learning can take place.

REPRODUCTIVE TO PRODUCTIVE LEARNING

In the past, learners' achievements were measured against their ability to reproduce subject content. In productive learning, achievement is measured against

the productive contribution a learner can make, instead of what the learner can reproduce.

BEHAVIOURISM TO CONSTRUCTIVISM

In behaviourism view of learning, a learning result is indicated by a change in the behaviour of a learner whereas in constructivist views the learner sees learning as the individualized construction of meanings. Constructivism is presently accepted as the more relevant. Construction of meaning may initially bear little relationship to reality (as in the naïve theories of children), but will become increasing more complex, differentiated and realistic as time goes on.

TIME-BASED TO OUTCOMES-BASED

Now the selection of subject content is based on the relevance thereof to enable the learner to reach the learning outcomes. Furthermore, learner's achievement is measure by the level and extent to which learning outcomes are achieved.

3. **Increased students' engagement**

Student engagement occurs when students make a psychological investment in learning. They try hard to learn what school offers. They take pride not simply in earning the formal indicators of success (grades), but in understanding the material and incorporating or internalizing it in their lives. Student engagement is concerned with the interaction between the time, effort and other relevant resources invested by both students and their institutions intended to optimize the student experience and enhance the learning outcomes and development of students and the performance, and reputation of the institution.

In education, student engagement refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education. Student engagement is predicated on the belief that learning improves when students are inquisitive, interested, or inspired, and that learning tends to suffer when students are bored, dispassionate, disaffected, or otherwise "disengaged". Three dimensions to student engagement include the following:

1. **Behavioural Engagement:** Students who are behaviourally engaged would typically comply with behavioural norms, such as attendance and involvement, and would demonstrate the absence of disruptive or negative behaviour.

2. **Emotional Engagement:** Students who engage emotionally would experience affective reactions such as interest, enjoyment, or a sense of belonging.

3. **Cognitive Engagement:** Cognitively engaged students would be invested in their learning, would seek to go beyond the requirements, and would relish challenge.

Each of these dimensions can have both a 'positive' and a 'negative' pole, each of which represents a form of engagement, separated by a gulf of non-engagement (withdrawal, or apathy).

Examples of positive and negative engagement

	Positive Engagement	Non-Engagement	Negative Engagement
Behavior	Attends lectures, participates with enthusiasm.	Skips lectures without excuse Boycotts	Pickets or disrupts lectures
Emotional	Interest	Boredom	Rejection
Cognitive	Meets or exceeds assignment requirements	Assignments late, rushed or absent	Redefines parameters for assignments,

It would be perfectly conceivable for a student to engage positively along one or more dimensions while engaging negatively along one or more, or to engage positively or negatively along one or more while not engaging along another/others. An example might be a feminist student who attends all lectures and complies positively with all behavioural engagement norms, while engaging cognitively in a negative fashion and submitting assignments on a topic she defined according to her own epistemology.

4. **Improved Human Resource Management**

The resources employed in the management of higher education are both human and material. Usoro (2000) describes human resources as the people with different specializations, roles and capabilities who are an integral part of an organization. Human resources constitute all people resident in an organization who are not incapacitated beyond the possibility of contributing to the social and economic well being of the organization.

As technology changes and advances rapidly, it necessitates corresponding rapid changes in human resource needed. In of this fact, there is need for training and retraining of the available human resources in higher education to meet the challenges of newer technologies. Since higher education requires the services of well-qualified personnel, technical experts of varying grades, it is necessary that the available human resources be carefully trained and retrained to meet the needs of a transformed higher education.

5. Institution-Community/Industry Partnership

Most of the resources (human and material) for quality higher education programme delivery can be located in the communities. The need to establish a healthy synergy and relations with the business community is critical in developing requisite skills and abilities on students through provision of hands-on experiences. Consequently, mentoring service should be established with reputable organizations, both locally and abroad and who should occasionally be invited to speak to students as guest lecturers. To further boost experience sharing and capacity building, each institution should establish a circle to provide opportunities for staff and students to interact with organizations offering services related to students' course of study.

Conclusion

The role of grooming middle-level, intermediate and higher-level graduates through higher education in Nigeria is gradually becoming very challenging. In view of the global advancement in education delivery, and the changing role of higher institutions in the development of manpower, there is the need for higher education to equip their graduates with appropriate skills and competences for self-employment and self reliance. To achieve this, higher education teachers and curriculum planners should make necessary adjustments towards the changes and demands of the labour market and global economy. There is therefore the need to rethink, repackage, reposition and re-engineer teaching and learning as well as the curriculum to reflect changing requirements of higher education in a transformed economy.

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