

Research Article

This article is published by Jozac Publishers in the *African Social Science and Humanities Journal (ASSHJ)*. Volume 4, Issue 2, 2023.

ISSN: 2709-1309 (Print)
2709-1317 (Online)

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Article detail

Received: 28 March 2023

Accepted: 23 June 2023

Published: 07 July 2023

Conflict of Interest: The author/s declared no conflict of interest.



The university system, social change and sustainable development in Nigeria

Kayode Asaju¹

¹Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Science, Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria, asajuk@gmail.com

 <https://doi.org/10.57040/asshj.v4i2.222>

*Corresponding author: asajuk@gmail.com

Abstract: The educational system of any nation all over the world remains a strong determinant of the development of such nations. The secret of the high level of development witnessed in many developed nations in the world could be attributed to the success of their educational system, especially their University system. Among the various tertiary institutions, the effectiveness of the University system is essential in achieving national goals and objectives. The major functions of the university are to inculcate sound and practicable knowledge, undertake research and involve in community development. The achievement of these seems to remain a tedious task in Nigeria. The study seeks to examine the role or place of the university system in Nigeria as an agent of social change and sustainable development. The study adopts the system theory as its theoretical

framework. The research is a descriptive-analytical one and it draws qualitative data derived from secondary sources. The content analysis was used as a tool for data analysis. Findings from the study reveal that the universities in Nigeria are still lagging, compared to other world-class universities in the world and it has not played the expected role of being a catalyst of social change and sustainable development due to many challenges bedeviling the sector. This includes among others, inadequate funding, inadequate qualified academic staff, and inadequate and dilapidated infrastructure. The paper recommends among others synergy between the university system and other sectors of the economy, including the private sector, merit should be the basis for recruitment, promotion of staff, and appointment of the management staff of the university, a special funding mechanism through taxation of telecoms companies to fund the university. With this, Nigeria will achieve the desired development.

Keywords – Education, Development, Social change, Sustainable Development

1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, the educational system is the backbone of social, economic cum political development. The secret of the high level of development witnessed in many developed nations in the world could be attributed to the success of their educational system, especially their University system. Among the various tertiary institutions, the university's effectiveness is crucial in achieving national objectives. The major functions of the university are to inculcate sound and practicable knowledge, undertake research and become involved in community development. The university is required to train and develop of higher-level workforce that will be useful in all sectors of the economy. This is of particular importance to all nations bearing in mind that the quality of human capital is *sin qua non* for development and national competitiveness. The university's curriculums of the various degree Programmes

are geared towards the awards of certificates that are not only accepted globally but also benefit the economy and the nation as a whole (Adesina & Adewusi, 2004; NUC, 2022).

The number of universities in Nigeria has continued to increase over time. There are only 2 universities in Nigeria as of 1962. It increased to 93 in 2008, 100 in 2011 and as of 2022, it increased to 170 (NUC, 2017, NUC, 2022). The increase in the number of universities has also led to a corresponding increase in student enrolment in the university in Nigeria. The student enrolment was 2.09 million in 2017 (Nigerian University Commission (NUC), 2017). Similarly, over 2000 academic programs are now being offered at various university campuses across the country all in an attempt to develop national capacity, and ensure economic growth, productivity and sustainable development (Nigerian University Commission (NUC), 2022). The university is also expected to impact short and long-term training that will enable individuals to be adaptable to current trends in the labour market and socio-economic realities (NUC, 2022).

The nation's potential to exploit its natural resource for gain can be determined by the development of its human capital through effective generation, transfer and application of knowledge in the university. This is a herculean task given the numerous challenges facing the educational sector and the university in particular in Nigeria. The problem is that despite the increasing number of universities, courses offered, enrolment of students, and the number of graduating students, the contribution of universities to social change and national development in Nigeria seems to be below expectations. It seems that the required collaboration between the university and the other sectors is lacking. In other words, the expected synergy between the university system and the other sectors of the economy seems to be missing. The major functions of a university are to inculcate sound and practicable knowledge, undertake research and become involved in community development. Achieving these aims will remain a challenging task in the absence of the necessary collaboration or synergy between the universities and other sectors, and the lack of availability of the required resources.

So the questions are what should be the expected role of the university in enhancing social change and realizing the objective of national development, especially the Sustainable Development Goals to which Nigeria is a signatory? What is the expected synergy between the university and other sectors of the economy in the realization of these development objectives? What are the missing links in terms of harmonizing the university system and other sectors of the economy? The questions raised include;

- What should be the expected role of the university in realizing the objective of national development, especially the Sustainable Development Goals?
- How effective have they been able to achieve these roles?
- What are the obstacles or constraints militating against the university system as an agent of change and development?

The primary objective of this study is to examine the role of the university as an agent of change and national development. The specific objectives of this study include:

- Identify the expected roles of the university system in enhancing social change and the realization of the objectives of national development, especially, the SDG.
- Examine the contributions of the university system as an agent of social change and national development.
- Examine the militating factors affecting the effectiveness of the university system as an agent of change and national development in Nigeria.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The paper review the literature on the meaning of development, sustainable development, and social change. The theoretical framework adopted in the study was also discussed in this section.

2.1. Development

Development is multi-dimensional in concept. An assessment of the contributions of the university to sustainable national development requires a definition of development that is all-encompassing, that covers the diverse and dynamic spheres of knowledge and national development. Therefore, giving a single definition might be grossly deficient or inadequate. To realize the above, some definitions of the concept were discussed. The first is that of Dudley Seers (1969), who is one of the most popular and adaptable authors when it comes to discussing developmental problems in developing countries, Nigeria being one. To him, the three questions about the development of a particular country are:

What has happened to poverty? What has happened to unemployment? What has happened to inequality? To him, if all three declined from high levels, then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned. But, if one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially all three, it implies the contrary, even if the country's income per-capita doubles. The concept of development in a normative sense implies the progression from a less desirable to a desirable state. But, the most peculiar and challenging task is that of reducing or eliminating poverty, inequality and unemployment in most nations of the world. Hence, the emphasis today in the development literature is targeted at efforts to provide the basic necessity of redistributing the wealth of nations. The university has an important role to play in ameliorating these fundamental problems, as education remains the most effective weapon to overcome poverty, unemployment and inequality and deprivation, ignorance among others.

Other scholars who define development from the socio-economic perspectives include Rodney, Rodgers and Sapuru. Rodney (1974) sees development as a progression from the individual and social levels. At the individual level, it is the personal progression in skill and capacity and creativity, freedom from oppression and servitude, a sense of responsibility and self-discipline, and material well-being. Development at the social group level is the ability of individuals to associate with groups in society and as well have control over these associations. Rogers (1969) sees development as a form of social change through modern technology and improved social organisation that leads to the improvement in the per-capita income of a nation with a corresponding improvement in the standard of living of the citizens in the society. Development according to Sapru (1994) is a form of modernization that leads to societal transformation from a traditional to a modern society.

From the above definitions, it is obvious that education is the key to realizing development objectives (Seers, 1969; Rodney, 1974; Rogers, 1969; Sapru, 1994). These include a reduction in poverty, unemployment, and inequality, an increase in skill, capacity, and creativity, a sense of responsibility and self-discipline; greater freedom; social change; modernization of technology and production processes; improved social organisation; and, above all, improvement in the material well-being of most of the people. The place of the university in achieving the above developmental objectives cannot be over emphasized. Development is a general sustainable improvement in the material well-being of all citizens without prejudice to class or other biases through the eradication of poverty, reduction of inequality, and improved individual security and opportunities (Gbenga, 2003). The uniqueness of the above definition is that it introduced an aspect of sustainability to the concept and emphasized the sustainability of these development objectives. So, the question is: What is sustainable development?

2.2. Sustainable development

The idea of sustainable development was brought to the global forefront in the report of research conducted by the United Nations in 1987. The report warned about the environmental implications of economic growth and globalization caused by industrialization and population growth (Acciona, 2020). Here, Sustainable Development is a progression that meets the needs of the present and that of future generations, which guaranteed the balance between economic growth, care for the environment and the social well-being of the people (Acciona, 2020). In essence, sustainability implies an increasing improvement in the well-being of the people without any ecological hazards (Su, 2002). Briggs (2008) sees sustainable development as a socio-ecological process that will fulfil human needs and as well enhance the well-being of the people in their natural environment. It considers the present and

longtime effects of human activities on human welfare as well as efforts made through global cooperation to provide solutions that are not only viable but long-lasting (Briggs, 2008).

Various indicators were developed and used to assess the progress of sustainable development in the world by the United Nations (UN), and World Bank, among other international stakeholders. However, the challenge here is the yardstick for measuring or rating sustainable development and increasing human awareness of the implications of non-sustainable actions. The ratings are categorized into four. They include okay; medium; poor, and bad. When a nation is rated okay, it implies that the level of development is well sustainable. When it is rated medium, it implies the nation is almost achieving sustainable development. When a nation is rated poor, it implies that the level of development is almost not sustainable. When a nation is rated badly, it means the level of development is not sustainable. The implications of these ratings, especially when it is negative, could ginger the nations concerned to embark on actions that will help to improve on the positivity or reverse the negative trends. Indicators used to measure sustainable development include the Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW); Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI); Human Development Index (HDI); Environmental Development Index (EDI); Sustainable Development Index (SDI); Wellbeing Index; Ecological Footprint (EF) among others. However, the most preferred tool for measuring the rate of sustainable development of any nation is (HDI) developed by the United Nations (Bartelmus, 2008).

For Nigeria to achieve sustainable development, the education sector, especially the university, must be proactive in identifying and harmonizing the various elements required in sustaining it. Alamu (2017) advocated that effective learning is key to achieving the goals of sustainable development. To him, a child who can read and write has greater opportunities in future such as well-paid employment that will enable him to have better access to health care services, and higher status in society. He (Alamu), concludes that to attain the SDGs, illiteracy in Nigeria needs to be overcome, and that is determined by the level of commitment of the federal, state and local government areas, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions and the parents of the students. This implies that overcoming the challenges militating against achieving the SDGs depends on the government's political will and commitment to improving the various aspects that will make the educational system in Nigeria more qualitative, resourceful and adaptable to the ecological peculiarities of the country. Furthermore, the educational sector, especially the university system, must work in synergy with other sectors of the economy. In other words, for the other sectors of the economy to function efficiently, they must collaborate with the university system.

2.3. Social change

Change is a dynamic development concept and it is all-encompassing. According to Wilterdink (2020), Social change evolves from different dimensions. One, diffusion due to contacts as a result of the relations among different societies; two, the changes inherent in the ecosystem that could lead to the devastating of natural resources, and pervasive diseases; and three, a change in technology brought about by intense industrial activities. All these changes lead to the evolution of another social group known as the urban- proletariat. It also increases the urban population growth as well as other demographic consequences. Social change can also be attributed to the alteration of the social structure of society due to the culture, laws, norms and the ways the social organizations are structured (Wilterdink, 2020).

A social change could be a result of long-time human interactions and relationships among different people that led to the transformation of cultural and social institutions with great implications the society. These changes often occur over time, and the consequences for society are profound and longtime (Dunfey, 2019: 10). Factors that determine the change in any society include demographic, natural, technological and cultural changes. According to Merrill and Eldredge (1952) and India Association of Sociologists ((IAS) 2020), change implied a situation in many people engaged in occupations that are different from that of their forefathers. Mazumdar (1966) sees social change as a new approach that tends to modify or replace the culture of a people and society as a whole. Social

changes are variations in people's ways of living due to alterations in their ecological changes, culture, and population. It could also be a result of an ideology revolution brought about by societal diffusions or group inventions (Gillin & Gillin, 1942; IAS, 2020). It is variation in the social process, patterns, interactions, and organisation (Jones, in IAS, 2020). Social change is a modification in the ways people in a particular society do things and think. (Jenson, in IAS, 2020).

In all these, education is crucial in achieving the goals of social change. It makes these changes easy and adaptable. The idea of social change is also in line with the basic objectives of the National Policy on Education in Nigeria as embedded in the policy document (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004).

2.4. Theoretical framework of the study

The theory underpinning this study is the system theory as propounded by Wehrich et.al (Wehrich et.al., 2008). This study examines the contributions of the university in the achievement of sustainable national development in Nigeria. The system theory emphasizes the harmonious working or operation of different and distinct parts to achieve a whole. A System is made up of different parts that make a whole. Each of the systems is independent of the other and each subsystem is vital to the effective running and wellbeing of the main system. This implies that all the subsystems are important and none could be undermined for the other.

Every sector in an economy does not exist in a vacuum. It takes inputs from the environment which is part of the main system (Wehrich et al., 2008). All organizations whether closed or open, receive inputs from the environment, transforms them and export the outputs back to the environment. Here, the university system is part of the educational system and invariably the larger national system. The university takes input in terms of funding, skilled manpower, good policies, infrastructure, and curriculum among others. The transformation takes place in the form of effective teaching and learning activities and judicious management of other resources at the disposal of the university and it comes out in terms of effective and qualitative and functional education that will ginger change and sustainable national development in Nigeria.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted in this study is the systematic review. Here, various kinds of literature on private studies carried out on the subject matter were selected and critically evaluated to arrive at conclusions. It thus relies on qualitative data derived from books, journals, conference proceedings, official documents, newspapers and magazines, periodicals and other related instruments extracted both online and in hard copies. The sum of the data collected is qualitative data and is thus analysed, using content analysis.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. University, social change and sustainable development in Nigeria

Expected roles of the university

Change and sustainable development indicate the all-around development of a nation. It is consistent and sustained upward improvement in the multi-faceted parts of a nation. However, its viability depends on a functional and qualitative university education that will enhance the acquisition of skills that would build skilled labour and allow for innovation and research in various disciplines for the benefit of mankind.

The University right from the medieval era has been recognized as an agent of change and sustainable development. (Balogun, 2008: 10). Through various research, the university has advanced knowledge that has led to improvement in the political, social, economic and physical environment of any nation. As an agent of social change, the role of the university as a bedrock of learning was predicated on the performance of its triple functions i.e. teaching, research and community service. It liberates and cultivated individuals' minds for knowledge to take place, and that constitutes an important role of the university (Guardian, 2018). However, this might be difficult to

achieve in an environment ravaged by poverty, insecurity, social unrest and ignorance. The understanding that the university is an agent for change and sustainable development is amplified by the acknowledgement of human capital above other factors of production and as a reliable source of present and future wealth. Therefore, the quality of human resources produced via the tertiary institutions, and the kind of knowledge generated through research, especially in the university determine the level of the wealth of nations (World Bank, 2000).

According to Balogun (2008), the university in the present digital economic state must not only produce skilful manpower but provide knowledge that will liberate the learner from ignorance and bondage. The output must also facilitate the exchange of skills and knowledge between academia and industries. To him, if all these are achieved, it will lead to better administrative skills and driver sustain development in the nation. University education plays a vital role in producing skilled and qualitative manpower required in the critical sectors of the economy that engenders national development. The university, therefore, requires collaboration with other vital sectors of the economy to help identify the knowledge gap and manpower needs for national development.

At the global level, several initiatives of the United Nations UN, and UNESCO among others are in recognition of the importance of education, especially higher education as means of eradicating illiteracy and solving those fundamental problems that affect humans and their environments. The International Institute of Education Planning (IIEP) (UNESCO, 2009) also stressed the important role university education plays in nation-building. The report believed that universities can produce and absorb the knowledge that will enhance national competitiveness. Knowledge promotes economic growth and development and is now an essential traded commodity among nations. This is against the backdrop that knowledge is a capital investment that allows for competition and is more profitable than that of other sectors of the economy. The unique place of higher education has led to the promotion of countries that accept it internationally and it is now a process that regulates the effects of market forces on the production, distribution, and absorption of public goods and services. According to Guardian (2018), no enlightened nation or community will underestimate the importance of education as a pivotal of national policy and development. The all-encompassing effects of university education have led to the present global competitiveness in international trade well as in social and cultural relations among nations (Guardian, 2018). However, the situation was not the same in most underdeveloped countries, especially those in Africa. There is a need for the universities in Africa to be more proactive and committed to efforts at social and economic transformation and modernization and training and development of skills across all the classes in society Du Vivier (Du Vivier, 2008). The situation above implies that the present study is significant and exigent.

Building effective and qualitative human resource is crucial in achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. The university, therefore, remains the bedrock of national integration, nation building and development. It is a beacon of light and science and technology breakthroughs and development. It is also self-sustained as it is made up of a congregation of intellectuals that constantly and continuously reproduces itself (Mba, 2020). The university remains a veritable tool to guarantee the present and future development and this is made possible through research, dissimilation of knowledge and innovation. This constitutes the main goal of sustainable development.

The universities are expected to promote endogenous capacity, nation-building, promote peace and unity that are germane to achieving sustainable national development. It also promotes and enhances freedom and fundamental human right, opportunities, and economic and social well-being of individuals. According to UNESCO (1998) and World Bank (2000), for the university to play its role successfully, university education must be relevant to the needs and aspirations of individuals, groups and society as a whole. The credibility or otherwise of the university depends on the level of success achieved with the available resources at its disposal (Orwig & Caruthers) This implies that the success of the university depends on the employment of the right intellectual minds capable of achieving good results that will enhance social change and sustainable development.

The above analogy was substantiated in the following words:

While citizens have the right to free basic education, such is not the case with tertiary education. University education is neither a social rite of passage for every teenager nor a dividend of democracy. University

education is neither a social rite of passage for every teenager nor a dividend of democracy. University education is a scanner and sieves out of which the finest minds emerge to push back the frontiers of knowledge that will positively transform the individual and civilize society (Guardian, 2018: 30).

The bulk of a nation's human capital is obtained from tertiary institutions (universities in particular). The university is saddled with the responsibility of training effective human resources that will pivot all the spheres or sectors of the economy and the nation as a whole. These human capitals have significant contributions to the development of a nation. The university has continued to train the human resources that will be useful in the viability of the economy and national development through the generation and transfer of knowledge. The university can achieve these through its tripartite functions i.e. teaching, research, and community services.

The University is also expected to strengthen the collaborations between the stakeholders in all sectors of the economy, both the public and private sectors. In the same vein, the emphasis should be on science and technology education. The collaboration and cooperation between formal and non-formal education need to strengthen. According to Ajayi (2003), University is the major stakeholder in the generation and advancement of knowledge and the development of sound minds who are crucial for the survival of humanities and addressing those fundamental problems affecting them. Some of these problems include poverty, food security, and climate change among others. The author suggests the establishment of an academic department of sustainable development in the university.

In a similar vein, Amaghionyeodiwe and Osinubi (2012) also indicate that the effects of tertiary institutions on a country's economic growth and development can be viewed through private and public benefits that could be attained. The private benefits are micro as they affect individuals and families. The benefits could be in terms of full employment, better salaries, and greater ability to save and as well invest. The result manifests in better health and an improved standard of living. The knowledge economy brought about by quality education by tertiary institutions, especially the universities can help developing economies to meet up with more technologically advanced societies (Asaju, 2020). They are likely to be more adaptable to new technologies. It will as well help the graduates to develop new tools and skills through on-the-job experiences that will help them perform better on the job. From this analogy, one can deduce the growth in information and technology from the developed nations (USA, Great Britain, Germany, and others), to the bulk of graduates who are the products of these universities. The university serves as a place where creativity and innovation are integrated into the socio-economic and political environment of the nation as obtained in developed countries in the USA and other European countries.

Furthermore, Brazil, Russia, India, and China (BRIC) have developed their capacity through Research and Development (R&D) and are now competing with American and European economies in the world market. They have also to a large extent overcome those barriers that impede development i.e. poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy among others. Even countries like Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, India, South Korea, and China, which were contemporaries of Nigeria in the 1960s, appeared to have achieved success due to their commitment to human resource development and utilization through the establishment of specialized universities that takes care of their development needs i.e. agriculture, health, science and technology, entrepreneurship, sports among others.

The roles and contributions of the university to social change and sustainable national development are summarily captured by Amaghionyeodiwe and Osinubi (Amaghionyeodiwe & Osinubi, 2012). To them, when teachers are well trained, it enhances the quality of primary and post-primary schools. It also avails secondary school leavers of higher economic advancement opportunities. In the health sector, effective training of medical doctors and other categories of health workers will improve the health status of individuals thereby raising their productivity artwork. When the right skills are inculcated in the rudiment of governance and leadership, it prepares the future leaders that will pivot the affairs of the nation to achieve the desired growth and development (Amaghionyeodiwe & Osinubi, 2012).

What is the situation in Nigeria?

The important role of the university in the overall development of Nigeria cannot be overemphasised. The world today is moving towards a knowledge-based economy, where human capital development is appreciating above other forces of labour. The bulk of this human capital is gotten from tertiary institutions, especially in universities. The expected role of the university in Nigeria is spelt out in the Education Policy (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004). However, due to the dynamics and various challenges of national development in Nigeria, the roles have continued to change over time to meet and be in tandem with the realities and peculiarities of the environment.

The objectives of the universities in Nigeria were set in line with the important roles that the universities play in enhancing social change and sustainable development in the country. The three broad objectives of universities are the inculcation of sound knowledge, research and community development and every university channels its time, energy and resources (both human and material) in achieving these goals. Mustafa (2016) stated that the objectives of each university include: encouraging the advancement of learning and to hold out to all persons without distinction of race, creed, sex or political conviction, the opportunity of acquiring higher education in technology; develop and offer academic and professional programmes leading to the award of diplomas, first degrees, post-graduate research and higher degrees which emphasize planning, adaptive, technical, maintenance, developmental and productive skills in the engineering, scientific, agricultural, medical, and allied professional disciplines to produce socially mature men and women with the capability not only to understand, use and adapt existing technology, but also to understand, use and develop new ones; act as agent and catalysts, through post-graduate training, research and innovation for the effective and economic utilization, exploitation, and conservation of the country's natural, economic, and human resources; offer to the general population, as a form of public service, the result of training and research and to foster the practical application of these results.

The achievement of the above objectives has been a source of debate among scholars and practitioners in the educational sector in Nigeria. Opinions are divided on the extent to which the university system in Nigeria has achieved these objectives. Nigerian universities have no doubt impacted positively the overall development of the nation. Today, the flux of skilled manpower in the public service, who are responsible for the implementation of government policies and programs, are products of the university. The political elites, the judiciary and even law lawmakers' counterparts respectively, are mostly products of Nigerian universities. These elites contribute their quota to national development through the laws they make and their implementation respectively. However, kleptocracy has been a major problem in Nigeria and it has eroded all gains made in the economic, political, social and even the educational system, including the universities in Nigeria (Omunaka & Oseren, 2023).

Federal universities of agriculture which were established by the government have helped in modernizing agricultural activities in Nigeria today. According to Okolo (2010), Nigerian universities have played a decisive role in agricultural development, especially in the labour, research and agriculture extension services. According to him, (Okoli) five universities were designated as agricultural universities and specially trained graduate and postgraduate students in agriculture and food security. Many other universities have faculties of agriculture, where they train graduate and postgraduate students in different agricultural disciplines. The universities within the Nigerian agricultural system have been at the forefront of new agricultural technologies, especially in crop improvement and food processing technologies (Okolo, 2010).

However, the achievements seem to be insignificant because of the numerous multi-dimensional development challenges facing the nation. As revealed in our previous discussion, the university has a great role to play in enhancing social change and achieving sustainable national development in Nigeria. Achievement of the SDGs required the collaborative efforts of the university and other sectors in the country. The university remains the bedrock for achieving meaningful growth and sustainable development. That seems not to be the case in Nigeria. Despite the little achievement recorded by the universities in Nigeria, it seems they could not solve the multi-dimensional problems confronting the country. Nigeria is unarguably having the largest number of higher

educational institutions in Africa. There are 160 Universities, 128 Polytechnics, and 177 Colleges of Education in Nigeria (Mba, 2019).

Despite the huge number of tertiary institutions across the country, Nigeria is still lagging in terms of qualitative education. A comparative assessment of the academic performance of 12 top Nigerian universities with that of other emerging global economies like Brazil, Turkey, Thailand, South Africa, and Egypt reveals that Nigerian universities are lagging, as per the World University Ranking (WUR) (Mba, 2019). The situation is pathetic considering the increase in the number of tertiary institutions and enrolments of students, especially, the university over time. Afolayan (2015) was of the view that the emphasis was more on achieving quantitative, rather than quality education. The universities in Nigeria are bedevilled by many challenges limiting their ability to contribute meaningfully to sustainable national development in the country.

4.2. What are the challenges?

One major problem confronting tertiary education in Nigeria today is the needless proliferation of degree-awarding institutions especially universities and the dubious politicization of university management. Despite the exploits made by the Nigerian staff and students in foreign universities, the Universities in Nigeria are still far behind in the international rankings (Guardian Newspaper, March 12, 2008). It has become evident that Nigerian universities have lost the goodwill, which was enjoyed by the first-generation universities like the University of Ibadan (UI), University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN), Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) and University of Lagos. The prestige that was enjoyed by these universities no longer holds as both the first, second and third generation universities are all in dearth shape, thereby making both students and lecturers leave the country at the expense of the country's development. Ndujihe (2018) observed that the first generation university attracted high a good number of foreign students and lecturers alike in the mid-1990s from countries like Cameroon, South Africa, Kenya and Ghana. Unfortunately, the situation has changed as the country witnesses a large migration of students and lecturers to foreign countries. Today, a large number of lecturers in search of greener pastures have left the country. Nigeria is losing its intellectuals to other countries in the world. The implication is that the contributions of these great intellectuals to the development efforts in the country will be lost to other countries. Many students are also studying abroad, even in close by countries that are far below the country in education rankings. Nigeria spends over 2 billion dollars (about N720 billion) annually as capital flight on education abroad (Punch, 2017). Over 1,202 Nigerian students are pursuing different academic programmes in India. Nigeria was ranked as the fifth-biggest source of international students in India (Punch, 2017). As of 2019, 11,985 Nigerian students were granted visa permits to study in Canada, making it the ninth most popular source country for international students (Thererot, 2020). Also, 19000 Nigerian students enrolled in various tertiary institutions in the UK and about N162bn is spent annually in the United Kingdom (UK) on foreign tertiary education (Ndujihe, 2018). In the same vein, more than 10,000 Nigerian students are among over one million international students in the US (Punch, 2017). As of 2019, Nigerians studying in the US are put at 13,423, accounting for 1.2% of the total international students in the United States of America. It also ranked eleventh in the leading places of origin of foreign students in the 2019/2020 academic season and the only African country in the 20 places of origin for international students in the USA over time (Kazeem, 2019; Nzekwe, 2019). Statistics also indicated that 13000 out of 39000 Africans travelling to study in America yearly are Nigerians (Abiola, 2020). However, on the contrary, fewer than US students are studying in Nigerian universities in the last four decades (Kazeem, 2019; Nzekwe, 2019).

The economic cost of these migrations is huge and devastating. Statistics indicate that the spending by Nigerian students studying in the USA as of 2019 was \$514 million. This amount is the total of what the Nigerian government spends on its students studying in France, Germany and the UK when put together (Kazeem, 2019). Only recently, the US government expressed its desire to speed up plans to force foreign students out of the USA. According to Abiola (2020), if these plans are actualized, it will affect international students, including Nigerian

students in the country. The trend is worrisome, given the number of tertiary institutions, including the universities in Nigeria.

Furthermore, statistics from the National Accreditation Board (NAB), Ghana, indicates that in 2015, there were 2091 Nigerian students in public universities and 5284 in private universities, bringing the total to 7375 Nigerians enrolled in the Ghanaian Universities in the 2012/2013 academic session (NAB, 2013). In 2016, there are 13919 Nigerian students in Ghanaian universities and a whopping sum of 179.46 billion per annum (UNESCO, 2016). In 2017, Nigerian students in Ghana Universities spend at least N300 billion annually and the Nigerian students schooling at Ghanaian higher institutions are estimated to be 75000 (Fact Check Nigeria, 2017). Houdegba (2017), also noted that about 90% of students studying at Benin Republic universities are Nigerians. He reiterated further that there is currently a growing interest by many young Nigerians to study in the institution. He adduced the reason for the growing interest in the courses offered, the affordability of the institution and the good learning environment.

The essence of the establishment of universities has been lost and the country seems to have derailed from its initial objectives. According to the Guardian newspaper (2018) from a historical perspective, the universities were set up as platforms for the development of manpower to service the colonial economy. These objectives however change after the attainment of independence. The university's role goes beyond developing manpower that will be stooges to the colonial masters to that with the necessary skills that will enhance the rapid growth of the economy and nation-building. However, to date, Nigerian universities have not achieved that level of enlightenment that views education as the source of power and of knowledge that liberates mankind from anarchy, ignorance, and superstition. Unfortunately, university education has now become an instrument of ethnic and religious identity and supremacy (Guardian newspaper, 2018). The common trend is that the emphasis is no more on quality, but on quantity. Thus, the products of the universities are very weak in practical applications of knowledge and cannot respond to the demand of manpower requirements in the country. It is common to hear these days that Nigerian graduates are not employable. Nigerian universities have failed to produce quality graduates both in learning and character that would enhance their chances for global competitiveness (Nwokolo, 1989; NUC, 2004; Ishiekwene, 2005; Asaju, 2015; Asaju, 2021).

Furthermore, Nigerian universities have not fared well in the overall world university rankings. It is pertinent to know that in 2019, the only university of Ibadan was the only Nigerian university ranked between 901-1000 in the world. In the year 2020, only four universities in Nigeria made the world ranking. The highest-ranking university in Nigeria include Covenant University, ranked 401- 500, followed by the University of Ibadan, ranked 501-600, the third is the University of Lagos, 800-1000, and the fourth, is the last university Nigeria that is ranked, Nsukka, 1000-1400. The rankings include 1400 universities across 92 countries in the world (Times Higher Education (THA), 2020; Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), 2019). Two things were responsible, the reading culture among students and even academic staff is very poor, and the lack of political will to pursue knowledge for its sake and not for wealth accumulation. These cultures are vital in achieving academic excellence and propelling research towards problem-solving (Guardian, 2008). Unfortunately, these academic cultures are lacking among academia and students in Nigeria.

The growing concerns about poor learning culture in the Nigerian universities system are made worse as many graduates of these universities are finding it difficult to be gainfully employed in the formal sector of the economy today. Those who managed to find employment in the informal sector of the economy work in very poor working conditions with meagre salaries or wages. Furthermore, effective learning becomes difficult and demoralizing as the majority of the universities in Nigeria are running academic programmes where the skills are not competitive in the labour market and are not suitable for the present realities of the economy. Onalo (2018) believes that 95% of Nigerian graduates are not employable because they lacked the required skill and competence to be adaptable to the present realities in the complex and dynamic labour market. Although he blamed the universities in Nigeria for this misnomer, he was of the strong opinion that these universities are not well funded. Also, due to bad political

and educational leadership, the university has continued to turn out graduates who lacked the moral and mental transformation that will allow them not to be used as political thugs, especially during the electioneering process by bad politicians (Nnaji et al., 2022).

Another problem affecting the effectiveness of the university system in Nigeria is the issue of inadequate funding. There is no doubt that the lack of funding by the government has been a major reason for the frequent friction between the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the Federal Government of Nigeria. While UNESCO has directed that 26% of a developing country's budget should be set aside for education (UNESCO,1998), the education budget in Nigeria has remained very low and insignificant in the past three decades. Mainoma and Maikudi (2018) find out in their study that the allocations made to federal universities in Nigeria are far below what is expected of a modern university system. From the findings, it was observed that from the period 2000 – 2013, the percentage budgetary allocation to the education sector in Nigeria is minimal and it continue to decrease over time. The table below shows the federal allocations to education from 2000 to 2013.

Table. 1: % of Federal allocation to Education, 2000-2013

S/N	Year	% of allocation
	2000	9.88
2	2001	7.68
3	2002	12.64
4	2003	8.32
6	2004	8.21
7	2005	5.97
8	2006	8.77
9	2007	8.09
10	2008	6.49
11	2009	6.98
12	2010	6.42
13	2011	-
14	2012	8.43
15	2013	8.72
16	2014	9.0
17	2015	9.3
18	2016	6.7

19	2017	6.1
20	2018	5.9
21	2019	5.9
21	2020	5.1
22	2021	5.1
23	2022	5.0

Source: Culled from Mainoma and Maikudi (2018) and UNESCO, and

Data from Table 1 shows the percentage of budgetary allocations to the education sector from 2000-2022. The data indicates that allocations to universities in 2000 were 9.88%, which decreased to 7.68% in 2001. In 2002, the allocation increased to 12.64% but decreased to 8.32% in 2003. It dropped further in 2004 to 8.21% and then to 5.97% in 2005. It rose again to 8.77% in 2006, decreased to 8.09% in 2007 and continued to decrease until 2012, when it rose to 8.5% and then to 8.7 % in 2013. It increased again from 9.0% in 2014 to 9.3% in 2015 when it reaches the peak of education spending for the past two decades. It started decreasing again in 2016 from 9.3 to 6.7 % 2016. In 2017 it decreased to 6.1, it decreased further to 5.9 in 2018, 5.9 again in 2019, and it get worse in 2020 and 2021 with 5.1 % respectively. This implies that the Nigerian government spends less on education compared to some African countries. The data shows that these African countries dedicate a larger share of their annual budget to education compared to Nigeria. Lesotho spends 17.0% of its budget on education, Botswana 19.0%, Swaziland 24.6%, South Africa 25.8%, Côte d'Ivoire 30.0%, Burkina Faso 16.8%, Ghana 31%, Kenya 23.0%, Uganda 27%, Tunisia and Morocco 17.7% respectively.

Babalola (2017) also carried out a comparative analysis of funding in a state university in California and 50 federal universities in Nigeria including the UBE (universal basic education) combined. He noted that, while the federal government of Nigeria allocated N 495. 456 billion in 2012 for the 50 federal universities and UBE, the North California state university budgetary expenditure was \$7.1 bn, which translates to about N1.2 trillion. He further stated that, in 2013, the combined budgets for Plateau State, Gombe State, Taraba State, Nasarawa State and Bauchi State were N559 billion (Babalola, 2017). According to him, these states allocated about 8% to 10% of their budget to education (Babalola, 2017). Yet the 2012 budget for California state university was \$4.4 bn, which equates to about N640 billion. This indicates that much priority has not been given to the education system by both the state and federal governments who are the major funders of education in Nigeria. The minimal allocations over the years to the educational sector will invariably affect funds available to federal universities with great implications on the effectiveness of the university in performing its roles. It will also affect infrastructural development, the motivation of staff and other ingredients of an environment conducive to learning and research. Faborode and Edigheji (2016) rightly put it this way:

When we consider the fact that higher education only gets a small fraction of allocation, we would appreciate the level of neglect suffered by that level of education, e.g. the university. It is no wonder then that the several excellent brains and great minds who are supposed to develop Nigeria's higher education are either frustrated at home or forced out to develop educational systems in Europe, America, Asia, and East and Southern Africa as a result of brain drain.

The issue of brain drain in Nigerian universities has been discussed earlier in this paper. The fact remains that the country will continue to experience brain drain if the situation in the universities in Nigeria remains the same. Studies conducted by Ogomudia (2008) and Ajayi (2009) revealed that some of the challenges militating against the effectiveness of university education in Nigeria include poor policy planning and implementation, policy

inconsistency, inadequate funding, and inadequate infrastructure, corruption, irregularities in the admission process, lack of qualitative primary and secondary levels of education, lack of regard for student's class carrying capacity requirements, inflexibility in operations, ineffective university management, and government interference in the operations of the university and many more. staff recruitment, discipline, appointments into management positions, among others forms of interference.

Amaechi (2014) also summarized the problems impeding the effectiveness of Nigeria universities to include staff and students indiscipline, inadequate fund, inadequate facilities, examination malpractice, demonstration and rioting, secret cult activities, drug addictions, sex abuses, corruption, maladministration, policy inconsistency, mismatch and lack of well-articulated ideology that underpins the goals of the Nigerian educational policy that will ultimately stimulate national development in Nigeria. In their study on the state of universities in Nigeria, Faborode and Edigheji (2016), observed:

The sorry state of higher education in Nigeria has been well documented in Newspapers articles, learned journals, and several reports of government-sponsored panels. These problems are summed up to include poor funding, poor or absence of teaching-learning equipment, lack of books, chemicals and other research materials, examination malpractices, poor remuneration, industrial unrest and brain drain, indiscipline and violence demonstrated through endemic secret cult activities....., the list is almost endless with the effect being manifested in the inability of these institutions to adequately perform their assigned duty of transmission and generation of new knowledge, training in the learning and character and contribution to national development (Faborode and Edigheji, 2016).

The Needs Assessment Report submits that all the universities in Nigeria have a common problem irrespective of region and ownership. The problems include low-quality physical facilities for teaching and learning. They are also, inadequate, dilapidated, over-stretched and over-crowded, and improvised. The physical facilities include classrooms and lecture theatres, laboratories and workshops. Also, included are basic learning resources that are unavailable or in short supply. These learning resources include video-conferencing facilities, interactive boards, public address systems, internet services and library resources (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2012). Another problem is that of the teaching staff. The teaching staff constitutes the line officers of the university. The achievement of the major goals of the university depends on the adequacy and effectiveness of these academic staff. But it seems the reverse was the case in many public universities. The Needs Assessment Report (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2012) reveals that most universities are understaffed as the staff-student ratio is still very high in most universities. Also, the majority of them have underqualified staff as the junior lecturers formed a large chunk of the workforce. Iyoda & Igbinedion (2022) advocated knowledge management in the university that will ensure that the junior lecturers are adequately mentored to assume the role of the senior ones, especially when they retire. It will also reduce or eliminate the re-cal of top lecturers who are already on retirement due to inadequately experienced personnel.

Furthermore, much has not been achieved in terms of intellectual achievement. The Needs Assessment Report (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2012) indicates that even though the various universities have witnessed an increase in publications, 80% are in local journals that have no wider visibility in the international knowledge community. Also on the issue of intellectual achievement, the report indicates that no Nigerian intellectual is in the League of Noble Laureates or a nominee for the Nobel Prize within the time reviewed (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2012). Unfortunately, it is more than ten years since the committee report was submitted to the government, and there is much to be desired as the situation remains the same. The continuous and recent ongoing agitation on these same issues by ASUU led to 26 weeks of ASUU strike in 2021 and another eight months of strike action in 2022. This is a clear pointer to the fact that much has not been done to ameliorate the problems identified by the Needs Assessment Report (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2012). Considering these problems and challenges, it will be difficult for universities in Nigeria to play the role of catalyst for social change and sustainable development.

Another challenge is the internal wrangling and politicization of academics. The constant internal wrangling among academic staff in the university is gradually affecting academic excellence in the universities in Nigeria. This wrangling has pitted academic staff into camps and each competing for relevance and administrative positions. Godfatherism is the order of the day and staff and even students who are not in the favoured or domineering camp are doomed. The pull-down syndrome constitutes the major strategy adopted to silence those perceived as opposition or threat.

Also, related to the above is the politicization of the system. The over-politicization of the recruitment process has brought in people who have no business in academics into the system. Merit and hierarchy which hitherto constitute major criteria for attaining administrative positions is jettisoned for mediocrity. Unfortunately, these so-called loyalists enjoyed unfettered favours in terms of appointment into administrative positions, promotion, and training opportunities among others. They are treated as sacred cows as they exhibit all manners of disrespect and disdain for rules and regulations, lay down processes and procedures, and known university academic cultures without remorse. Unfortunately, they were never punished for these bad behaviours. According to Otonko (2012), some of these loyalists are agents planted among lecturers and students to spy on them. They are thereafter rewarded for their loyalty. Also, their career growth is politically motivated. Otonko (2012) also indicates that political- professors often silence the lone voices of the active and vibrant academic-oriented ones. He further blamed the situation on the long-term government intervention and encroachment into general administration in the university and the academic staff and others who betrayed their institutions. To him, the consequence of these anomalies is the exit of many brilliant lecturers who could not compete in the political-campus arena of the university to join the rat- race in the business world or go overseas for greener pastures (Otonko, 2012). Given the above situation, retaining intellectuals who could drive meaningful change and innovation that will bring about sustainable development will be a herculean task or impossible in Nigeria.

5. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

The university is the vehicle for achieving the national development of any nation. The research has critically articulated the role of universities in achieving national development in Nigeria. The implication is the government has long neglected this important vehicle in all its efforts at achieving national development in Nigeria.

6. CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings or outcome of this study will help policymakers, within and outside the university, and practitioners in formulating policies that will help the university to take its rightful place in the development process. Researchers will also find it valuable as a resource material or an avenue to identify new problems that could lead to further enquiry into the subject matter.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The university system remains the bedrock of national development and social change. The university remains veritable for the transformation of entire sectors in Nigeria. These can be made possible when the university is made effective and amiable to the dynamics associated with the national and global world. The expected synergy between the university system and the vital sectors of the economy is missing. Some of the challenges include, inadequate funding, inadequate and dilapidated physical infrastructures, adequate qualified academic staff, internal wrangling and politicization of the internal mechanism and operations in the university system have led to the derailment in achieving the established objectives of the university. Thus, it is obvious that the universities in Nigeria have failed to contribute meaningfully to efforts at social change and sustainable national development in Nigeria.

The paper, therefore, recommends the following;

- There is a need for synergy between the education sector, especially the university and other sectors of the economy. And this should be the responsibility of the federal and state governments in collaboration with owners of private universities in Nigeria.
- The establishment of a special fund directly from the federation accounts for the smooth running of the university.
- The immediate removal of university academic staff from the IPPIS pay system
- The upward review of the academic staff salary and other benefits in line with global best practice
- The setting up of a project monitoring committee and the bulk of its membership should be drawn from the academic staff in each university.
- To ensure transparency, issues relating to university funds as well as project execution should be made open and discussed at the faculty and senate meetings.
- The need for complete university autonomy in running the affairs and management of the institution
- Merit should be the watchword in the recruitment, promotion and appointment of academic staff into managerial positions in the university.
- Staff training informs of conference attendance should be made compulsory for every academic staff at least once a year. This should be sponsored by the university's internally generated revenue of the university or via Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND).
- Staff discipline should be fair, just, and consistent.

8. FUNDING

This research paper received no internal or external funding.

9. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I acknowledge my research assistant, Mr Ashepo Sunday Yohanna.

ORCID

Kayode Asaju  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9386-7655>

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