

Exploring Challenges to Classroom Delivery in Nigerian Universities and Ways Forward

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Abstract

This paper focuses on exploring challenges to classroom delivery in Nigerian universities and ways forward. University education is an important form of investment in human capital which can be described as high level and specialized form of human capital, contribution of which is paramount to economic growth in the society. But the capacity to achieve this is thwarted by lingering challenges in the process of classroom delivery in Nigerian universities. The paper looked at the meaning of university education, classroom delivery, classroom activities, inadequate and deterioration of facilities, inadequate academic staff, inadequate ICT facilities, enrolment pressure, brain drain, insecurity, dwindling funding, and frequent labour dispute and closure of the campus. The paper concluded that such challenges make the effective classroom delivery difficult and thereby erode the high reputation and international respect accorded to Nigerian university in the 1960s, through to 1980s. It then suggested among others that, the UNESCO's recommended amount to be set aside by every nation from budgetary allocation should be adhered to in order to revitalize the university system in Nigeria.

Keywords: Exploring, challenges, classroom delivery, university education, way forward

Introduction

Education is an instrument of change and a veritable tool for economic growth and national development. The establishment universities was in pursuit of meeting the global requirements of producing manpower that will serve in different capacities and contribute positively to nation's socio-economic and political development in Nigeria. The quest for knowledge and the desire for the advancement of the conditions of humanity have been the motivation for

the establishment of university system. The idea of a university describes the hope for societies. Universities by their nature are institutions of higher learning where knowledge is generated, transmitted and applied to solve societal problems. At the core of the university enterprise are the academic staff who are employed to research (generate knowledge), teach (transmit/inculcate knowledge), and carryout community service through knowledge applications (Abdukareem et al., 2011).

Despite the fact that universities are the engine of all social and economic growth, and their quantity and more importantly quality reveals so much about a nation's determinations to remain ahead of other nations. Universities in Nigeria are confronted with several challenges. The challenges include inadequate funding, poor management style, political interference, disciplinary problems, inadequate and deteriorated infrastructure, faculty exodus, limited capacity, the epileptic budgetary release, delayed salaries, salary shortfalls, non-payment of emoluments for conducting mandatory teaching and learning activities, concerns on interpersonal relations, career progress requirement and organizational climate, over-congested classrooms and laboratories, taps without water and inadequate power supply to run the equipment, struggle for use of facilities and poor maintenance of facilities, the brain drain, poor commitment and bridged staff quality have become the order of the day in Nigerian universities. The diminishing in the provision of basic teaching and learning facilities in tertiary institutions, essentially results in poor quality of academic and professional programmes with consequences of difficulty in classroom delivery and poor international rating of Nigerian universities (Ogbene & Odeh, 2017). With delayed an non-release of appropriated funds for both capital and recurrent expenditure required of universities, the subsector also goes into depressed and crisis in the form of agitations strikes and adequacy of basic teaching and learning facilities (Ogbene, 2017). There is heightened presume on facilities such as furniture for classes, offices, lecture and laboratory equipment, generators, electrical equipment, and transportation (Ogbene, 2017). According to Omebe and Omebe (2015), the deplorable state of education system in Nigeria is very glary. Both the quality of teaching and infrastructure has been severely impacted by the comatose state of the education system. The next decades will be most challenging for universities in the world, and especially Nigeria. A university that misses the nuts and bolts that tie in quality with growth and development in an ambience of social relevance will be left for the junk yard (Jegede, 2017). However, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2016) has

emphatically pronounced that “Education needs to fundamentally change if the nations are to reach their global development goal”. It is in line with this, the paper focused on exploring challenges to classroom delivery in Nigerian universities and ways forward.

Definition of education

Education is a dynamic as well as comprehensive concept, which has a very wide connotation. Many definitions exist in relation to the concept of education in the literature. According to Hartnet and Carr (2015), education involves a desirable change in human behaviour, through the process of teaching and learning. Fafunwa (1980) as cited in Nnachi (2008) conceives education is the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behavior which are of positive value to the society in which he lives. According to Adedokun (2012), education is the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, abilities, competence and the culture of the people by an individual so that a person can live successfully in the society and at the same time contributes significantly to the development of the society.

University education

University as its name implies, is a congregation of minds devotes to finding solutions to the needs of the society through a disciplined way of learning (Jegede, 2017). The Federal Ministry of Education (2004) clearly distinguishes the university education and other types of higher education, Nigeria expects the university system to contribute optimally to the development of high level manpower within the context of the needs of the nation by increasing and diversifying its programmes, making professional course contents to reflect national requirement, inculcating community spirit in students through team projects and action research and by making all students offer liberal or general study courses. However, Section 8 (60) of the Federal Ministry of Education (National Policy on Education) also states that higher education in Nigeria should vigorously pursue these goals through:

1. Teaching
2. Research and development
3. Knowledge generation and dissemination and international cooperation
4. Dedicated services to the communities through extra-mural and consultancy services.

Classroom delivery

Classroom delivery refers to the way in which educational content is conveyed from instructor to students. It is the interaction among the teacher, students, the content, knowledge and skills students will need for learning and collaborating with others. Classroom delivery skills enable the teacher handle students more efficiently and effectively.

Classroom activities

The classroom is the education moulding point where the teacher display professionalism as they bring on stage knowledge, skills, values and pedagogies to interact with learners in life situation with the sole intention of leaving them better than what they were at the commencement of the lesson. It is indeed the stage where the paper work (policy and curriculum) are transformed into live actions where learners could see, feel, and apply knowledge and skills (Uwatt, 2017).

Uwatt (2017) identified the following essential features of classroom activities:

1. The classroom environment

The classroom environment happens to be the physical space the school management provides for learning activities. Though it connotes physical structure, it is not without its social and psychological climate. The term physical readily brings to mind the layout and design that map out a given space. The classroom design is unique in its own way due to the nature of business slated to take place there as well as the convenience of the occupants of the space. It is expected to be spacious, well lit and ventilated and rich in instructional materials. The problem starts with physical size of the classrooms constructed several decades ago when the school enrolment is not as high as it is today. It is pathetic state of affairs to observe teachers and learners of fifty to sixty-five in number cramped into a space that was hitherto meant for about twenty-five people. This is a lingering issue with little attention paid to it. This is an impediment to classroom delivery.

2. Learners

The learners are composite part of the classroom environment and activities. The entire educational concerns evolve round the learners starting from the

policy to the curriculum and the classroom activities. Learners are placed at the central point where every effort is directed at nurturing and directing them in the desired direction. The teacher organizes, guides and directs learners all through the learning activities. That is why it paramount for the teacher to know learners' disposition, interest, aptitude, and readiness to learn. The problem of poor overcrowded classrooms, library facilities, teachers' non-commitment to duty, unaesthetic layout, shortage of instructional materials and functional styles all find dumping point in the learner, as the learner receive both the good and the ugly side of the learning situation.

3. The teacher

The ultimate movement from policy to programmes and curriculum all culminate in the classroom, with the teacher saddled with the responsibility of interpreting the curriculum, selecting appropriate learning experiences and activities, materials and evaluation techniques to meet learners' aspirations and national goals. The start off point of this responsibility is the teacher's rejection to the policy and the curriculum. Teachers must be brought into the policy processing routine and curriculum development in order to have a fair knowledge of what they are expected to do in order to induce appropriate commitment. This affects the entire hub of the learning activities.

4. Instructional activities

These are the selected and well-ordered learning experiences and their corresponding methods materials and evaluation techniques utilized meaningfully to achieve learning goals. The teacher is the sole manager of the instructional strategies and should discharge his duty creditably. This can be done effectively under the selection of learning contents and enhances, matching the contents with appropriate activities that will explain, affirm or demonstrate knowledge or skill.

5. Resource materials

These are enhancers and learning support system which are very crucial to quality learning in any educational programme. It should be selected and acquired based on the subject matter, learning goals, age and competence level of the learners, accessibility and availability of the materials. It is worth noting that an indispensable attribute of a teacher includes the ability to decide when and hour to use the resource materials at the different points of teaching. They

should be use for eliciting meanings, explaining concepts, affirming or clarifying issues. However, the following are challenges to classroom delivery:

I. Inadequate and deterioration of facilities

The present situation of our universities is very alarming. Most of other academic and non-academic facilities are inadequate, archaic and antiquated. Their building are largely dilapidated and decayed (Galadanci, 2013). According to Asiyai (2013) quality higher education is dependent on the quality and quantity of human and material resources put in place in universities. The lack of infrastructures such as science laboratories, workshops, libraries and electricity will affect the quality of education in such level. For good quality delivery, these facilities must meet the minimum standard specified by the National Universities Commission (NUC). For quality teaching and learning the class size must be small for effective students/teachers interaction. Unfortunately, most institutions of higher learning in Nigeria, the lecture halls are overcrowded with majority of the students standing at the corridors during lectures.

According to Galadanci (2013) in order to adequately provide a conducive atmosphere for teaching and research a university must have first class facilities in several respects. First it must have adequate classrooms as well as lecture theatres and halls where qualitative teaching can take place. It must also have supporting facilities such as offices, well equipped laboratories, well stocked libraries and adequate computer workrooms spread across different department.

Worried about the poor quality of graduates of higher education institutions in Nigeria, NUC carried out a need assessment survey which was reported by Okebukola (2005) and highlighted the following:

- i. Only about 30% of Nigerian students' population has adequate access to classrooms, workshops, lecture halls, laboratories and libraries.
- ii. Deficient libraries in terms of currency and number of books, journals, and electronic support facilities.

- iii. Inadequate academic calendar result from staff unions' industrial action premised on low salary, wages/ welfare and students strikes often time related to inadequate facilities.

II. Inadequate information communication technology facility

Nigerian government adopted Information Communication Technologies in university education as part of her education reform effort, considering that, Information Communication Technology integration in educational practices is meant to improve teaching and learning, enhance higher education research, enhance collaboration among peers and improve quality of education. Unfortunately, in most of the universities in country there is acute shortage of computers, multi-media projector, electronic white board, and automation of lecture halls and lecturers offices. (Asiyai, 2013).

III. Enrolment pressure

Universities in Nigeria are seriously over-stretched leading to explosion in students population and the number of aspirants seeking university admission, and decline of equality (Oni & Alade, 2011). According to Jegede (2017), the total students enrolment in all Nigerian universities grew from over 2000 in 1962 to about 1.9 million in October 2017. He also indicated that, the admission statistics from JAMB for 2010 to 2016 showed a total of 11, 703, 709 applicants were received, but a total of 2, 674,485 students were admitted across the 36 states and the FCT between 2010 and 2015. This means that only 28 per cent of students who applied were admitted across the 36 states and FCT. Moja (2000) also maintained that:

Access to higher education and the lack of the capacity of the system to absorb the numbers of students seeking admission to higher education institutions continues to pose a serious problem. For example, it is estimated that out of 400,000, JAMB candidates seeking admission to university education, more than 320,000, which is about 80% are not able to gain admission to any of the Nigerian public universities (P.30).

In 2015, Nigerian universities admit only about 250,000 of the 1,735,720 students that sat for the country's national entrance examination, the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME). The University of Ilorin,

admitted only 12,000 of the 105,000 candidates that applied for the 2014/2015. The stress put on the universities in terms of demand and the limited expansion in physical facilities and academic staff to cater for this demand has taken a great toll on the process and quality of programme in such institutions (Jegade, 2017). This might be the reason why Nigerian youth who have the means often leave the country in search of education. Most of these students chose the UK and the US. Nigerian enrolment in the latter destination has increased more than 25% in the past five years, with 7,921 Nigerians studying in America in 2013/2014. Other top destinations for Nigerian students include Ghana, Malaysia, Canada, and South Africa (ICEF monitor, 2015). In 2010, Nigerian students spend about N246 billion in tertiary institutions in UK which is more than 60 per cent of education sector budget in 2012 (Omebe & Omebe, 2015).

IV. Inadequate academic staff/ poor quality of academic staff

Teachers determine the quality of education because they transmit educational policies into practice and action (Asiyai, 2013). According to Ukeje (1996) without adequate number of inspiring, well-informed teachers, fully prepared to meet their responsibilities in Nigerian universities, the country cannot have good education and without good education, the nation cannot hope to meet successfully, the challenges of a changing world. In the same vein, Ajayi (2007) maintained that good teachers are needed for good education which in turn is indispensable for social change, social transformation and national development. Despite the importance of teachers in the attainment of good education, universities in Nigeria are short of lecturers to adequately handle teaching and learning activities. The lecturer to student ratio has worsened. The number of professors and holders of PhDs has been a growing force of concern. A number of universities have become increasingly dependent on visiting lecturers and inbreed staff which was counter-productive (Alechenu, 2013). According to Alechenu (2013), a report indicated that there were at the moment 37,504 academics in Nigeria public universities with 83 percent of them being male are employed in federal universities, with 14,474 (39%) teach in state owned universities. However, Jegede (2017) asserted that the of academic staff strength has reached 51,000 and with 230 programmes as of July 2017.

The teaching staff to student ratio revealed further disparities between Nigeria universities and their counterparts elsewhere in the world. The ratio of

teaching staff to students in selected institutions is as follows: National Open University of Nigeria 1 to 363, University of Abuja 1 to 122, Lagos State University 1 to 144. In contrast: Harvard University 1 to 4 Massachusetts institute of technology 1 to 9, Cambridge 1 to 3, Teknion 1 to 15 (Alechenu, 2013). Alechenu further revealed that the committee set up by Federal Government of Nigeria on the needs Assessment of Public Universities in Nigeria noted that, “Teaching staff distribution in the country, both by Qualification and by rank, indicates that Nigeria’s University system is in crisis of manpower.” Instead of having 100 percent academics having PhDs, only about 43 percent do so. The remaining 57 percent have no PhDs. Instead of 75 percent of academics being between senior lecturers and professors, only about 44 percent are within the bracket while the remaining 56 percent are not (Alechenu, 2013). Attainment of good quality in higher education requires teaching staff of adequate quality and quantity.

V. Brain drain

Nigerian universities faced a great challenge of mass exodus of brilliant and most talented lectures to other sectors of the economy. Some left Nigerian universities to join the business world, some joined politics while others left Nigeria for better services (Asiyai, 2013). According to Ali (1999) many experience and young lecturers are fleeing Nigeria from the frustration of university life into more rewarding and more challenging sectors of the economy and even to overseas countries. There is diminishing scope of mentoring junior researchers by seasoned and senior lectures in Nigeria due to brain drain. Brain drain has led to decline in research outputs from universities in Nigeria. Research brings about improvement in teaching and learning, but exodus of brilliant and seasoned academics from universities, the quality of education delivery is threatened (Asiyai, 2013).

VI. Insecurity and other vices

Insecurity is another challenge facing Nigerian University system as a result of the increasing activities of secret cult groups, kidnappers and other vices. Due to the activities of cult group and kidnappers majority of the students and lecturers live in perpetual fear. Some of those cult groups indulge in arm robbery, rape, assassination and infrastructure destruction. They cheat in the examination openly and threaten lecturers when caught. While some staff of universities are being hunted by kidnappers and those kidnapped are made to pay huge sum of money as ransom before they are released (Asiyai, 2013).

The inter and intra cult dashes claimed the lives of cult boys and girls, and even the lives of innocent persons who have nothing to do with cult activities.

Another security challenge confronting the educational institutions in Nigeria is the violence unleashed by Boko Haram sect inducing the mental and physical attack on the youths. On several occasion gun-shots and bombs are targeted at the students and teachers, also propaganda used to threatening their consciousness (Adamu & Faul, 2013).

VII. Inadequate funding

. The major constraint to attaining academic excellence in Nigerian universities is financial constraints which made many academics to be working under difficult circumstances. Many universities in Nigeria were unable to build lecture halls, equip laboratories and workshops and payment of staff salaries, research grants, allowances and medical bills (Onokerrhoraye, 1995; Asiyai, 2013). According to Jegede (2017), in recent times, the amount being expended on education has been on the decrease both in real and in percentages. The percentage annual budget allocated to the education sector has continually decreased from 10% to 6.24% from 2015 to 2017.

Despite all efforts made, the Nigerian government has not shown enough commitment towards adequate funding of higher education (Asiyai, 2013). The 26% recommended by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) for education sector has not been implemented.

VIII. Frequent labour disputes and closures of university

Incessant disputes between the Academic Staff Union of Nigeria University (ASUU) and government with the subsequent closures of the institutions also creates a challenge that obstructs academic work in the Nigerian University system. Closure of the institution affects staff productivity and realization of educational aim and objectives. The variables inducing the frequent trade union disputes include poor conditions of service of staff, non implementation of ASUU/FGN agreements, lack of autonomy and academic freedom and poor funding. Despite all assurances and memorandum of understanding between ASUU and FGN, Federal Government of Nigeria fails to implement the agreement reached with the ASUU since 2009 (Asiyai, 2013).

The disruption of academic programme of institutions of higher learning affects students learning outcomes, since lecturers find it difficult to complete the course work. The frequent disputes and strike galore by university staff and students leave students with little or no time to complete both their theoretical and practical work. In most cases a semester's course work is sandwiched to few weeks during which lecturers are rushed to accommodate the time lost to strike. This type of academic rush is a big threat to the attainment of quality in higher education in Nigeria (Asiyai, 2013).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the dwindling funds, dilapidating infrastructure, inadequate facilities, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate faculty members, brain drain, insecurity has made the classroom delivery difficult in Nigerian universities. There is also an absence of strategic planning and implementation, coupled with politicizing the establishment of more universities in the name of opening more access but neglect the already existing ones, that combined to erode the high reputation and international regard for Nigerian universities in 1960s, through to 1980s.

Suggestions

The following suggestions were offered for consideration in addressing the challenges of classroom delivery in Nigerian universities:

1. The 26% UNESCO's recommended amount to be set aside on every nation from budgetary allocation should be strictly adhered to in order to revitalized the Nigerian university system.
2. Adequate facilities should be provided to universities in Nigeria.
3. ICT facilities should also be provided in the Nigerian universities.
4. The carrying capacities in Nigerian universities should be improved considering their inability to accommodate the vast number of applicants.
5. Universities in Nigeria should employ more qualified, competent, efficient and effective lecturers to match the students' population in order to have successful classroom delivery and quality education for national development.
6. There should be a political will and sincerity in the implementation of policies in education sector. This helps even in reducing the issue of industrial disputes between FGN and ASUU.

7. University authority should take necessary measures to secure the university environment, considering the high level of security challenge in the country. Students should also be counselled to be security conscious on campus.
8. Universities in Nigeria should forge ahead to overtake their counterparts in the global race of becoming relevant, creative, innovative and responsive to the needs of stakeholders and larger society.

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