



## Monitoring and evaluation of education standards in Nigeria tertiary institutions: Aligning practice to international standards

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### Abstract

The quality of our products in Nigerian education system is nosediving. Quality has been torpedoed more often than not. Most Nigerian University graduates are at best unskilled and unemployable. Evidence abounds in research literature and in our daily newspapers. Part of the problem has been attributed to lack of effective monitoring and evaluation of educational standards in Nigeria, hence this paper. The paper looked at concept of standard, tertiary education standards in Nigeria, international standards in tertiary education, justifications for aligning practice of tertiary education in Nigeria to international standard and aligning practice of tertiary education in Nigeria to international standard through monitoring and evaluation. The paper concludes that alignment is necessary and relevant to give our tertiary education an international content, through adopting best practices to enable our graduates compete internationally as the world is now a global market.

**Keywords:** education system, Nigeria tertiary institutions

### Introduction

Nigeria is our country and there is no checking out like "Andrew". We need to tackle every challenge that comes our way in the course of rebuilding and revitalizing our nation. Education has been adjudged an instrument "par excellence for effecting national development. Hence, education and national development are inextricably tied together. A weak education cannot effect national development but a strong one can. Tertiary education is the education given after secondary education in universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, monotechnics including those institutions offering correspondence courses (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004)<sup>[4]</sup>. The goals of tertiary education include the following.

- contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training and development;
- develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society;
- develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their social and external environments;
- acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;
- promote and encourage scholarship and community service;
- forge and cement national unity; and
- Promote national and international understanding and interaction.

The above goals are the standards set by Nigerian government to be achieved by students offered admission into tertiary institutions in Nigerian. But to what extent the goals are being

achieved in this country will be examined later. It is noted also that tertiary education institutions pursue the goals through teaching, research, generation and dissemination of knowledge, pursuit of service to the community, maintenance of minimum standards through appropriate agencies as well as inter-institutional cooperation.

The regulatory bodies that prescribe the minimum academic benchmarks for tertiary institutions in Nigeria are National Universities Commission (NUC) Abuja; National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), Kaduna; and National Commission for College of Education (NCCE), Abuja. They prescribe the minimum academic standards and ensure they are complied with by the institutions through accreditation and resource verification. Institutions can be denied accreditation after scrutiny by the NUC and those denied accreditation can experience cessation of public or private funding; a loss of status in the national higher education community; and graduates being unqualified to enter the profession. The agencies monitor the programmes of the institutions with a view to strengthening the educational standards. But to what extent the practice of tertiary education institution in Nigeria is aligned to international standard as well as the extent the regulatory bodies monitor and evaluate standards in these tertiary educational institutions will be investigated later in this paper.

The paper therefore x-rays the concept of standards; tertiary education standards in Nigeria; international standards in tertiary education; justification for aligning practice of tertiary education in Nigeria to international education standards; aligning practice of tertiary education in Nigeria to international standards through effective monitoring and evaluation and conclusion.

### Concept of Standard

The term 'standard' is a fluid concept and has no universally accepted definition. Some scholars equate standard to quality and see it as a level of degree of quality that is acceptable. Standard is also seen as a basis for comparison; a reference point against which other things can be evaluated. Education standards therefore describe the knowledge and skills every student ought to possess at critical points in their educational career. Standards determine what students should know and be able to do in different academic subjects. Education standards deal with the goals and objectives of education that should be achieved by students committed to them. Therefore there are standards in all the course offerings by which students shall be measured. The National Policy on Education specifies the objectives and goals of tertiary education which are the standards to be met by students involved. These standards include both national and international standard. The objectives and goals determine the standards. A fall in standard means that the recipients of that education are unable to achieve the goals set; and a rise in standard means that the recipients are able to achieve higher goals set. Hence standards can fall and rise. Some scholars are of the view that the standards of tertiary education have fallen while some say that the standards are high. Objectives and goals of education can change from time to time because of rapid changes that occur in the society. Society is dynamic hence education that serves the society is also dynamic. Therefore standards of education change as a result of change in a dynamic society.

According to Seneca, a philosopher of old no one can step in the same river twice, showing a society in constant flux. It is therefore precarious to compare education standards of yester years to the present as the two belong to different era. It is based on this that some scholars are of the view that the standard of education in Nigeria is high. To such scholars, quality should replace standard. A good quality education therefore is one that best fulfils the objectives of the education system at present not necessarily comparing it with the past. Thus the quality of education is high if the product of the system satisfies to a high degree the expectations of a good man as conceived in the age and place where he lives.

Based on the above clarification we can now discuss the standards of tertiary education in Nigeria.

### Tertiary Education Standards in Nigeria

A critical view of the goals of tertiary education will show that tertiary education graduates are far from the achievement of the objectives and goals. The quality of the graduates of tertiary education in Nigeria has dropped. Evidences abound. So many candidates are admitted into tertiary institutions but little or no learning takes place. The primary function of every academic is to teach, but most cheat rather than teach. An academic staff should be an intellectual with a decent life style, a person of proven and unquestionable character that tries to abide by the tenets of higher institution, upholding the

culture of integrity in a rarefied environment of a sanctified ivory tower, the university, but are they? A lot of water has passed under the bridge. Adewole (2002) <sup>[1]</sup> attested to this when he stated that Nigerian University degrees are treated with suspicion abroad. He stated further that reports from World Bank gave poor rating to Nigerian University graduates as they were found to be unproductive on the job. Also Bulus (1992) <sup>[3]</sup> asserted that it is common knowledge that many of the products of colleges of education are not capable of passing the senior secondary school certificate which they go to prepare others. Also Utulu (2001) <sup>[9]</sup> remarked that Nigerian Universities that were once acknowledge and renowned for the quality of their products had let down their guard. That their, products were now facing serious rejection and discrimination at the national and international market for employment and further education. Employers of labour complain bitterly about the quality of our graduates and even those with the best grades are recruited and given some training for them to cope. Lamenting further Anya (2013) <sup>[2]</sup> reported the Needs Assessment Report of the Nigerian Universities System which showed underdevelopment of needed infrastructure and the lack of trained manpower particularly of academic teachers. Also, there were inadequate, dilapidated, overstretched and improvised physical facilities as a result of poor planning. The report also revealed that staff/student ratio at University of Abuja was 1:122, National Open University 1:363; Lagos State University 1:114. It revealed further that only 43% of academic staff hold doctoral degrees; only seven of the over 100 universities have up to 60% of their academic staff with doctorate. It went further to reveal a state university that has one professor and 25 Ph.D holders and another, two professors and five Ph.D holders. It revealed further that in one state university only four of 47 listed professors are full time, the rest are visiting. Also in another, 24 of the 174 Ph.D holders are full time. Anya went further to state that "a tenured staff in our university can visit many universities, irrespective of distance without any control. Some academics are always on the road traveling from universities town to another and unable to meet their primary obligations with their tenure-employer. Moon lightening becomes the order of the day in tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria with concomitant consequences.

What could be the cause of the fall of standard of tertiary education in Nigeria? One of the causes of poor standard of tertiary education in Nigerian is very poor budgetary allocation to education. In 2015, 11% of the budget was allocated to education; in 2016 it reduced to 8% and thus year, 2017 it nosedived to 6%. What will the paltry 6% of the total budget do, when UNESCO stipulated the minimum to be 26%? A look at the budgetary allocation to twenty (20) World Bank sampled countries as reported by World Bank (2012) shows the position of Nigeria when it comes to funding

education:

**Table 1**

S/N	Country	% Allocation	Position
1	Ghana	31.0	1 <sup>st</sup>
2.	Cote d'Ivoire	30.0	2 <sup>nd</sup>
3.	Uganda	27.0	3 <sup>rd</sup>
4.	Morocco	26.4	4 <sup>th</sup>
5.	South Africa	25.8	5 <sup>th</sup>
6.	Swaziland	24.6	6 <sup>th</sup>
7.	Mexico	24.3	7 <sup>th</sup>
8.	Kenya	23.0	8 <sup>th</sup>
9.	United Arab Emirate	22.50	9 <sup>th</sup>
10.	Botswana	19.0	10 <sup>th</sup>
11.	Iran	17.70	11 <sup>th</sup>
12.	USA	17.50	12 <sup>th</sup>
13.	Tunisia	17.0	13 <sup>th</sup>
14.	Lesotho	17.0	14 <sup>th</sup>
15.	Burkina Faso	16.8	15 <sup>th</sup>
16.	Norway	16.2	16 <sup>th</sup>
17.	Columbia	15.6	17 <sup>th</sup>
18.	Nicaragua	15.0	18 <sup>th</sup>
19.	India	12.7	19 <sup>th</sup>
20.	Nigeria	8.4	20 <sup>th</sup>

*Source:* World Bank (2012).

With this dismal position of Nigeria, one can appreciate the value Nigeria has placed on education. No wonder, having x-rayed Nigerian position the World Bank stated unequivocally that Nigerian universities did not make the list of topmost best 2000 nor the best 6000 universities in the World. Also according to Times Education World University Ranking 2015/2016, it is only University of Ibadan, Nigeria that ranked 601<sup>st</sup> of the World top 800, 200 steps lower than Makerere University Uganda which ranked 401<sup>st</sup>. The University of Cape Town South Africa at 120<sup>th</sup> position is the highest ranked University in Africa, 481 steps higher than the University of Ibadan. The University of Ibadan ranked 32<sup>nd</sup> in the ranking of 100 Universities in Africa. Lending his voice, Igborgbor (2012) <sup>[6]</sup> stated further that eight of the ten Universities in Africa are in South Africa; only nine African Universities are among the first one thousand in World ranking, eight of these are in South Africa. Also there is no Nigerian University among the first twenty in Africa or the first one thousand six hundred in the world ranking. He stated further that the first ranked Nigerian University of Benin then is the twenty second in Africa and the one thousand six hundred and thirty nine in the world. That only eleven Nigerian tertiary institutions are mentioned among the first hundred African tertiary institutions. Fegge (2003) <sup>[5]</sup> also stated that Nigerian tertiary institutions performed below average when compared to other institutions in Africa like Ghana and South Africa who have done well for the past 25 years. Why can't they do well when they accord priority to the education of their citizens?

The poor funding of education in Nigeria has turned Vice Chancellors, Rectors and Provosts in our tertiary institutions to investment merchants instead of experts in building human

capital. They chase after investments that will yield money to augment the poor allocation by government and forsake their primary function of improving teaching and learning. They turn themselves to task masters in order to generate revenue to run their institutions. Thus is done at the expense of teaching and learning improvement.

However government cannot take the whole blame. The administrators of tertiary education institutions, academic staff, parents, publishers, and non-teaching staff have their own blame. The administrators most times employ incompetently unqualified staff based on nepotism and ethnicity, turning the university to "locaversity". A scenario where professors from other states other than the indigene where a university is located cannot be a Vice-Chancellor, Provost or Rector in Federal Institution unless in their states of origin. Also incompetent lecturers exhibit moral laxity and academic dishonesty without batting an eyelid because as "sons and daughters" of the soil "no shaking". Their traditional rulers and other highly placed individuals in their locality are ready to stand by them at all times. In tertiary institution in Nigeria, lecturers commit various forms of academic misconduct. Some absent themselves from work, award underserved scores to students, commit examination malpractice as well as sexual harassment, collect money from students for grades, cover up examination malpractice, tell stories to students in class rather than teach them, delay in preparing students result, writing projects, dissertations and theses for students for a token, forcing students to buy books with assignments attached, victimize students who refuse to pay money for grades. Some lecturers also involve in falsification of research findings, plagiarism and falsification of examination records. Some give students exam without teaching because nobody supervises lecturers. They claim to have academic freedom. Freedom that turns to license to commit all manner of frauds. They also involve in. swapping of names for publication in order to take credit. However this does not mean that we do not have decent lecturers who discharge their duties conscientiously. Sorry to say that these categories of persons are in the minority. The administrators of these institutions are doing their best to discipline some of the erring academic staff through establishment of ethic committees and similar ones, but they have not substantially succeeded. In the midst of these misconducts, how can the standard of tertiary institutions improve? Other causes of poor standards include inefficiency and corruption in the management of available fund, even the internally generated revenue, promotion of unqualified teachers based on ethnicity, imposition of policies by the government, inadequate infrastructural facilities, poor remuneration of staff, crave for paper qualification, publishers not assisting in publishing recurrent textbooks, parents not interested in their children or wards' education. Others include decay in social values, favouritism in the admission of students, arbitrary appointment of heads of department, labour unrests that mar the academic calendar, emergence of different cult groups that cause may hem to their fellow students and academic staff. All these stifle standards in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. No wonder, out of a total of 508 tertiary institutions in Nigeria (statistical report on 2012 admission and 2014 United Tertiary

Matriculation Board Examination), only University of Ibadan ranked 601<sup>st</sup> of the worlds' top 800 and 32<sup>nd</sup> in the ranking of 100 universities in Africa. The regulatory agencies are doing their best, but what can they do in the face of dwindling allocation to education and eroded value system. We take solace in the remark of Klyosaki (1998) <sup>[7]</sup> that "there is one thing that is a blessing with human beings: they are generally optimistic and have the ability to forget". After about 10 to 12 years they forget, then things change. Things must surely change for better because it is only change that is permanent. However we must do something positive before the change comes.

### **International Standards in Tertiary Education**

Every country has their own metrics in evaluating their tertiary institutions. For instance NUC has metrics in evaluating universities, which include academic content 18%; staffing 32%; physical facilities 27%; library 18%; funding 3% and employers' rating 2%. A university passes accreditation if it is able to make 70% in all the metrics. Otherwise the university is denied or gets partial accreditation. Universities are therefore rated based on these benchmarks. The approved teacher to student ratio ranges from 1:10 to 1:30 depending on the disciplines. For example, medicine and veterinary medicine are 1:10 while education and social sciences are 1:30.

However for international standards in tertiary education there are also metrics for evaluation as follows:

- a. Academic reputation 40%
- b. Employer reputation 10%
- c. Faculty/student ratio 20%
- d. Citation per faculty 20%
- e. International faculty ratio 5%
- f. International student ratio 5%

The metrics from Nigeria and the international standards differ somehow. For example, in Nigeria, there are no international faculty ratio and international student ratio, it is hardly we see students from other countries study in Nigeria or lecturers from other countries teach in Nigeria. This was not so before 1980. Things have changed and our universities are localized devoid of international faculty members and students. Most universities in Nigeria are populated by indigenes of the state where they are sited, some encourage inbreeding by employing only indigenes making the university highly localized. Our universities really need international content. This however does not mean that we do not have some handful of foreign lecturers from other Africa countries as well as students, but they are negligible hence the need to align the practice of tertiary education to international standards.

### **Justification for Aligning Practice of Tertiary Education in Nigeria to International Standards**

In view of globalization, no country in the whole world will remain isolated. The world has now become a global village. Even though Nigerian education should solve the local problems, there is great need to align it to the international standards because of the increasing global nature of higher

education. In support of this Okebukola in Macgregor (2014) stated that:

The overall essence, whether national, regional or composite international standards is to ensure that the higher education system in terms of its processes and products reflects the aspiration and socio-cultural context of the country which the system serves while recognizing the increasingly global nature of higher education delivery. No country can afford to neglect the wind of change blowing the globe and become an island.

Furthermore there has been an explosion of transnational higher education, new technologies and global students, academic and labour mobility, and emergence of new forms of knowledge and skills in an increasingly integrated world, according to Macgregor (2014). Thus skills such as collaborative and teamwork, creativity and imaginative critical thinking, problem solving, technology literacy, informational and leadership can be learnt. There is also a lot of other 21<sup>st</sup> century skills like flexibility and adaptability, civic literacy and citizenship, oral and written communication, global and cultural awareness as well as ICT literacy. Through collaborations, Nigeria tertiary education can embrace these skills.

Again there is a growing influence of international university rankings for countries to show proof of standards. Development of international standards support improvements in higher education and Nigeria needs to key in. If our tertiary education is aligned to international standards, certificates gotten in our countries can no more be discriminated by the Western world. Nigeria can learn a lot from other countries of the world. For instance, project-based learning characteristic of the 21<sup>st</sup> century not very familiar in this country, can be learnt as well as the use of mobile technology and inquiry based learning. Thus international standards could be a catalyst for student mobility and knowledge enhancement as well as helps to facilitate transnational education.

How then can we align practice of tertiary education in Nigeria to international standards? This can be done through monitoring and evaluation of education standards in Nigeria.

### **Aligning Practice of Tertiary Education in Nigeria to International Standards through Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring is different from evaluation. Monitoring could be regarded as a procedure for checking the extent to which contents, inputs, processes and outputs in a programme are being implemented. It has to do with watching and observing to determine achievements, constraints and challenges. In monitoring, information is gathered in a systematic manner so that judgment can be made and questions answered. Effective monitoring has to do with whether what we are doing is working and how we know. Monitoring provides regular information on a programme that enables the administrators of schools ascertain whether or not set objectives have been realized towards the achievement of the goals. Evaluation on the other hand is the measurement of success which informs on the future planning for learning and teaching. It is an art of

making judgment about quality and effectiveness of a programme performance. Through monitoring and evaluation, information is provided on the progress of the school. They help the administrator to plan school programme through judgments made on information gathered. Technological tools are used to gather information and should be available. The information gathered should be applied to school challenges to solve school problems leading to accountability and school improvement. Record keeping is very important when monitoring as well as regular reporting system. Through monitoring and evaluation, we can find out whether school resources are spent according to plan and also whether the teaching method is delivering the desired educational outcomes.

If Nigerian tertiary education institutions are monitored effectively the administrators, teachers, non teaching staff and students will sit up because they can learn from past experiences to make improvement. Therefore, the regulatory agencies of our tertiary institution, as well as the administrators should make use of monitoring and evaluation to improve school systems and educational results. Equipment for monitoring and evaluation should be provided by the government and school leaders. If information is gathered through monitoring and evaluation, teachers will be able to align their teaching accordingly to improve students' performance. Standards can be enhanced through effective monitoring and evaluation. This suggests that school leaders should adopt technology for the purpose. Aligning national standard to the international will not be possible without effective monitoring and evaluation of education programmes and activities.

Again the alignment requires a change of heart from the government, school administration, parents, teachers, non-teaching staff and students. The stakeholders must come together to improve the standards of tertiary education in Nigeria. Corruption in all sectors need to stop and every leader in their own rights should show leadership skills so as to align the practice of tertiary education in Nigeria to international standards. This cannot be so when a paltry sum is provided for education, and even the little one provided is embezzled. Leaders in education should have financial literacy in line with international standards so that they will exhibit discipline in managing funds because good name is better than riches, Nigeria is not supposed to be a rich country inhabited by poor people.

### Conclusion

Nigeria is blessed with abundant human and material resources but bad leadership has turned her to be a rich country with poor citizens. Corruption is rife and no institution is exempted. Leaders unite only in looting and will not care about ethnicity, religion and other diverse interests. Monies develop wings and fly to foreign countries leaving the populace in abject poverty. Is it not shameful that while other Africans appropriate up to 32% of their annual budget to education, Nigeria is lagging behind with paltry 6% leaving her education system in precarious situation. How can the best university in Nigeria rank 32<sup>nd</sup> in the ranking of 100 universities in Africa and 601<sup>st</sup> of the world's top 800? Yet we claim to be the giant of Africa!

Nigerians patronize schools abroad as if those countries are populated by super humans. How can almost all the tertiary institutions in Nigeria be replete with inadequate material and human resources and yet we cart away billions of naira to foreign countries. We bastardize and desecrate our own educational standards so that, we can run to foreign lands for better education. This is a parody.

If this scenario is allowed to continue, time will be when the future crop of our graduates will be a bunch of illiterates. Then those incapable of learning will take to teaching. Formerly the standards and performance of the Nigerian university system compared with those of the best universities in the world. How come now that certificates from this country are discriminated in foreign lands? How come ours have become "locaversity" instead of university in a globalized world? How come it has become very rare to see international lecturers and students patronize our universities unlike in the time past? We should say no to deterioration and come together to re-build and revitalized our education system which is the foundation of national development. Therefore alignment is necessary to give our tertiary education an international content through adopting best practices to enable our graduates compete in global markets. There is also need to adopt effective monitoring and evaluation to make Nigerian graduates relevant locally and internationally.

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