

## **The Development of Higher Education in Nigeria**

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**Abstract:** *The demand for tertiary education has been on the increase in Nigeria primarily because of the recognition of the fact that economic and social development are increasingly instigated by the advancement and application of knowledge which can be provided only by higher education. The government of Nigeria recently initiated higher education policy reforms intended to bring its higher education system more in line with international good practices. The reforms promote increased institutional autonomy, greater system differentiation, strengthened governance, and mechanisms for quality assurance. They seek to create a more flexible and responsive system of university teaching and research that over time will contribute increasingly to national innovation capacities, productivity gains, and economic growth. The central theme of this paper is limited to the development of higher education in Nigeria but the origin of education in Nigeria was also discussed. One of the most enduring legacies parents and the country can pass on to their youth is education. Indeed, education is the fabric of any culture, with it, culture is transmitted, thoughts are conceptualized and information transmitted.*

**Keywords:** *development, higher education, structure, Nigeria.*

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### **I. Introduction**

Education is an experience, the total of a person's experience [1]. Some scholars see it as culture "a way of life and the process of transmitting, advancing and consolidating culture as the process of education" [2]. The national education system transmits art, music, custom, tradition, language, and the skills of the society to the younger generation with a view of perpetuating and advancing the culture of the people. This paper therefore set to underscore the importance of higher education. The quality of knowledge impacted, the dysfunctional system and the challenges faced in an attempt to carry out this all-important function and the politicking in the system.

The prime place education occupies in the developmental effort of nations has never been doubted the world over. Perhaps this is why the renowned Professor Blaike remarked that - education is the biggest industry that touches on every fabric of our human endeavor [3]. Various nations, including Nigeria, have been making conscientious efforts to harness this important sector for optimal development. Although much has been achieved in this regard, much still needs to be done to confront effectively the ever-increasing challenges of our time.

Education as an institution of society is more than education as a discipline of study. It represents the whole system of transmission of a people's culture from one generation to the other to guarantee social and cultural survival. Every human society, therefore, has a system of cultural transmission as could be found in their system of socialization and covers all ages from infancy to adulthood [4]. Children are regarded as a bundle of possibilities and every society puts in place a strong system of education to ensure that these children are prepared to understand and cope with the unknown future. The family represents the basic unit of education as education begins in the home where parents and other members of the home serve as the teachers and the child learns toilet training, language, the basic concept of numbers, and numeracy. Among the Hausas, the structure of education centered on a strict moral code which is religious-based and sought to achieve submissive behavior while among the Igbo, children were taught to achieve through competition and the Yoruba education focused on the production of what they call Omoluwabi, a well-developed personality who can stand his/her own in all spheres with particular emphasis on strong moral base. Majasan, (1967); Babarinde & Bankole, (2011).

## **II. Education**

Education is the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, and other capabilities. Education could be formal with clearly intended consequences and informal with unintended consequences. It is a universal aspect of any culture. Although it is a universal feature of society, educational systems vary according to organizational structures, pedagogical practices, and philosophical and cultural organizations [5].

This may be readily observed when one examines educational systems in a variety of cross-cultural settings, (and even among the myriad of public, private, parochial, and alternative educational networks). What is to be learned, how the learning is designed to a great extent, is a function of culture. For instance, in pre-colonial Africa, the pattern of learning was chiefly informal with the family playing the major role. It was not only the responsibility of the immediate nuclear family but also that of the extended family and community at large to educate the younger generation [2].

There were particularly no systems of organized educational training. The acquisition of skills and language was achieved through the simple process of observation and imitation with little or no overt instructions. However, there were also elements of deliberate learning in specialized occupations such as goldsmithing, weaving, carving, and specialized religious acts and functions. This was the result of prolonged training based primarily on decent i.e., the younger understanding the older [6].

### **2.1 Western system of education in Nigeria**

Nigeria is blessed with a lot of ethnic groups; Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo being the most recognized. The system of education in Nigeria (Primary) is called Universal Basic Education (UBE) which is a replacement of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) to improve the first nine years of schooling. Which include the 6 years of primary education and the formal education system in Nigeria includes, 6 years of primary schooling 3 years of junior secondary schooling 3 years of senior secondary schooling, and 4 years of university education, finally directing toward a bachelor's level degree in the majority of the subjects. The annual term of school in Nigeria is ten months and is sectioned into three ten- to twelve-week periods, each at the pre-primary, primary, junior, and senior secondary stages.

Western education has a long history in Nigeria. The first beneficiaries were slaves and children of slaves who were exposed to western education abroad and later those educated at home. The first recorded effort according to [7] was some sort of educational institution in the Oba of Benin's palace in 1515 while the major open attempts took place in 1842 and 1843 through The Methodist Missionary Society and Rev. Birch Freeman followed by Church Missionary Society through Rev. Henry Townsend and Mr. and Mrs. De Graft of The Methodist Mission in Badagry. The pioneering effort was completed by other major Christian Missionary societies with the first secondary school CMS Grammar School, Lagos established in 1859.

The Nigerian educational system has undergone major structural changes over the last 30 years. Before and after the 1960 Nigerian independence, the Educational System at the primary and secondary levels mirrored the British system, i.e., 6 years of primary education and 5 years secondary and 2 years of higher level/A Levels.

In 1973, the educational system was updated to the 6-3-3-4 (6 years primary, 3 years junior secondary, 3 years of senior secondary, and 4 years tertiary education) similar to the American system.

In 1982 the first National Policy on education was developed and adopted. Since this period, the educational system has witnessed a lot of changes and modifications at various levels.

#### **2.1.1 Primary education**

Primary education in Nigeria usually begins at the age of six. However, children as young as three attend school independent of pre-school arrangements which are usually provided by private providers. Students usually spend six years in primary school and graduate with a school-leaving certificate.

Subjects taught at the primary level are Mathematics, English language, and Islamic knowledge Studies, Bible Knowledge, Science, and Hausa-Fulani.

On completion of primary school, primary school children are required to take a Common Entrance Examination to qualify for admission into Federal and State Government schools.

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) came as a replacement to Nigeria's universal primary education scheme of the 6-3-3-4 system of primary education. The 9-3-4 system of education was designed in conformity with the Millennium Development Goals (MGDs) and the Education for All (EFA) policy initiative. The specific objectives of the UBE as stipulated in the guidelines of the Federal Ministry of Education include:

- (1) Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
- (2) The provision of free Universal Basic Education for every Nigerian child of school age.
- (3) Reducing drastically the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system (through relevance, quality, and efficiency).
- (4) Catering to the learning needs of young persons who for one reason or another have had to interrupt their

schooling through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education, and

(5) Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate level of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative, and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning' (FME, 2011).

Although the UBE program has generated increased enrolment over the years, evidence has revealed that the country's education system has declined over the last ten years and the system continues to suffer from low-quality education as millions of children continue to be left out of school and many others remaining are subject to a severely dilapidated education environment.

The UBE scheme involves 6 years of Primary School and 3 years of junior secondary school, culminating in 9 years of uninterrupted schooling, and transition from one class to another is automatic but assessed through continuous assessment. The scheme is monitored by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), and has made it free and a right of every child in Nigeria. The UBEC Law Section 15 defines UBE as early childhood care and education.

The law stipulates 9-years of formal schooling, adult literacy and non-formal education, skill acquisition programmed, and the education of special groups such as nomads and migrants, the girl child and women, Al-majiri, street children, and disabled individuals.

Unfortunately, the stated objectives of UBE have not been matched with sustained actions in terms of the investment of resources to improve education in Nigeria. Education levels in the 21st century remain low and disappointing due to neglect and disruptions of the educational sector. As a result, the country continues to maintain a bottom-rank position in most international measures of socio-economic status. The major consequence of this neglect is that more children in Nigeria are now out of school (UNESCO, 2011).

### **2.1.2 Secondary education**

Students spend six years in Secondary School that is 3 years of JSS (Junior Secondary School), and 3 years of SSS (Senior Secondary School). By Senior Secondary School Class 2 (SS2), students are taking the GCE O' level exam, which is not mandatory, but most students take it to prepare for the Senior Secondary School Examinations. The Senior Secondary School Exam is taken in the last year of high school (SS3). The Federal Republic of Nigeria is made up of thirty-six States and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). There are about two Federal Government Colleges in each state. These schools are funded and managed directly by the Federal Government through the Ministry of Education with the teachers and staff employed by the government.

Teachers at the Federal Government schools must possess a Bachelor's degree in Education or a particular subject area, such as Mathematics, Physics, etc. These schools were initially intended to be model schools carrying and maintaining the ideals of secondary education in Nigeria. Admission to a Federal Government College is based on merit, determined by the National Common Entrance Examination taken by all final year elementary school pupils. Tuition and associated fees are considered very low in comparison to Federal Government Colleges and private schools.

State-owned secondary schools are funded by each state government. Although education is supposed to be free in the majority of the state-owned institutions, students are required to purchase books and uniforms. Teachers in state-owned institutions usually have a National Certificate of Education (NCE) or a Bachelor's Degree. These schools are often understaffed due to low state budgets, lack of incentives, and irregularities in the payment of staff salaries.

Private secondary schools in Nigeria tend to be quite expensive with average annual fees averaging from two to four thousand dollars (\$2000.00 - \$4000.00) per term. These schools have smaller classes (approximately twenty to twenty-five students per class), modern equipment, and a school environment comparable to international school standards. Teachers in these institutions all possess at a minimum a Bachelor's degree in a specific course area and are sent to workshops and various training programs regularly.

### **2.1.3 The 9-3-4 system**

With the introduction of the 9-3-4 system of education in Nigeria, students are required to enter secondary school after spending a minimum of nine years of primary education and passed a prescribed national entrance examination. The students must spend a minimum period of six years in secondary school. During this period, students are expected to spend three years in Junior Secondary School and three years in Senior Secondary School. The General Certificate of Education Examination (GCE) was replaced by the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE). The SSCE is conducted at the end of the Secondary School studies in May/June. The GCE is conducted in October/November as a supplement for those students who did not get the required credits from their SSCE results.

The standards of the two examinations are the same. A body called the West African Examination Council (WAEC) conducts both the SSCE and GCE. A minimum of seven subjects and a maximum of nine are registered for the examination by each student with Mathematics and English Language taken as compulsory

subjects. A maximum of nine grades are assigned to each subject from A1, A2, A3 or A1, B2, B3, B4, (Equivalent to Distinctions Grade); C4, C5, C6, or B4, B5, B6, (Equivalent to Credit Grade); P7, P8 or D7, D8, E (Just Pass Grade), F9 (Fail Grade). Credit grades and above are considered academically adequate for entry into any University in Nigeria. In some study programs, many of the universities may require higher grades to get admission.

The Federal Government policy on education is adhered to by all secondary schools in Nigeria. Six years of elementary school is followed by six years of secondary school. Senior Secondary school consists of the SS I, SS 2, and SS 3 which is equivalent to the 10th, 11th, and 12th Grade. The Senior Secondary School Examination (SSCE) is taken at the end of the SS 3. The West African Examination Council (WAEC) administers both exams. Three to six months after a student has taken the SSCE examination, they are issued an official transcript from their institution. This transcript is valid for one year, after which an Official transcript from the West African Examination Council is issued. The National Examination Council is another examination body in Nigeria which administers the Senior Secondary School Examination (SSCE) in June/July. The body also administers the General Certificate of Education Examination (GCE) in December/January. Students often take both WAEC and NECO examinations in SSS 3.

### **III. Evolution of higher education in Nigeria**

The period between 1882 and 1929 could be described as the beginning of modern education in Nigeria and this period was marked by intensive missionary activity and expansion in southern Nigeria. Let us recall that western education was received with less enthusiasm in Northern Nigeria for obvious religious and political reasons. This trend continues to date. However, at the period in focus, 1882 – 1929, the Colonial Government paid little attention since its main attitude to Africa was simply to make a profit for the colonial government. However, since change is perhaps the most constant event in life, the attitude of the colonial government could not have remained static for long. Hence, government intervention started through several legal instruments. For example, the first Nigerian Education Ordinance was enacted in 1887. In 1920, Phelps- Stoke Commission was set up “to review the need for native education instead of western education” and between 1943 and 1945, Elliot Commission on Higher Education in West Africa was inaugurated to, “report on the organization and facilities of the existing centers of higher education in British West Africa, and to make recommendations regarding future development in that area. [8].

1959/1960 witnessed the turn of the Ashby Commission which was set up on the eve of Nigeria’s independence, an event that gave tremendous expectations for our people. The Panel was to, “conduct an investigation into Nigeria’s needs in the field of post-secondary school certificate and higher education over the next twenty years.” Several other efforts followed especially at the regional levels to chart a course for education. These included 1961-1962, Oldman Commission on Primary education in Northern Nigeria, and in 1961, Banjo Commission in Western Region to review the existing structure and the working of pre-primary and secondary (grammar and modern) school system in the region, the adequacy of the teacher training program, and the interrelationship between primary education and the various types of secondary education including pre-university education.

Again in 1963, the government of Western Region set up Ajayi Commission to inquire into an increase in fees charged by private grammar schools and teacher training colleges; 1958–1962 Dike Commission was set up to review the educational system covering primary, secondary, and technical colleges in the Eastern Region in 1968, Asabia Commission was set up by the Federal Government to look into the grading and duty post in voluntary agency and educational institutions. The above uncoordinated and sectional educational and curriculum development in Nigeria continued until the ruling elite finally led Nigeria into a needless thirty months civil war (1967 – 1970) which consumed huge resources in human and financial terms and inflicted lasting damage on the psyche of the nation. It took this civil war to wake the Nigerian ruling class up to the need to build one and united Nigerian nation.

The search for possibilities of achieving the new policy of Rehabilitation, Reconstruction, and Reconciliation intensified after the civil war, and scores of items were considered and discarded. The final choice of education as the instrument par excellence for achieving national development NPE, 1981 should not be a big surprise. The past efforts in the field of education in the various regions had created massive development possibilities in human and infrastructural terms and had become a yardstick for measuring the advancement of a region over the other. The preceding years before the civil war of 1967 – 1970 were those of massive investment in education and a period of intense rivalry among regions on the provision and expansion of western education. Those were the years of high hopes and great dreams for the future of Nigeria and her people. It was also a period when the ruling elite competed among themselves on the provision of infrastructural facilities and the expansion of social amenities. Those were the years when it made meaning to talk of first to build a television station, a modern stadium, and provide free education. Various governments boasted of education as taking the ‘lion share’ of budgetary allocation. Education assumed the pride of place in

development planning strategy both at the Regional and Federal levels.

#### **IV. Higher education: a concept**

Higher education refers to the western type of education which is organized after secondary education. There are rules and regulations formulated and administered by the Ministries of Education. Policies are drawn up to guide and direct such institutions by Government. In the Higher, Education laws are to be found rules and regulations guiding the type of buildings, facilities, equipment's required in the institution, the entry qualifications of students, their ages, the curricula, the rules guiding the student's movement, the qualifications of the teachers, their workloads, their conditions of service and the student's certification and graduation. There is usually a quality control mechanism, in the case of Nigeria, it is the universities and the National Universities Commission (NUC) that is saddled with that responsibility. It became obvious that for Nigeria to effectively grow and develop it needed universities, and in the observation of Curle (1970) for a country to develop, the citizens must be educated, he declared that "to develop, a country must have a very considerable proportion of trained citizens, not only to act as doctors, engineers, teachers, and agriculturists but also to establish its values of justice, selection on merit, flexibility, empiricism, and efficiency".

##### **4.1 The structure of higher education in Nigeria**

Higher education in a broad sense is an education delivery system offered at a post-secondary school level which consists of colleges of education, colleges of agriculture, colleges of health technology, colleges of technology/polytechnics, mono-technics, universities, research institutes, vocational education institutes, innovation enterprises institutes, and Nigerian education resources center (NERD). Programs offered by these institutions usually terminate with the successful completion by the awarding of certificates, diplomas, degrees, and postgraduate certificates. However, for this paper, three types of tertiary institutions were examined namely colleges of education, polytechnics, and universities.

##### **4.2 Aims of higher education:**

- (1) To contribute to national development through high-level relevant manpower training.
- (2) To develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society.
- (3) To develop the intellectual capability of an individual to understand and appreciate their local and external environment.
- (4) To acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of society.
- (5) To promote and encourage scholarship and community services.
- (6) To forge and cement national unity.
- (7) To promote national and international understanding and interaction.

The first institution of higher education was the Yaba Higher College, established in 1934. This became the nucleus of the first university college, established in 1948 at Ibadan. At independence in 1960, there was a need for expansion, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka was established in 1960, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, University of Lagos, and the University of Ife (all in 1962) and much later, the University of Benin (1970). These are known as first-generation universities. In 1975, with the twelve states' structure, and the agitation for more universities by Nigerians, the Federal Government established seven additional universities at Jos, Maiduguri, Kano, Sokoto, Ilorin, Calabar, and Port Harcourt. These universities became known as second-generation universities [9]. Virtually, all states have either a higher institution or a Federal one located there.

The establishment of Higher Institutions was to train various crops of people. Nigeria now has a crop of well-educated graduates despite the popularly taunted falling standard. And are readily making contributions in all spheres of the country's development.

##### **4.3 First generation universities**

Five of these Universities were established between 1948 and 1965, following the recommendation of the Ashby Commission set up by the British Colonial Government to study the needs for university education for Nigeria. These universities are fully funded by the Federal Government. They were established primarily to meet the manpower needs of Nigeria and set basic standards for university education in the country. These universities have continued to play their roles for manpower developments and provisions of standards, which have helped to guide the subsequent establishments of other generations and states universities in Nigeria. Examples include the University of Ibadan, Amadu Bello University, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, the University of Lagos, and the Obafemi Awolowo University Ile Ife, University of Maiduguri.

##### **4.4 Second-generation universities**

With the increasing population of qualified students for university education in Nigeria and the growing need for scientific and technological developments, setting up more universities became imperative. Between 1970 and 1985, 12 additional universities were established and located in various parts of the country. Examples include the University of Benin, University of Jos, University of Calabar, and the University of Ilorin.

#### 4.5 Third-generation universities

The need to establish universities to address special areas of Technological and Agricultural demand prompted the setting up of 10 additional universities between 1985 and 1999.

#### 4.6 State universities

Pressures from qualified students from each state who could not readily get admissions to any of the Federal Universities continue to mount on States Governments. To address the situation, it became necessary for some State Governments to invest in the establishments of universities within their states.

#### 4.7 Private universities

Furthermore, in recognition of the need to encourage private participation in the provision of university education, the Federal Government established a law in 1993 allowing the private sector to establish universities following strict guidelines prescribed by the Government. Examples of private universities include Afe Babalola University Ado-Ekiti, American University of Nigeria, Babcock University.

**Table 1.** Enrollment Growth: Policy Norms and Rates of Increase between 1989/90 and 1998/99.

Category	NUC Policy Norms	Actual Growth Rates
1 <sup>st</sup> generation universities	3%	9%
2 <sup>nd</sup> generation universities	10%	13%
3 <sup>rd</sup> generation universities	15%	21%

Source: HARTNETT 2000.

#### 4.8 All Progressives Congress (APC) priority for education

The new government under the Presidential leadership of Muhammadu Buhari since May 2015 has made education one of the key priorities. The focus for education is:

- (1) Increase in the budgetary allocation to education to 20%.
- (2) Train, enhance, recognize and reward teachers.
- (3) Implement laws on national skills standardization, certification, and apprenticeship programs.
- (4) Raise the quality and standards of universities to redress the outflow of students to foreign countries.
- (5) Increase investment in vocational education.
- (6) Introduce and strengthen strong entrepreneurial orientation at all levels within educational institutions.
- (7) Develop a curriculum that takes into account the needs of the employers of labor (The 21st Economic Summit of Nigeria, 2015).

Nigeria has witnessed a phenomenal growth in the number of universities from 2 at independence in 1960, to 55 as of November 2004, to 73 in 2012, and about 181 other tertiary institutions with student enrolment up to 24 million (Universities inclusive). In the 2004/2005 session, only 14.5% of applicants were admitted into Nigerian Universities, while in 2008/2009 18.9% of applicants were admitted. In 2005 the male/female admission profile stood at 780,001 and 1,014,337 in 2008/2009. The factors leading to this explosion range from the need to meet the goals of the national policy on education of the 1970s, which provided for equal educational opportunities for all citizens at all levels (primary, secondary and tertiary) [10], through the establishment of specialized universities (of agriculture, education, and technology) to the quest for private and state ownership of universities, to the need to meet the educational needs of qualified candidates who could not be admitted in the Federal Universities.

**Table2:** showing Higher Education Institutions in Nigeria as of 2011/2012

	Federal	State	Private	Total
Monotechnics and Specialized Institutions	23	2	2	27
Colleges of Health Technology & Allied Institutions	9	40	1	50
Technical Colleges	19	110	3	132
Approved VEIs (Vocational Enterprise Institution) and IEIs (Innovation Enterprise Institution)				99
Colleges of Education	21	38	4	63
Polytechnics	21	38	16	75

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Universities	37	37	50	124
Total	130	265	76	570

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Data was compiled from websites of the NUC, NCCE, and NBTE (2012).

Higher education in Nigeria has experienced a phenomenal rate of growth since independence in 1960. The number of students enrolled in Nigerian universities grew from 1,395 in 1960, to approximately 25,000 in 1974 and the Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) has projected that the number will double by 1979/80. The quantum jump in student enrollment and the evolution and growth of Nigeria's six universities should be of special interest to educators throughout Africa as well as to members of the international academic and donor communities. The Overseas Liaison Committee is therefore honored to publish Professor A. Babatunde Fafunwa's account of the evolution of Nigeria's higher educational system.

### V. Historical development of higher education in Nigeria.

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country. Before the 18th century, there was little or no difference between Europe and Africa, but the slave trade coupled with the industrial revolution in Europe changed the socio-economic equation. Africa became the trading subordinate of Europe and later its colony. A review of the Nigerian educational system from 1842 to 1959 revealed that there was absolutely nothing in the Nigerian educational system that promoted "national consciousness", "national unity", "patriotism" or the like [11]. The colonial government never pretended to build a Nigerian nation. The citizens were either British subjects or British-protected persons whose loyalty was supposed to be for the British Empire and the King or Queen of England. The consequent effect of this was that instead of training the people in the area of technology, the majority of the citizens were educated in the area of civics as they were meant to assist the British colonizers in some administrative duties [11].

The first higher educational institution in Nigeria, the Yaba Higher College, was established in 1932. The agitation of Nigerians for a more comprehensive higher education provision led to the constitution of the Asquith and Elliot Commission on Higher Education. Their reports in 1943 favored the establishment of universities in Nigeria. Consequently, in 1948, the University College Ibadan was founded as an affiliate of the University of London. The University College continued as the only university institution in Nigeria until 1960 (Jubril, 2003).

In April 1959, the Nigerian government commissioned an inquiry (Ashby Commission) to advise it on the higher education needs of the new nation for its first two decades of independence. Before the submission of the report on 2nd September 1960, the Eastern Region government established its university at Nsukka, the University of Nigeria Nsukka, 1960. The recommendations of the Ashby report include:

- (1) The Federal Government should give support to the development of new universities in Nigeria;
- (2) A university should be established in the North using the old site of the Nigerian College in Zaria as its base;
- (3) A university should be established in Lagos to handle courses in business, commerce, and economics;
- (4) University College Ibadan should widen its curriculum and develop into a full university;
- (5) A National Universities Commission should be set up to have undisputed control over the affairs of the universities, particularly in terms of finance, staff, and courses.

So, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka was founded in 1960 while the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife (formerly, the University of Ife) was established in 1961. Ahmadu Bello University Zaria and the University of Lagos were both established in 1962 while the University College transformed into a substantive university also in 1962. In 1970, the newly created Bendel State established a university, known as the University of Benin. Consequently, the six universities established during this period 1960-1970 became known as first-generation federal universities.

Also, between 1975 and 1977, seven new universities were established which was to reflect the then 19 state structure. These second-generation universities as they were referred to include:

The University of Calabar (1975), the University of Ilorin (1976); the University of Jos (1975); the University of Sokoto (1977), the University of Port Harcourt (1977), and Bayero University, Kano (1977). These universities became federal universities under Decree 46 of 1977 which provided for the Federal Government's take-over of all universities in Nigeria (Jubril, 2003). The 1979 constitution transferred university education from the exclusive to the concurrent legislative list which meant that state governments were free to establish state-owned universities if they so desired. Based on this, several universities were established between 1979 and 1983. They include Bendel State University (now Ambrose Alli University) Akoma; Anambra State University of Technology, Enugu; Imo State University, Owerri; Ogun State University, Ago-Nwoye, Ondo State University, Ado-Ekiti; Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Port Harcourt; Cross River State University, Uyo and Lagos State University, Ijanikin.

Nigeria currently operates the 9-3-4 system of education which is part of the Universal Basic

Education, UBE, which came as a replacement for Nigeria’s Universal Primary Education Scheme of the 6-3-3-4 system of education. Students spend six years in secondary school that is 3years of JSS (Junior Secondary School) and 3years of SSS (Senior Secondary School). First-year entry requirements into most universities in Nigeria include: Minimum of SSCE/GCE Ordinary Level Credits at maximum of two sittings; Minimum cut-off marks in Joint Admission and Matriculation Board Entrance Examination (JAMB) of 200 and above out of a maximum of 400 marks are required. Candidates with a minimum of Merit Pass in National Certificate of Education (NCE), National Diploma (ND), and other Advanced Level Certificates with a minimum of 5 O/L Credits are given direct entry admission into the appropriate undergraduate degree programs. Higher educational institutions in Nigeria include Universities, Polytechnics, and Colleges of Education. There are currently 129 approved universities in Nigeria comprising 40 Federal Universities, 39 State Universities, and 50 Private Universities (NUC, 2014). Also, Nigeria has a total of 128 approved polytechnics and 117 approved Colleges of Education in Nigeria, making it the largest higher education system on the African Continent [12].

Although Public Universities have dominated the higher education landscape in Nigeria for several decades, their failure to cope with admission pressure became more compelling from the 1990s. In 1990 about 250,000 candidates applied for admission and less than 50,000 constituting (20%) of the candidates were admitted. In 1992, close to 300,000 applied for admission and about 50,000 amounting to 17% got admitted while in 1994, out of the 400,000 that applied for admission, less than 50,000 totaling 13% got admitted into different universities in Nigeria [13], [14] affirmed 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 37 Nigerian universities”. Also, [15] stated that, “The Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) figures show that the situation has not improved. According to JAMB figures, out of about 800,000 candidates that sat for the 2005 examination, only 147,000 were offered places in the existing universities, representing only 18.4 percent”.

Another major problem facing higher education especially Federal and State Institutions is funding. Enrolments have increased more quickly than the government’s capacity to finance these institutions. This has hampered education delivery, monitoring, inspection, and other quality assurance activities. The government has made efforts at addressing this problem; for example, in 1993, the Education Tax Decree was enacted to provide 2% of the profits of companies registered in Nigeria to be collected by the government and paid into a fund called the Education Tax Fund (ETF) now (Education Trust Fund). Despite the increase in funding from over 11 billion nairas in 1999 to over 90 billion nairas in 2008, funding remains a major challenge.

This was the trend in Nigeria such that the admission crisis became more critical after 2001. The access rate had fallen by 2002 to less than 13 percent [16]. Based on this fact, the expansion of access through the establishment of Private Universities became one of the most reasonable policy options. According to [17], of the number of candidates applying for admission every year in Nigeria, only about 5.2 percent to 15.3 percent get admitted every year, meaning that about 84.7 percent to 94.8 percent of the candidates seeking admission never get admitted. The emergence of private provision of higher education in Nigeria came with the inauguration of a democratic system of government under President Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999. The National Universities Commission was empowered to receive applications, examine and validate the facilities of serious applicants of private Universities across the country. And so, in 1999, three private universities emerged namely, Igbinedion University, Okada, Edo State, Babcock University, Ileshan Remo, Ogun State, and Madonna University, Okija, Anambra State. In 2001, Bowen University, Iwo, Oyo State was established while Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State was established in 2002.

**Table 3:** Total Number of Universities, Applications, and Admission between 1999 – 2009

S/N	Year	No of Universities	No of Applications	No of Admitted	Left Over
1.	1999/2000	45	417,773	78,550	339,223
2.	2000/2001	46	467,490	50,277	417,213
3.	2001/2002	52	550,399	60,718	544,321
4.	2002/2003	53	994,380	51,845	942,535
5.	2003/2004	54	1,046,950	105,157	941,793
6.	2004/2005	56	841,878	122,492	719,386
7.	2005/2006	75	916,371	N/A	N/A
8.	2006/2007	76	803,472	123,626	679,846
9.	2007/2008	94	1,054,053	194,521	859,532
10.	2008/2009	95	1,182,381	N/A	N/A
..	...	...	...	...	...
X	2012/2013	122	1,503,901	N/A	N/A

Source: (Ajadi, 2012)



Table 3 shows the admission capacity of Nigerian universities between 1999 and 2009. This shows that the available universities are barely able to accommodate 20% of the applicants. This also reflects the fact that government alone cannot help because the available public universities are poorly funded and there is a dearth of adequate human and material resources; which invariably gives credence to the emergence of private universities in Nigeria.

According to [18], of the 1,185,579 persons that took the JAMB examination in 2009, a total of 211,991 was admitted, amounting to 17.9 percent of the applicants. This shows that less than 20 percent of those who apply to universities are admitted. Also, Adesulu (2013) reports that, in 2010/2011, Nigeria had 112 universities with a carrying capacity of 450,000 and 1,493,611 applicants. Thus, the admitting capacity was 30.13 percent of the total number of applicants. This means that at best, only 30.13 percent of the total number of applicants were accommodated during that academic session. In the 2011/2012 session, five universities were added, bringing the number to 117, with 500,000 carrying capacity amounting to 33.25 percent and 1,503,933 students applied that year. However, in 2012/2013, 11 universities were added bringing it to 128 with 520,000 (29.96 percent) admission spaces. In that year, a total of 1,735,729 applied for UTME. The National Universities Commission report of 2011/2012 showed that most of the universities in Nigeria exceeded their allotted admission quota.

### **5.1 The roles of tertiary education in peace and sustainable development**

Attributes the following ability to tertiary education in Nigeria towards achieving peace and sustainable development [19];

- (1) Reduce conflicts and contribute to peaceful co-existence in living together including settlements of dispute, most especially concerning resource and boundary matter.
- (2) Tertiary education is also in a position to stimulate the expansion of knowledge in the area of current concerns, enhance safety and environmental management that are directly related to poverty in the given condition, and also nutrition.
- (3) Tertiary education helps build up a population that is favorably disposed to tackling the human problem, be it in cultural, social-economics issues.
- (4) It can help to fight indoor lance offers and expands opportunity as well as play a critical role in ordering social events, and behavior generally.
- (5) Tertiary education can also make critically important contributions in cultural understanding especially in multi-ethnic environments, and sustainable livelihood of the people in the society.

## **VI. Conclusion**

The central theme of this paper is limited to the development of higher education in Nigeria but the origin of education in Nigeria was also discussed.

Whichever way it is viewed, education is a dominant factor in the process of nation-building and national development. Education has been seen as an instrument for achieving the goals of unity, political stability, economic progress, and equality of opportunity and for circumventing situations that may give rise to conflict. The human race has achieved so much through education and its application to living and interacting. Education has contributed immensely to human growth and development.

After so much research and revision of articles on education in Nigeria, I've concluded that there has been a tremendous increase in institutions of higher learning in all disciplines. It is worthy to note that, higher education should be better planned and controlled by quality, in terms of students intake and lecturers; the emphasis should be more on science/technology and the professions. These are areas of great need for a country like Nigeria. Emphasis should also be on the acquisition of knowledge and skills in agriculture, mining, building, construction, manufacturing, industrialization, health, education among others.

Appropriate steps are being taken to increase access to higher education through the development of a private university sector and the establishment of nationwide tertiary distance education programs. As continued enrollment growth generates a more diverse student population with different capabilities and different needs, the system will have to become more flexible and responsive if these students are to attain academic success. Continuing education options for working professionals, quality assurance programs, student support services, and mechanisms that enable students to transfer among institutions are among the changes likely to be required.

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