REVAMPING TERTIARY EDUCATION TO MEET GLOBAL NEEDS AND CHALLENGES IN POST-PANDEMIC ERA FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The paper takes an overview of the philosophical basis of the Tertiary Education and the content provisions of the current demands of our time and the projections of our future. It further examines some critical social issues that should be addressed through efficient and functional Tertiary Education to meet the critical needs and rising challenges of post-pandemic era. The paper suggests some content areas to be infused into and/or emphasized in the already existing, curriculum to make Tertiary Education more responsive to the needs and challenges of post-pandemic era. The paper concludes that there is need for reordering of our educational priorities to accommodate new knowledge and to empahasize neglected areas of knowledge to enable Tertiary graduates be self-productive and to also key in properly into today's world of work and to meet Global needs and challenges of post-pandemic era for economic growth and development.

Keywords: Revamping, Tertiary, Education, Meet, Global, Needs, Challenges, Post-Pandemic, Era, Economic, Growth, Development

Introduction

Education is a very important means for socio-cultural political and economic growth. It is the umbrella of every society and no society grow beyond its level of educational attainment. All over the nation/world, education is seen and assumed to be the pillar and most important instrument of change, as any fundamental change in the intellectual and life wire of social outlook of any society has to be preceded by an educational revolution. The attainment of this role lies on an effective and efficient education and education policies for which the tertiary education has a great role to play for economic growth and development.

In Ojo (2006), Education is central to man because it is a ticket to success, and a visa to the unknown and a way to great height. It empowers, emboldens, refines, civilizes, enlightens, enriches and gives confidence to man and his environment.

The most important way out of poverty is functional and qualitative education. It is a long life long process which enables an individual to develop his potentials in order to give service not only to him but to the society at large (Nzerem, 2021). Every tertiary

educational system must therefore be fashioned in such a way that beneficiaries fit into the world of work and also respond adequately to the needs of the society at large.

The worrying and important questions to ask are: To what extent has the process of education at the tertiary level been able to equip the graduates with knowledge and skills that are needed for the challenges in the post-pandemic era.

The nation's recovery and sustainable economic growth and development depends on many factors which expansion is one of them which includes quantitatively and qualitatively of the National stock of human capital through education. As the president of the World Bank Barber Conable cited in kwapong (1995:2), stated in his World Bank policy study on education said that without education, development will not occur. Only an educated people can take the skills necessary for sustainable economic growth and development for a better quality of life. The major important role of education apart from political difficulties in Nigeria and of its development theories and fashions during the past era, is accepted now as important for effective economic growth and development.

Quality education brings functionality and relevance to societal needs. Relating the curriculum with the needs, problems and aspirations of the nation is a wide way to each functional, qualitative and relevant education. A country that needs rapid economic growth and development or that has experienced economic downturn requires emphasis on higher Vocational Education (Ogwazo, 1995). It will help the product of the school system to be self-employed in different fields and vocation that will strengthen their economic base and reduce unemployment. There is need to practice technical and science education in tertiary institution in Nigeria.

Tertiary education should provide experts and specialists in the various fields who will work for the benefits of the Nation. Produce the people who will make responsible citizens and have a better commitment to the development of the nation and will help to provide the needed manpower in all sectors of the economy (National Policy on Education, 2004).

Tertiary education is expected to create the needed Manpower resource with enhanced skills which can lead to the technological innovation and productivity, economic growth and development within the economy. According to (Edame 2004) said that tertiary education is aimed at producing men and women who have both cultural and expert knowledge in all aspects or fields.

Harbison (1973) documented the consistent pattern of the positive correlation between schooling and economic development by showing that school enroll ratios were considerably lower for the less-developed Nations of the world than the advanced countries.

What are the efforts tertiary institutions making towards this global needs and challenges of post-pandemic era, to consider their educational priorities to accommodate new knowledge and to emphasize neglected areas of knowledge to enable graduates meet the demands of labour market? Akinboye (2015) expressed his reservation about Nigerian Education system when he noted that our educational system seems to have been reduced to a pattern of repeated practice, go to nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary institution to acquire certificates and start looking for job that is usually not available. In the same vein, Obike (2016) lamented the state of affairs of tertiary education as follows:

The issue at stake is that tertiary education in Nigeria is merely focusing on knowledge acquisition with little understanding and without useful skills that could lead

graduates to self actualization and needs of Global challenges of post-pandemic era. Tertiary education graduates invariably alienated from their environment. They go into urban areas searching for non-existing jobs, for which they are in any case ill equipped (P.71).

According to the policy on Education (FRN, 2004) the goals of tertiary institutions shall be to:

I) Contribute to national develop through high level relevant manpower training,
II) Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society.
III) Develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environment;
IV) Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self reliant and useful members of the society;
V) Promote and encourage scholarship and community service;
VI) Forge and cement national unity; and
VII) Promote national and international understanding and interaction.

The National Policy on Education further specifies very clearly that the tertiary institution shall make optimum contribution to national economic growth and development by:

I) Intensifying and diversifying its programmes for the development of high level manpower within the context of the needs of the nation.
II) Making Professional course content to reflect our national requirements.
III) Making all students, as part of a general programme of all-round improvement in Tertiary Education to offer general study of knowledge and nationalism.

However, the goals of Tertiary Education seems to have been faced with many problems affecting implementation and realization of the national objectives of education in Nigeria (Omotayo, 2009). This fact was equally noted by (Olutala 2006) when he noted that Nigeria's philosophy and policy formulation is not really deficient rather what is needed is a matching zeal and devotion to policy implementation. Although, this matching zeal appears to be lacking (Nzerem, 2008).

Tertiary Education in Nigeria have emerged tremendously as they have become challenge for the nation to various governments and all other stakeholders. The challenging have never been as profound as they have become these days. The educational reforms such as massification, expansion, employability, skills, globalization, competencies shortage, equity, social justice and national development according to jegede (2012) have continued to increase other problems such as differences in areas of demography, funding physical infrastructure, levels of academic support, qualified academic staff and local challenges have increased drastically. The other effect of brain drain which is an issue of major occurrence affecting tertiary education in Nigeria.

The process of national education goal realization at the tertiary education level has been affected with a lot of management problems (Ocho, 2005 and Okoh, 2002). Tertiary education is to create needed manpower to drive the economy of the nation.

The immediate post-pandemic era in Nigeria regarded tertiary education as a public good offering knowledge and social justice through fair access to knowledge resources as well as offering a broad range of skills and capabilities to research to increase the Nation's development Sawyer (2004). The various social and economic challenges that plagued Nigeria, beginning from 1980 and subsequent structural adjustment reforms. In Nigeria,

there are 36 Federal Universities, 37 States Universities and 45 Private Universities (National Accreditation Board 2012) (National Universities Commission 2012).

In a knowledgeable economy such as Nigeria, tertiary education can help economies keep up with more technological innovations. They are likely to develop new tools and skills themselves. Your knowledge will also improve the skills and understanding of none graduate co-workers, while the greater confidence and technical know-how inculcated by schooling may generate enterpreneurship with positive effects on job creation.

The establishment of private tertiary education in Nigeria according to Sawyer 2004 created challenges that needed to be addressed. They are as follows:

a) Shortage of resources, infrastructural facilities and poor funding.

b) Over-reliance on part-time faculty from Public institutions.

c) The concentration of profit private institutions on directly marketable courses and programmes.

d) The absence of research in private tertiary institution as a necessary part of the tertiary education enterprise.

This paper explains for evolutionary imperatives for Tertiary Education and proper characterization of the social laboratory that Tertiary educational institutions should become if they are to enhance their competitive advantages and to also fit in properly into the world of work, economic growth and development of the nation.

Evolution of Tertiary Education in Nigeria

According to Obanya (2012), the strong pull of the forces of rapid changes, the predominance of ICT and pervasive social economic uncertainty of the twenty-first century have caused serious survival challenges for tertiary education. For these, he suggested that for higher education to remain afloat or competitive in a world of work there is need to:

I) Transform from ivory tower to social laboratories.

II) Respond effectively to the demands of the world of work of a knowledge economy.

III) Compete forcefully with other competent structures for the generation and application of knowledge.

The transformation from Ivory Tower to social laboratories as indicated by Obanya (2012) is shown in table 1.

Table 1: Transformation from Ivory Tower to Social Laboratories

Ivory tower orientation	Desired social laboratory orientation
Disconnect from practical concerns of every life.	Embedded in the practical concerns of everyday life.
Esoteric and over specialized focus.	Easy to understand procedure, accessible to the average to the average person
Not easy to use research (useless)	Usable research, applicable to genuine societal challenges.
Academic elitism	Participatory academic processes
Outright condensation	Ready acceptance of other knowledge practitioners.
No linqua franca with laymen	Closer link and mutual intelligibility of ‘academic’ and ‘practical’ language.
Living in intellectual isolation	Opening up society. Working in concert with extra academic actors.

Source: Obanya (2012), Transformation from Ivory Tower to social laboratories

The approaches of social laboratory means that the society (of which the tertiary education is an integral part) should become the source of academic and intellectual arrangement spring and the theatre in which the practical applications of academic pursuits are translated into action for sustained development of society (Obanya 2012). The new direction also requires special education to be more responsive to the demands of the knowledge economy. The notion of knowledge economy as explained by Drucker (2003) is the production of services based on knowledge intensive activities that contribute to an accelerated pace of technical and scientific advancement. The key components of a knowledge economy is a greater reliance on intellectual capabilities than on physical inputs on natural resources. Knowledge economy that the tertiary education places further the emphasis both on what the recipients of knowledge are and on who they are. Houghton and Sheeben (2002) x-rayed the characteristics of knowledge economy in the following perspectives:

I) Unlike physical goods, information is not destroyed in consumption, its value in consumption can be enjoyed again and again.

II) Bridges are built between various areas of competence.

III) Learning is progressively central to both people and organisations.

IV) Learning involves both education and learning by-doing, learning-by-using and learning-by-interacting.

V) Initiative, creativity, problem-solving and openness to change are increasing important skills.

VI) Integration of 'thinking' and 'doing' and avoiding excessive is specialisation by emphasizing multi tax job responsibility.

VII) Although, machines replaced labour in the industrial era, information technology has become the sources of codified knowledge in the knowledge economy demanding uniquely human skills such as conceptual interpersonal and communication skills.

Therefore, knowledge generation and application have become the major components of human existence, social and corporate tool for productivity, wealth creation and sustainable economic development in the pandemic era. In a world in which we are all knowledge workers, all human activities would rely on knowledge for its continuous growth, while enterprises of all manners and forms would have knowledge as the main feature that would bestow on them any measure of comparative advantage. It then follows that knowledge generation, knowledge transmission and knowledge application should become prime occupations of institutions and organisations outside the tertiary and other higher institutions of learning and in fact, completely outside the formal education sector. This reason can be illustrated by examining some of these concrete examples from developments around us which include:

I) Continuous re-tooling and re-skilling of the workforce in industries and commercial undertakings involving continuous inculcation of new knowledge for human resources.

II) Intensive ICT-penetration in clinics, the public service, defence and security services, in banks, marketing outlets, publishing, journalism, air travel, hotel and catering concerns etc as a means of accessing and using knowledge to fast-track business activities.

III) Professional organisation with programmes of mandatory continuing professional development for practitioners as a means of ensuring continuous updating a knowledge and skills.
IV) Scientific and technical research laboratories and other specialised research activities in high-performing industries generating and applying knowledge to ensure continued high performance.
V) Consultancy firms engaged in high-level training for a wide variety of professions, all of which involve updating of knowledge and skills.
VI) The emphasis in all areas of human activity on international best practices in play continuous search for excellence.
VII) Public (academic/professional) lectures and related events now holding more in hotels and event centres than on campus.
VIII) Fellowships and other awards by professional bodies gaining increasing recognition than academic degrees.

These areas meant to emphasize the fact that modern society is filling with institutions outside the tertiary education based areas that are also concerned with knowledge generation, transmission and application. There is a growing tendency for socio-economic operators to rely more on these institutions than on the tertiary institution reason is that program of these institutions are considered as being of directly relevance to the needs of the Labour market. Again, the work of these institutions rely more on the social laboratory methodology that uses the world of work as the main determinants of their curricula and pedagogy (Obanya, 2012).

Tertiary Education are therefore faced with the challenges of enhanced relevance and responsiveness and the context of Labour market demand. They need a reapprochement strategy that would draw their curriculum and pedagogy in alignment with the needs of the world of work if they are to remain afloat in a knowledge intensive environment in which a variety of social laboratory institutions are stoutly challenging the monopoly of the ivory tower (Obanya 2012).

Effects of the Prevailing Trends for Tertiary Education curricula.

The problems/challenges that has characterized the twenty-first century knowledge-intensive economy is posing serious challenges for education and more particularly for the curriculum of formal education and most particularly, for tertiary education in post-pandemic era.

The rising challenge of post-pandemic era of tertiary education graduates is an indication of the lack of relevance and applicability of knowledge acquired in the tertiary education. Knowledge should not be required to just for the sake of it.

There must be some considerable relationship between knowledge gained in the tertiary education and the demands of the world of work in post-pandemic era. Everywhere in the world, the world of work has been questioning the preparedness of tertiary institutions and other higher institutions to fit into knowledge driven economic productive functions in the post-pandemic era. The business world is now presenting generic global need and skills for inclusion in the higher education curricula. For instance, the Australian chamber of commerce prescribes the following as guide for designing, the Australian Higher Education curricula:

I) Communication that contributes to productive harmonious relationship among employees and customers.
II) Teamwork that contributes to productive working relationships and outcomes.
III) Problem solving that contributes to productive outcome.
IV) Initiatives and enterprise that contribute to innovative outcomes.
V) Planning and organisation that contribute to short and long-term strategic planning.
VI) Self-management that contribute to employee satisfaction and growth.
VII) Learning that contributes to continuous self-improvement and expansion in company's operations and outcomes.
VIII) Technology that contribute to effective execution of tasks
IX) Personal attributes -loyalty, honesty, integrity and adaptability.

The bases of fact is on what education, training and experience have changed or made of the persons and not simply qualifications.

Personal qualities and attributes are the main requirements of today's knowledge worker in a workplace that places great emphasis on competitive advantage in post-pandemic era.

In fact the world of work that promotes the knowledge worker with a set of global needs and skills that value personal qualities much more than qualifications, skills are no longer seen as simply handling the hammer and fixing nuts and bolts. There is no greater emphasis on global needs and set of skills that define the knowledge, person and consequently and appropriate curriculum guide for persons who can fit nearly into the demands of the knowledge economy.

Examples of global needs and skills set that could guide the Higher Education curriculum as put forward by Obanya (2012) is shown this;

Table 2: Global needs and skill guide for Higher Education

Hand skills	**Soft skills**	**Go-getting skills**
Cognitive intelligence	Emotional intelligence	Imaginative intelligence
Self-expression skills	Character formation skills (for strengthening the total person)	
Logical reasoning skills (for analysis and problem solving)	Intra personal skills (for the individual to understand his/her strengths and weakness as well as his/her potentials. Interpersonal skills (for understanding and teaming with others)	Creative thinking skills
Computations skills (for mathematics reasoning)		Ideational fluency skills (proactive in generating novel ideas). Opportunity-grabbing skills (perceptivity in making the best of opportunities)
Design/manipulative skills (for purely technical reasoning and action)	Lifelong skills (knowledge seeking skills)	Experiential learning skills (making the best use of the lessons of experience ever working on new idea).
Conception skills (for generating ideas and translating them into action maps)	Perseverance skills (for seeing ideas and projects to fruition)	Idea-to-product skills (ease and passion for turning ideas to products). Services skills (ability to apply head-hands-heart)

Obanya, 2012: A global need and skills set guiding higher Education curricula.

The global need and skill set is an attempt to illustrates the fact that education has to transform the total person. Current practices that focus mainly on intellectual learning results in a curriculum that is not just narrow but abysmally shallow as they do not cover the whole cognitive intelligence. In order words, merely acquiring knowledge from books doesn't make one readily acceptable to society. The book-learned person would also have to be someone whose behaviour would meet accepted ethical and social standards. Emphasis now is placed on personal attributes not simply on qualifications. This therefore, is not to say that the conventional courses and subjects in the tertiary education institution jettisoned but continue studying of these courses would always produce globally equipped and skilled graduates. That is, graduates who would not qualify as knowledge workers and who therefore, cannot fit into the world of work. The Orthodox courses offered in the tertiary institution become useful mainly when they serve as tools for transforming students along the global need and skills set to enable them fit into the real world of work. Therefore, tertiary education curriculum must be justified on ground of utility and significance in order to face the challenges in post-pandemic era. As a result the content must be such that beneficiaries put into practice what they have learnt for economic growth and advancement of the society.

Conclusion

The focus on demands for the twenty-first century world of work has brought a new dimension as to what type of knowledge that is most worth in the context of tertiary education. The Orthodox knowledge stuffing tertiary curriculum is no longer valued as there has been a paradigm shift from how much you know to how you have learnt to learn. However, effect at reforms in tertiary education must be geared towards developing total persons that will meet the global needs and challenges in post-pandemic era for economic growth and development.

Recommendations

- ✓ Tertiary education curricula should progressively be re-ordered in keeping with the social laboratory paradigm to meet the demands of today's worlds of work.
- ✓ Knowledge generation, knowledge transmission and the knowledge application/sharing should become prime occupation of all higher institutions. However, tertiary institution should make various dimensions of nation's aspirations the focus of knowledge generation, transmission and transfer/sharing. It could be done through the following viz:

I. Institutional research agenda based on societal needs with emphasis on participatory action research.

II. Curricula based on society's development challenges, regularly fed by research findings and characterized by participatory hands-on/mind on experiential learning.

III. Outreach activities involving the application of research results to address development challenges in which teachers and students learn from society in the same way our society learn from them.

- ✓ Systematic pedagogy training for tertiary institution teachers is needed to improve the quality of learning. Response to this demand would have to go beyond ad adhoc and emergency arrangements where training is only restricted to newly recruited staff and those thought to be without formal training in education principle and practice.

✓ Tertiary education teachers should strive more than ever before, to exert positive influence on students through systematic application of transformational pedagogy. Transformational pedagogy requires that the teacher:

1. Discard the lecture approach to teaching.
2. They should capitalise on the knowledge/experience/values and attitudes that students bring to the programme.
3. Practices resourcefulness by sourcing materials beyond conventional textbooks.
4. Discourages dictation in favour of discovery.
5. Accepts that the learner is central and so plans and executes teaching activities with the learner in mind.
6. Accepts that learning can be considered successful only after the learner has learnt.
7. Realizes that successful learning begins when the student's capacity for continuous self-improvement has become a fully ingrained habit.

✓ Federal Government of Nigeria should increase financial allocation to education sectors. This gesture will enable the tertiary institutions to expand educational facilities to cope with the high demand for higher education in the context of knowledge driven economy.

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