

THE TERTIARY EDUCATION ELEMENT IN NATION-BUILDING IN NIGERIA 1971 – 2009

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Abstract

Hitherto, the preoccupation of scholars has been on harnessing raw materials to stimulate national development. Experience has proved this approach to be deficient. Current trend in development thinking shows that rather than the abundance of natural resources, the decisive factor is the quality of people. Thus, investment in human capital is seen as best investment. This paper, while using Nigeria as a reference point, cites the example of a number of countries to buttress this fact. Consequently, the focus of this paper has been on the establishment of higher educational institutions to impart knowledge and sharpen skills, thereby adding value to human resource, which could be channeled towards the transformation of the nation. The question now is, how has Nigeria fared, given the phenomenal expansion of educational institutions, as well as series of on-the-job training programmes?

Introduction

Issues of nation-building in Nigeria deserve special attention among scholars. Apart from the fact that one comes across discussions on nation-building in disciplines like history, political science, law and sociology, the fact remains that scholarship itself has as one of its primary objectives, the application of knowledge towards effecting national development. Nation-building in Nigeria suffered a setback with the civil war of 1967 – 1970. 1971 was fortuitous for Nigeria as it witnessed the phenomenal rise in foreign exchange accruing from the sale of crude oil as well as the influence of its intellectuals and technocrats/bureaucrats in global affairs. One major effect of this boost in revenue was the rapid expansion of institutions of higher learning.

Essentials of Nation-Building

The issue of nation-building, unlike other political processes, has engaged scant attention of Nigerian scholars. Rather, it has generally been treated as a mere concept in political analysis. It should be stated that Olusanya made it the focus of his inaugural lecture in 1977. In his presentation, he saw nation-building as: ‘The rediscovery of the true identity of the hitherto colonized peoples and of the ordering of society in such a way as to take its place amongst the progressive countries of the world’ (Olusanya, 1978:4). The process of infusing a sense of common identity, common destiny and shared values among peoples of diverse cultural backgrounds, and mobilizing resources to establish an enduring modern state that is politically stable, economically vibrant, with guaranteed social security, that could withstand the challenges of rapidly-changing times, demands certain attributes. In particular it requires the leadership to be visionary and committed. It must be borne in mind that the geographical entity that now constitutes Nigeria, is an amalgam of more than two hundred and fifty different ethnic groups. An element of their diverse cultural setting could be discerned from their traditional political systems which range from, the centralized political organization of the Yoruba, the emirate system of administration among the Hausa/Fulani to the acephalous societies of the Tiv and Igbo.

With the coming of British colonial rule, these disparate groups were integrated into a western-type administrative set-up. Thus, post-independence leaders were faced with the challenge of fostering this unity, as well as adding value to this by effecting positive changes in the living standards of these peoples. It is the aggregation of these processes that translate into nation-building. The essence of this concept was succinctly conjured in the long-term objectives of the Third National Development Plan (1975-1980) when it stated that the plan was intended to establish a strong united nation, with a just, democratic and egalitarian society, a dynamic economy and full opportunities for all its citizens (King, 1988:12). From this, it can be deduced that nation-building is a multi-faceted and dynamic phenomenon. It embraces the principles of development. Nation-building has to do with socio-economic development goals with the institution of a viable polity. This implies a process that involves continuous socio-economic transformation that keeps its people in pace with changing times and challenges.

In giving meaning to nation-building, various approaches which are mutually self-reinforcing are involved. The political dimension involves creating a genuine democratic environment that is inclusive, in terms of not just the right to vote and be voted for, but equally putting in place forums in which the people at the grassroot make input into programmes that determine their lives. Diversification of the economy and thereby creating room for employment opportunities, constitute a complementary element of this complex process. Another dimension relates to social activities, in terms of security, and the guarantee of the fundamental human rights. Specifically, this aspect comes under the category called the Economic, Social and Cultural rights, by which the government ensures improvements in the living standards of its citizens.

Human Capacity Building

Discourses on nation-building have usually been associated with developing the political landscape, and complemented by the expansion of the economy. By this means, it is assumed that with a strong government, coupled with the injection of foreign aid, there would be economic growth which would translate into better social opportunities for the people. Studies have however revealed that this approach does not adequately promote the well-being of the society. In most cases, it succeeds in throwing up a political elite with a narrow base who tend to hold on to power through a clientele of nouveau riche. A more efficient strategy has been identified in terms of harnessing the latent potentialities of man. This is what in technical terms is known as capacity building.

The Challenge of Human Capacity Building

A scholar has defined capacity development as: ‘the process by which individuals, institutions and societies acquire knowledge and develop abilities to better perform functions’. (Siegmann, 2003:256). Given its natural endowments, the tendency was for Nigeria to evolve as a leading member among the developing nations. Its demographic configuration was complemented by an equally favourable agricultural and strategic mineral resources. But these elements, by themselves, do not add any value to human life. By training and re-training man acquires the knowledge and skill to transform the raw materials into valuable items for the people; and in turn, enrich human life. However, before working on this premise, it is apposite to take a cursory look at the process by which natural resources have effected positive changes in the welfare of a people.

Hitherto, environmental determinism was the dominant theory in studies dealing with key factors that aid in shaping the life of man. In particular, it was the case that the greater the natural endowments of a people, the greater the prospects of better living. This applied into modern times even when technological inventions facilitated the exploitation of natural resources. In this regard, developed countries like Australia, Canada, Finland, Sweden and the United States are cited as countries whose advances have been premised on natural resource-endowment (de Ferranti et al 2002:6). However, studies carried out by Jeffrey Sachs and Andrew Warner, have revealed that ‘... during two decades of the late 20th century (1970 – 1989), countries rich in natural resources grew more slowly than their counterparts.’ (de Ferranti, et al 2002:6). In the Nigeria case, one readily comes across a paradox. It is a classical example of what has been described as ‘resource curse’ (Wunder and Sunderlin, 2004:252) which has been the feature of many oil-producing countries. Under such circumstances the generalities of the people of such countries suffer due to the ‘problems of underinvestment in human capital, ill governance, rent-seeking, institutional decline, and economic stagnation.’

This same observation has been made by another scholar who pointed out that ‘... many countries that make most of their money by exporting natural resources without investing sufficiently in skills or efficient production perform poorly – as show cased in countries like Nigeria, Algeria or Venezuela’ (Michaelies, 2005:403). This same study reveals that in the examination of the wealth of 120 countries, it was established that ‘intangible assets’ ‘which comprised the quality of institutions, human and social capital, have the greatest share of wealth almost everywhere’. It is instructive to draw attention to the position of educationists as well as great thinkers, who have over the ages, espoused theories that established the primacy of education and training as the veritable tool for advancing the cause of humanity. This was the essence of Plato’s *Republic* wherein he postulated that in order to derive what is best for society; leadership must be entrusted to those who have attained the highest level of education that is available. Classic Confucian doctrine, for example, underlines that those who labour with their brains should govern, while those who labour with their brawn should be governed (Zhou, 1993:15). When the United Nations began to draw its attention to the plight of developing countries, it sought to turn around the situation by promoting educational services in these countries. Consequently, UNESCO recommended that those countries should allocate 26 per cent of their respective budgets to education.

The significant socio-economic developments that have taken place in what came to be known as the Asian Tigers – Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan have justified this thinking. It has therefore been observed that their economic success owes largely to ‘their universal and high-quality education’ (*South* July, 1989 p. 37). It is not out of place to contend that the various education commissions that were set up at the dawn of independence in Nigeria, were greatly influenced by this mindset. For instance, the Elliot Commission of 1945, as well as the Ashby Reports of 1960 were partly informed by the need to expand opportunities of higher education to impart knowledge and as a means of developing manpower in the then colonial territory in Nigeria. Given the above context, this discussion rests on the assumption that a relatively large pool of skilled manpower has the propensity of generating further opportunities of development for the larger society in terms of creating more wealth, increased demand of facilities; expand employment opportunities and consequently a check on social problems. In other words, education is by nature, heuristic.

It is imperative to state here that at various times after Nigeria’s independence, private establishments had been influenced by this thinking and therefore determined to apply same in their operations as a means of enhancing productivity and income earnings of the various categories of workers who were functioning within their schemes. For instance, the Nigeria Tobacco Company [now British American Tobacco (BAT)] had, between 1967 and 1969, in collaboration with the then Western State Ministry of Economic Planning and Social Development, as well as the Institute of Adult Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan organized literacy programmes for tobacco farmers in the Iseyin area. The programme was designed to enable the farmers to acquire new knowledge and skills essential for more efficient production (Floyd, B. 1980:36). It was equally intended to facilitate increase in the income of beneficiaries.

Human Resources Development in Nigeria

The various levels of educational institutions have the mission of imparting knowledge on individuals, with the objective of stimulating and broadening their productive tendencies. However, it is at the tertiary level that emphasis is placed on skill acquisition. Consequently, the focus of this paper has to do with how this factor has impacted on nation building process in Nigeria. Before independence, the Yaba (in Lagos) Higher College was established in 1934 to produce manpower for the various public services. (See Olusanya, 1973:21, 61 and 68). This can be identified as the pioneer tertiary educational institution in Nigeria. In furtherance of the above objective, the University College, Ibadan was founded in November 1948. In order to meet the challenges of nation building proper, the immediate post-independence leaders mobilized the resources of their respective Regions to found universities thus: University of Nigeria, Nsukka (Eastern Region, 1960) University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife (Western Region, 1962) and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. (Northern Region, 1962). By 1970, the University of Benin, Benin City was established as an additional means of meeting the challenges for the much – needed manpower in the expanding public service. From these came the first set of Western-educated elite who had their post-primary education in Nigeria and had to travel abroad for higher studies; as well as indigenously-trained university graduates.

These educational programmes, succeeded in throwing up Nigerians whose names have featured prominently through their contributions at the national and or international spheres of operation. These include Taslim Elias (a former Chief Justice of Nigeria) who once served as the president of the International Court of Justice at the Hague. Akinola Aguda who served as the Chief Justice of Uganda. Another justice in this regard is Bola Ajibola who served not only on the bench at the Hague, but also was appointed as President of the World Bank Tribunal in 2004 (*The Guardian*, June 27, 2004:3). There is equally the example of Oba Nsugbe who was honoured in 2002 as a Queen’s Counsel (Nigerian equivalent of Senior Advocate of Nigeria – SAN) in the UK at the tender age of 39. (*Guardian Editorial*; April 19, 2002:14). Aguiyi Ironsi, who later became Nigeria’s first military Head of State, was Africa’s first Commander of a UN Peace-Keeping Force during the Congo crisis. Similarly, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) which was an initiative of Nigeria has largely been commanded by Nigerian Military Officers. In terms of academics, Nigerian intellectuals have distinguished themselves. An instance can be drawn from the development of African historiography, through which process Terence Ranger had identified Kenneth Onwuka Dike, and Ade Ajayi along with Alan Ogot as: ‘The first African academic historians’, and posited that ‘if they had not existed they would have had to have been invented’ (Ranger, 1976:19). It is germane to state here that Dike was the first African to head the premier university in Nigeria. Ade Ajayi on his part, was among the pioneer graduates of this same institution.

In response to the challenges of a rapidly-changing global society, as well as the need to expand avenues of educational advancement, and the consequent enhancement of Nation-Building process, successive governments have established institutions that have facilitated manpower development. The table below graphically explains the astronomical rise in the establishment of universities:

LIST OF APPROVED UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

(A) FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES

S/N	UNIVERSITY	YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT
1.	University of Ibadan, Ibadan	1948
2.	University of Nigeria, Nsukka	1960
3.	Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife	1962
4.	Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria	1962
5.	University of Lagos, Lagos.	1962
6.	University of Benin, Benin City	1970
7.	Bayero University, Kano	1975
8.	University of Calabar, Calabar	1975
9.	University of Ilorin, Ilorin	1975
10.	University of Jos, Jos Plateau	1975
11.	University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri	1975
12.	Usman Danfodiyo University, Sokoto	1975
13.	University of Port-Harcourt, Port-Harcourt	1975
14.	Federal University of Technology, Owerri	1980
15.	Federal University of Technology, Akure	1981
16.	Federal University of Technology, Yola	1981
17.	Federal University of Technology, Minna	1982
18.	Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna	1985
19.	University of Abuja, Abuja	1988
20.	Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi	1988
21.	University of Agriculture, Makurdi	1988
22.	University of Agriculture, Abeokuta	1988
23.	Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka	1992
24.	University of Uyo, Uyo	1991
25.	Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike	1992
26.	National Open University, Abuja	2002
27.	Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun	2007

(B) STATE UNIVERSITIES

S/N	UNIVERSITY	YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT
1.	River State University of Science and Technology, Port-Harcourt	1979
2.	Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma	1980
3.	Abia State University, Uturu	1981
4.	Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu	1982
5.	Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye	1982
6.	Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos	1983
7.	University of Ado-Ekiti, Ado-Ekiti	1982
8.	Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso	1990
9.	Imo State University, Owerri	1992
10.	Benue State University, Makurdi	1992
11.	Delta State University, Abraka	1992
12.	Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko	1999
13.	Kogi State University, Anyigba	1999
14.	Niger-Delta University, Yenagoa	2000
15.	Anambra State University of Science and Technology, Uli.	2000
16.	Kano State University of Technology, Wudil	2000
17.	Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki	2000
18.	Nasarawa State University, Keffi	2002
19.	Adamawa State University, Mubi	2002
20.	Gombe State University, Gombe	2004
21.	Kaduna State University, Kaduna	
22.	Cross River University of Technology, Calabar	2004
23.	Plateau State University, Boklos	2005
24.	Akwa Ibom State University of Technology, Ikot-Akpaden	2005
25.	Ibrahim Babangida University, Lapai.	2005
26.	Tai Solarin University of Education Ijagun	2005
27.	Umaru Musa Yar'Adua University, Katsina	2006
28.	Bukar Abba Ibrahim University, Damaturu Yobe State	2006
29.	Kebbi State University of Science and Technology, Aliero	2006
30.	Osun State University, Osogbo	2006
31.	University of Education, Ikere-Ekiti	2008
32.	Ondo State University of Science and Technology, Okiti-Pupa	2008
33.	Taraba State University, Jalingo	2008
34.	Kwara State University, Ilorin.	2009

(C) PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

S/N	UNIVERSITY	YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT
1.	Babcock University, Ilishan Remo	1999
2.	Madonna University, Okija	1999
3.	Igbinedion University, Okada	1999
4.	Bowen University, Iwo	2001
5.	Covenant University, Ota.	2002
6.	Pan-African University, Lagos	2002
7.	Benson Idahosa University, Benin City	2002
8.	ABTI-American University, Yola	2003
9.	Redeemers University, Mowe, Lagos State	2005
10.	Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo	2005
11.	Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin	2005
12.	Caritas University, Amorji-Nke Enugu	2005
13.	CETEP City University, Lagos	2005
14.	Bingham University, Auta Balefi, Karu, Nasarawa State	2005
15.	Katsina University, Katsina	2005
16.	Renaissance University, Enugu	2005
17.	Bells University of Technology, Badagry	2005
18.	Lead City University, Ibadan	2005
19.	Crawford University, Igbesa, Ogun State	2005
20.	Wukari Jubilee University, Wukari	2005
21.	Crescent University, Abeokuta	2005
22.	Novena University, Ogume, Delta State	2005
23.	University of Mkar Gboko	2005
24.	Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji-Arakeji Osun State.	2006
25.	Caleb University, Lagos	2007
26.	Fountain University, Osogbo	2007
27.	Obong University, Obong Ntak	2007
28.	Salem University, Lokoja	2007
29.	Tansian University, Umunya	2007
30.	Veritas University, Abuja	2007
31.	Wesley University of Science and Technology, Ondo	2007
32.	Western Delta University, Oghara, Delta State	2007
33.	The Achievers University, Owo	2007
34.	African University of Science and Technology, Abuja.	2007

Source: National Universities Commission. Monday Bulletin, Vol. 4 No. 23, 1 June 2009.

* As at the end of 2005, the number of the National Universities Commission (NUC) approved private universities had risen to 25.

Apart from the above, other specialized institutions/manpower training bodies have evolved. Some of these are the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON – 1972) in Badagry; National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS – 1979) Jos; School of Accountancy (1984) established by ANA in Jos; Nigerian Institute of Bankers, Lagos; Project Development Institute (PRODA – 1970), Enugu; Federal Institute of Industrial Research (FIIRO), Oshodi, Lagos; Nigerian Institute for Medical Research (NIMR), Lagos; Nigerian Building and Road Research Institute (NBRRI), Lagos; Leather Research Institute of Nigeria (LERIN) (now National Research Institute for Chemical Technology) (NARICT 1988), Zaria; National Centre for Genetic Resources and Biotechnology (NACGRAB – 1986); and National Institute for Pharmaceutical Research and Development (NIPRD), Ile-Ife; Raw Materials Research and Development Council (RMRDC 1987), Abuja and Agricultural and Rural Management Training Institute (ARMTI), Ilorin, among others. The relevance of these institutions could be appreciated if one draws attention to the philosophy that motivated the setting up of one of them.

At the formal opening of NIPSS in 1979, the then Nigerian leader declared that it was intended to harmonize the input of three categories of elite groups – the intellectual, the public service and the commercial into addressing national issues. He pointed out that the scope of the Institute, ‘should span larger national interests, interests which have not been adequately represented in the University, the military institution, or any management training institute in the commercial sector... It is therefore an institution in which all those who have attained positions of responsibility in all professional fields and on a national plane can bring their experiences and ideas to bear on all issues as they affect our ever-changing society and the well-being of Nigerians’, (Obasanjo, n.d.: 466 – 467).

Development Trends

The establishment of these public educational institutions which were complemented by private initiatives as well as those of professional bodies, did not make any meaningful impact in the pool of skilled manpower which the nation needed to efficiently harness its resources. It is instructive to illustrate this discussion with the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree (otherwise known as the Indigenization Decree of 1972). The policy thrust was that by an evolutionary process, Nigerians should be empowered to meaningfully direct all aspects of the economy to meet national goals. Hitherto, Europeans and some Asian businessmen particularly Lebanese, Syrians and Koreans dominated the distributive sub-sector. They were the primary factor in the import and export services. Similarly, there was hardly any Nigerian in the commanding heights of what is now known as the Small and Medium Industries Enterprises (SMIE). To complement this, the banking sub-sector was equally under their control. To reverse the trend, the indigenization decree was promulgated. However, subsequent events tended to establish the fact that the nation was lacking the desired managerial skill that could ensure the desired expectations of the decree. In the process, the Nigerian business elite who took over the import and export business as well as the small scale enterprises merely served as surrogates for the Lebanese, Syrians and Koreans who had hitherto been divested by the Decree. While making reference to this, Olusegun Obasanjo (The then military Head of State), in an address to the nation stated that a panel was set up to assess the implementation of the Decree. He pointed out that:

In its Report, the Panel found out that out of a total of about 950 affected enterprises only 314 or 33% were confirmed as having fully complied with the provisions of the Decree by the 30th of June, 1975 (Obasanjo n.d.: 46-47).

Prior to this, P.C. Asiodu, the then Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Mines and Power, during a presentation titled ‘Aspects of Indigenous Participation and Control in the Oil Industry in Nigeria’, at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Lagos on March 3, 1972, emphasized that:

...the issue of development boils down to the quality of manpower available locally. It involves the state of Indigenous acquisition and development of modern technology and of managerial know-how (NIIA, 1972:44).

He lamented the fact that: ‘At the end of 1970, out of 12 people of management status only I was a Nigerian and he was not really involved in the technical process of production and marketing oil’.

This trend did not improve even when the Federal Government nationalized the British Petroleum (from B.P. to African Petroleum), as well as the Barclays and Standard banks which came to be known as First and Union Bank respectively. In fact, there was no appreciable value added in the utilization of available resources, which situation manifested in the continuously deteriorating living standards of the people, and the rising poverty rate. The available resources at the disposal of the people could not match the growing challenges, a situation that worsened their living standards. One significant outcome of this was the wave of human capital flight (otherwise known as brain drain) from Nigeria. Both skilled and unskilled manpower have since the middle 80s, sought better opportunities to develop their potentialities, mainly in the United States and Europe. It is interesting to note that among the crop of Nigerians who settled in those countries, with ample opportunities for development, a great number distinguished themselves. Wole Soyinka who in 1986 emerged as Africa’s first Nobel prize winner for Literature, was, in the period of study associated with intellectual activities in the U.S. than in Nigeria.

Similarly, a Nigerian-born surgeon, Ferdinand Ofodile, who was credited to have broken new grounds in plastic surgery, (*Vanguard* June 13 2002. 1 & 2) was able to achieve this feat in his base in New York. This was the situation with a former Vice Chancellor of Lagos State University, Enitan Babanumi who was granted patent licence by the US government, 'to produce a patent formulation that would prevent skeletal muscle degeneration, known as "wasting" in AIDs and cancer patients' (Anaele. 2002:4). In acknowledgement of the quality of his research activities in the fields of Biotechnology and Bioinformatics, the US adopted Babanumi as a 'Permanent Resident Alien of extraordinary ability' (Oyekanmi, 2001:61). Similarly, Bart Nnaji was credited to have evolved as, the first black man to be named a 'distinguished Professor in Engineering in American history' (*The Guardian* May 2, 2001:6). In fact, Nnaji was said to have served as Minister of Science and Technology, during the short-lived Interim National Government of Nigeria in 1993. Perhaps one of the most outstanding among those scholars who has resided outside Nigeria was Philip Emeagwali. As a way of placing his relevance in the context of contemporary global technological advances, a former President of the US, Bill Clinton, said of him thus:

One of the great minds of the information age is a Nigerian American named Phillip Emeagwali. He had to leave school because his parents couldn't pay the fees. He lived in a refugee camp during your civil war. He won a scholarship to University and went on to invent a formula that lets computers make 3.1 billion calculations per second. Some people call him the Bill Gates of Africa. (Gana: n.d: See also: *Sunday Punch* August 27, 2000 6 and 29).

Apart from this set of intellectuals, a great number of professionals whose impacts could have been significant in the development of the country, equally emigrated. Among such were medical doctors. It is instructive to state that, as far as the political leaders were concerned this development was perceived from the dimension of the immediate economic benefits that could accrue to the professionals, rather than the overall interests of the nation. For instance, Olikoye Ransome-Kuti, who was the then Minister of Health, was quoted to have remarked that he had no reservations about the exodus of the doctors, as their countries of destination offered better conditions of service (Ogunseitan, 1986:12). A deep reflection of this situation is instructive, given its debilitating effects on the nation's University system, as a great number of the world-renown scholars took leave of their respective home-based universities for other countries where they hoped to have opportunities for self-fulfilment. In this regard, some of them sought avenues in African countries like South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Ghana and even the Gambia. As a means of illustrating their plight graphically, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), came up with handbills that showed the profile of remuneration of their counterparts in other countries. In conclusion, they submitted that the salaries paid to university teachers by the Nigerian government was 'a joke', because the 'take home' pay could not take them home.

Deriving from this parlous condition, it was observed that in the late 1980s and mid 1990s, industrial strikes by academic staff members became prevalent, such that some universities were closed for continuous periods ranging for between three and six months. It was such that some sets of students lost up to two years or more, before graduating for the programmes for which they enrolled. The rot in the university system, which reflected adversely in the quality of graduates produced, was the focus of Professor Niyi Osundare's valedictory lecture at the University of Ibadan on July 26, 2005. While citing several authorities, he posited that universities were the repositories of ideas and knowledge which form the indispensable platform upon which rests the meaningful development of any society. He alluded to Robert L. Church's insight into the fact that: 'The rise of the university in America marks the institutionalization of new definitions of knowledge and learning. According to Osundare 'Church goes on to highlight the great debt that America's progress, owes to her educational institutions'. In the words of Church:

Higher education was called upon to foster the search
For new knowledge necessary to meet the ever-changing
needs of modern society, to train intelligence and direct
it to the service of society and mankind... These
expectations form the essence of what may be called
the university ideal. (quoted in: Osundare, 2005).

While the University of Ibadan lived up to these expectations up till the 1970s, particularly with the groundbreaking research findings of the Department of History as well as the University College Hospital (UCH) which was reputed to be 'one of the best teaching hospitals in the Commonwealth' (Akinwumi, 2005:1 and 4), the University of Ibadan, like others in the nation, soon lapsed into slumber. An earlier study carried out by the World Bank, which covered the period between 1985 and 2001, revealed that graduates of Nigerian Universities were of low quality. Similarly, Wole Soyinka had by 2001, called for the shutting down of universities in the country for a year 'to allow time for re-organization of the institutions' (See: *This Day* November 13, 2001 p. 15). This flagging in the university system had not been checked by late 2005. Thus, in an editorial in the *Nigerian Tribune*, it was revealed that in the 2005 global ranking of Universities, none of the 76 Universities in Nigeria fell within the 200 Universities rated as among the best (See: *Nigerian Tribune* 'Editorial' December 2, 2005: 10). Drawing from the above, one can deduce that fundamentally, there was a dearth of human resources in the nation's universities which could meet the phenomenal rise in enrolment in these institutions, which had in turn impacted negatively on the quality of graduates. This had serious implications on the nation, as it undermined its leverage on the international scene, given the deteriorating quality of life among the people as well as the increasing migration of various categories of Nigerians to other countries to seek what was termed 'greener pastures'. In placing this into perspectives, one needs to draw attention to contemporary global trends which place premium on knowledge acquisition.

Given the increasing challenges on Nigeria's development as well as its image in global affairs, concerned Nigerians sought means of reversing the trend. One of such was the then Nigerian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Bola Ajibola. He took recourse in harnessing the pool of human resources among Nigerian professionals based in the UK. He interacted with various associations to solicit their cooperation in availing Nigeria of their wealth of skill and exposure for the improvement of quality of life among Nigerians. This, in its own way, had an impact as it was reported that some medical doctors responded to this clarion call by, among other things, donating medical supplies and equipment worth N32 million to their home country (Abbah, 2000:23). In tandem with this initiative, the Federal Government, in 2004 muted the idea of mobilizing the crop of Nigerian professionals resident outside the country, to contribute in their various ways to the development of the country. Consequently, it came up with the concept of Nigerian Experts and Academics in Diaspora Scheme (NEADs). Through this initiative, the expertise of such personalities like Gabriel Oyibo as well as Augustine Esogbue, among others, could be brought to bear on the need to guide Nigeria to keep pace with the challenges of contemporary scientific and technological advances. Perhaps, it would not be out of place to state that it is on record that Esogbue was among the nine experts selected by the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to serve on its safety advisory panel (Adeseri, 2003: 1 and 2).

It has however been observed that there has not been any concrete programme that could lead to harnessing the talents and expertise of this set of people for the development of the nation. The import of the situation is that in a growing competitive world which places premium on merit, the impartation of knowledge and skill to a sizeable set of youths was undermined, leading to the underdevelopment of their productive tendencies. This was the context in which Wole Soyinka came up with a birthday celebration lecture in 1984, which he titled, 'Reflections of a Wasted Generation' (*The Punch* July 23, 1984 pp. 8 & 9). Perhaps in a similar context, Philip Asiodu, who was a graduate of the University of Ibadan, was appointed Presidential Adviser on Economic Affairs in 1999. During the occasion of his maiden meeting with the management staff of the National Planning Commission in Abuja, he was quoted to have said that his appointment at the age of 65 is a reflection of the inability of the nation to develop youths who could meet the challenges of such public office. According to him:

I was appointed Permanent Secretary at the age of 31 and the failure is that for the last 30 years, with Nigeria, opting out of the global system(sic) we have failed to make people who are between 35-55 and exposed them to the international Community (Ujah, 1999:5).

CONCLUSION

It has been observed that global trends point to the development of educational opportunities and skill-acquisition, as means of remaining competitive and current. Continuous exposure to new ideas and experiences are acquired through attendance at institutions of higher learning, as well as in-service courses.

This had informed the significant expansion of training facilities in Nigeria, during the period of study. It has however been observed that services provided by these institutions have not adequately manifested in the development of the nation given the inefficient manner in the utilization and management of material resources at the disposal of the nation. The implication of this is that the exploitation of resources for the advancement of society falls short of human demands. A sizeable number of intellectuals who were supposed to have been the primary facilitators of emerging trends in knowledge systems and in the process deploy such knowledge in productive activities, had sought more conducive environments to apply their skills. One significant effect of this has been the erosion of quality of instructions, particularly in the nation's universities and the attendant uncompetitive quality of university graduates, especially from the mid-eighties when the military once again seized control of government. For instance, as part of its study report on Nigeria in 2001, the UN revealed that there was a significant decline in the quality of university education in Nigeria in the preceding 15 to 16 years (Editorial. *This Day*: November 13, 2001:15). This development has been the major factor for the low quality of life during the period of study, and consequently the prevalence of poverty.

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