

**EROSION OF CAPACITIES OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT.**

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## Abstract

*University education remains the pivot of our national development agenda. This is more so because the stock of highly educated individuals produced by the universities play strategic role in our sustainable development agenda. However, overtime the universities have experienced deterioration of quality arising from inadequate fiscal resources among other challenges. The paper therefore attempts to analyse the experiences of universities under condition of declining state funding. It attempts to document the effects of resource crunch on the various activities through the development of university profiles overtime with a view to establishing the extent and nature of deterioration. The paper employs descriptive research design to analyse data on staffing profile, budgetary allocations and establishes a case for deterioration of university education using some parameters. The results enable us to project the effects of erosion of capacities of university education to sustainable global development.*

## Introduction

Public policy and action are fundamental strategy for human resource planning. Human resource development is an inseparable component of development strategy. Furthermore, educational development is strongly supported by the Nigerian government and its willingness to invest in education allow public universities to have a dominant position. Accordingly, National Universities Commission (NUC) (2006) reported that the Nigerian university education system has expanded from one university in 1948 (university of Ibadan-university College London) to eighty (80) in 2005 of which include 27 Federal, 26 State, 24 private and four (4) Inter- universities. The institutional growth in Nigeria's university sector is 128 universities as at 2013. We are still counting.

The importance and contribution of university education to the development of Nigerian society cannot be overemphasized as it is believed to be unique and vital in helping to illuminate the individual's mind through the knowledge acquired who in turn contributes meaningfully to the society. Due to this attached importance to university education, the universal declaration on human right states in article two (2) paragraph one (1) that "everyone has access to education and that higher education should be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit and individual capability and ensure that the values and ideals of a culture of peace prevail and is sustained; and suggests that the development of higher education should be considered, its quality and relevance enhanced."

Nevertheless, university education systems in the Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly Nigeria are under considerable strain as these higher growth rates have posed more challenges. To begin with, university education in Nigeria is faced with the challenges of high demand for admission places leading to escalated enrolments, insufficient funds and physical facilities, inadequate qualified academic staff, and the unemployment of the university graduates.

Furthermore, Obanya (2004) reported that high enrolments in higher institutions also known as 'massification' has greater challenge in ensuring quality since the available resources have not matched this increase in the number of students. In this respect therefore, Chevailler (2000), *The Economist* (2005) and Adu and Orivel (2006) asserted that the overcrowding of lecture hall, laboratories, libraries amongst resulted in deterioration of physical facilities and

wearing out of the equipment. All these various elements have contributed to the decline in the quality of university education and consequently to the erosion of capacities. Even though government funding was decreasing in absolute term, enrolment in the universities continued to expand, which led to a decline in per student expenditure. Cutbacks in research, staff development, library acquisitions and maintenance have led to a detrimental effects in educational quality in Nigerian universities and these have serious implications for global development.

There is no doubt that the universities have been devising strategies such as cost-sharing and income generating activities to diversify both the resource base and sources of funding.

The fact remains that most Nigerian universities have fallen into state of disrepair. Deterioration of physical facilities and academic standards combined with faculty attrition due to brain drain syndrome are both factors that have contributed to a sharp decline in the quality of teaching and research. The deterioration of the university system has in turn severely affected the analytical and management capacities and competitiveness of Nigerian universities in the context of globalisation and development. This paper focuses on the deterioration of university education in Nigeria.

## **Literature Review and Conceptual Clarification**

### **Erosion of capacity**

The concomitant effect of erosion of capacity is deterioration of quality education. Quality education from the perspective of Ndiomu(1989) is that education that is relevant and adapted to the needs of the society. He argued that such needs must meet the standards in health, growth, and physical survival in a complex and globalized world. It implies education that is worthwhile and which empowers the recipients with relevant skills, knowledge, ideas, values and attitudes needed for him /her to make informed decisions and live a self-sustaining life. Quality in higher education refers to the worth of the inputs into higher education systems, lecturers, instructional facilities and evaluation procedures which translates to the outputs. From the perspective of Majasan, (1998) he maintained that quality education is value-loaded arguing that quality education should produce disciplined behaviour, hard work, improved cultural heritage and mutual respect within and outside the school community. If a society expects quality manpower for rapid development and transformation, quality education is a must do affair. According to him quality education is expected to address critical issues like the dignity of labour, quality leadership and committed citizenship, industrial harmony, political stability, religious tolerance, self-reliance and security. Quality higher education entails that the products of institutions of higher education should be able to perform according to expected standard and compete favourably with their peers in other countries of the world. Quality education is the education that produces a complete person. Complete in the sense that the person is intellectually, morally, physically, emotionally and socially developed. It is an axiom that education without quality can even be more dangerous than no education because without quality, education has no value.

## **Variables Responsible for the Erosion of Capacities in University Education**

Several factors pose as challenges in eroding the capacities of university education in Nigeria. These factors include but not restricted to the following:

- Inadequate and declining financial resources
- Poor quality of teaching, learning and research output
- Inadequacy of physical resources
- Incessant labour unrest and frequent closure of universities
- Brain drain syndrome
- Inadequate state of art communication technology facilities
- Cultism and other vices.

### **Declining and inadequate financial resources**

Inadequate funding is the most critical challenge that has threatened the attainment of good quality university education in Nigeria. The problem of inadequate funding of education has been a bane to educational development in the country. According to Onokerrhoraye, (1995) a major constraint to attaining academic excellence in Nigerian universities is financial constraints which made many academics and non academics to be working under difficult circumstances. Many university institutions in Nigeria were unable to build lecture halls, students' hostels, equip laboratories and workshops and payment of staff salaries, research grants, allowances and medical bills (Ivara and Mbanefo cited in Asiyai 2005). Even the Federal government of Nigeria( FGN)/Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) Re-negotiation Committee (2009) realized this and widely acknowledged that the key to the survival of Nigeria in the 21<sup>st</sup> century lies in the country's ability to produce applied and theoretical knowledge in science, technology and humanities and hence the Re-negotiation Committee arrived at a consensus on the need for a rational and scientific procedure for determining the funding requirements to begin the revitalizing the Nigerian university system. Despite all efforts made, it did appear that the Nigerian government has not shown enough commitment towards adequate funding of university education. It is pertinent to mention that public universities are expected to enjoy annual intervention from Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) in addition to the normal allocation by the government. This intervention is mainly to finance capital development projects. There is no gainsaying that the intervention has been helpful but by no means grossly inadequate.

### **Poor quality of teaching, learning and research output**

A big challenge to erosion of capacities of university education is inadequate mix of and number of academic staff. According to Coombs (1970), teachers are the hub of any educational system. Teachers determine the quality of education because they transmit educational policies into practice and action. This point of view was corroborated by Ukeje, (1996) when he opined that without adequate number of inspiring, well-informed teachers, fully prepared to meet their responsibilities in our universities, we cannot have good

education and without good education, we cannot hope for long to meet successfully, the challenges of a changing world. Speaking in the same vein Ajayi (2007) seemed to agree with the above when he noted that good teachers are needed for good education which in turn is indispensable for social change, social transformation and national development. The importance of teachers cannot be over emphasized. Despite the importance of teachers in the attainment of good education, university institutions in Nigeria are short of lecturers to adequately cope with teaching and learning activities. The institutions because of inadequate funding are not able to employ additional lecturers. The few available lecturers are seriously over worked. Even in some universities in the country, because of shortage of lecturers in the required numbers and mix, their programmes are not accredited by the National Universities Commission (NUC). Attainment of good quality in university education requires teaching staff of adequate quantity and quality. Bamiro, (2012) attributed the problem of de-intellectualization of the academia to low quality of staff of some university institutions in Nigeria. Where there is inadequate teaching staff and poor quality of lecturers, there will be erosion of capacities with the resultant deterioration in quality in university education.

### **Inadequate resources**

Quality university education is dependent on the quality and quantity of human and material resources put in place in university institutions. The inadequacy of infrastructures such as science laboratories, workshops, students' hostels, libraries and electricity will affect the quality of education. For good quality delivery, these facilities must meet the minimum standard specified by the National Universities Commission (NUC). For quality teaching and learning, the class size must be small for effective students/teacher interaction. Unfortunately, most university institutions in Nigeria, the lecture halls are overcrowded with majority of the students standing at the corridors during lectures.

Besides, the libraries in most university institutions in the country are stocked with obsolete text books, with current journals and text books grossly inadequate. Kamm (1980) asserted that the library is at the heart of the academic effort in any university. For any institution to be strong academically, it must have a formidable library put in place. This explains why the top universities of the world (Harvard, Cambridge, Tokyo and university of California) are academically of high strength and quality because their libraries are well stocked. The acute shortage of educational facilities in university institutions in Nigeria has led to decline in the quality of university education in the country. For example, in most universities, the science laboratory and vocational and technical education workshops are virtually empty, grossly inadequate with the equipment needed for effective teaching and learning. It is not uncommon to see a student graduating from physics department without handling calliper and pendulum apparatus. The undesirable conditions of university institutions in Nigeria have been worrisome to many a scholar (Asiyai, 2005 and Odetunde 2004). Students of most university institutions in Nigeria are learning in dilapidated buildings which are poorly ventilated, illuminated, furnished and environmentally depressing and disabling situations. Even in most cases lecturers share small offices. Worried about the poor quality of graduates of university institutions in Nigeria, the National Universities Commission (NUC) carried out a need assessment survey which was reported by Okebukola, (2005) and highlighted the following among others:

- only about 30% of Nigerian students' population has adequate access to classrooms, workshop, lecture halls, laboratories and libraries.

- Deficient libraries in terms of currency and number of books, journals, and electronic support facilities.
- Inadequate academic calendar resulting from staff unions' industrial action premised on low salary, wages/welfare and students strike
- Lack of practical experience, often times resulting from deficient facilities.

These factors above are all threats to quality attainment in university education with resultant erosion of capacities. The situation has not improved since the study was carried out over a decade ago, rather if anything it has even worsen given the current scenario in our universities.

### **Incessant labour unrest and frequent closures of universities**

A another challenge to erosion of capacities university education in Nigeria is the incessant staff union disputes and subsequent closures of the institutions. Closure of the institutions affects staff productivity and the realization of educational aim and objectives. Asiyai (2005) provided a catalogue of strikes by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU) within fourteen years. She revealed that they were too many strikes, some of which lasted up to six months. Asiyai (2006) identified the variables inducing the frequent trade union disputes as poor conditions of service of staff, non implementation of ASUU/FGN agreements, lack of autonomy and academic freedom and poor funding. The situation of frequent university closures and unstable academic calendar are still very much with us.

### **Brain drain syndrome**

Another factor to erosion of capacities in university education in Nigeria is the problem of brain drain syndrome. Over time,, there has been mass exodus of brilliant and most talented academia to other sectors of the economy. Some of the lecturers left Nigerian universities to join the business world, some joined politics while others left Nigeria for greener pastures. As noted by Asiyai (2013) many experienced and young lecturers are fleeing Nigeria from the frustration of university life into more rewarding and more challenging sectors of the economy and even to overseas countries. There is diminishing scope of mentoring junior researchers by seasoned and senior academia in Nigeria due to brain drain. Brain drain has led to decline in research outputs from institutions of higher learning in Nigeria vis-à-vis the disappearance of research centres in Nigerian universities. Research brings about improvement in teaching and learning (Asiyai and Oghuvbu 2009) but when there is exodus of brilliant and seasoned academics from institutions of higher learning, the quality of education delivery is threatened and education which learners receive becomes worthless.

### **Inadequate state of art information communication technology facilities**

Another factor which is responsible erosion of capacities in university education in Nigeria is inadequate information communication technology facilities in most university institutions. As part of her education reform effort Nigerian government adopted information communication technologies in all levels of education since information communication

technology integration in educational practices is meant to improve teaching and learning, enhance higher education research, enhance collaboration among peers and improve quality of education. Unfortunately, most of university institutions of in the country, there is acute short of computers, multi-media projectors, electronic white boards, and automation of lecture halls and lecturers offices. Even majority of the institutions are not linked with functional internet connectivity. According to Resnick, (1998) these new digital technologies make possible a learning revolution in education. Furthermore information and communication technologies could be used to prepare lesson plan, collect data and analyze students' achievement. Curriculum content could be enriched through search from the internet by teachers. Through such internet search, information and relevant school practices which are unknown to lecturers and students and which cannot be found in textbooks, can easily be downloaded for use. Information and communication technology in education can be continuously linked to higher efficiency, higher productivity and higher educational outcomes, including quality of cognitive, creative, and innovative thinking. This would invariably impact positively on the quality and hence the capacity of university education.

### **Cultism and other vices**

A challenge to erosion of capacities in university education in Nigeria is the increasing activities of secret cult groups, kidnappers and other vices. The university institutions in Nigeria are under a siege and almost ruined by secret cults (Onoyase and Onoyase 2005). As a result of the activities of cult groups and kidnappers' majority of students, lecturers and their families live in perpetual fear. Some of these cult groups indulge in arm robbery, rape, assassination and infrastructure destruction. They cheat in the examination openly and threaten lecturers when caught. While academic and senior staff of universities in the country are being hunted by kidnappers and those kidnapped are made to pay huge sum of money as ransom before they are released. The tensions induced on members university institution communities as a result of the activities of these secret cult groups and kidnappers tend to generate negative impacts and therefore contribute in no small measure to the erosion of capacities of university education in the country. Furthermore we have high rate of students' uprising. Demonstration and strikes by students in protest of their rights or government insensitivity to their demands are issues that lead to deterioration in quality and hence erosion of capacities.

### **Present Paper**

The present paper is an attempt to analyse the experience Nigerian universities under conditions of declining human and material resources. The paper is an endeavour to document the effects of resource crunch on teaching, learning and research output through the development of university profiles over a period of time with a view to mapping the extent and nature of deterioration.

### **Objective of the Paper**

More specifically the objectives of the paper are:

- Analyse university admission over a period of time with a view of establishing unsatisfied demand for university education
- Examine the trends in budgetary allocation to Nigerian universities over a period of time.

- Depict the academic staff profile in Nigerian universities for a given year
- Examine annual teacher-student ratio with a view to establishing shortfalls if any
- Examine the effects of brain drain and frequent university closures on the erosion of capacities in Nigerian universities

### Methodology

The paper focussed on the changes at institutional level. This was done by examining both identifiable and quantitative changes in admission, academic staff and budgetary allocations among other variables. The institutional level changes were analysed based on the data collected from secondary information sources. The paper presented a general picture of developments in university education in the country in the recent past and focussed on the impact at the institutional level.

### Result Analysis and Presentation

This section deals with analysis of results obtained from secondary sources. This is presented to give a better understanding of the nature and extent of the erosion in the university system.

**Table 1:** Extent of unsatisfied Demand for Higher Education (2010-2014)

YEAR	NUM OF APPLICANTS	NUM ADMITED	% ADMITED	% OF UNSATISFIED DEMAND
2010	1,182,381	148,000	12.52	87.48
2011	1,375,652	360,000	26.17	73.83
2012	1,493,604	400,000	26.78	73.22
2013	1,503,889	500,000	33.25	66.75
2014	1,670,833	520,000	31.12	68.88

**Source:** Admission Data from JAMB Statistics

From table 1, the number of applicants increased from 148,000 in 2010 to 520,000 in 2014. This represents 351.4 percent increase with half a decrease. The percentage admitted fluctuation between 12.52 to 33.25 percent which represents the least and highest within the period under review. The overall average of unsatisfied demand within the period under review is 74.03%. As the figures in table 1 reveal, the number of available tertiary places far outweighs demand as represented by Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination( UTME) applicants while capacity has been increased Nigerian's universities with the establishment of new institutions and the upgrade of collages and polytechnics. Subsequent quality issues have arisen related to overcrowding and inadequate number of teachers in. According to Ilusanya (2007), scientific study of Nigerian universities showed that the carrying capacity( absorptive capacity) of Nigerian universities in 2005 is 16.2% the number of applicants.

Despite the large scale expansion in the Nigerian university system in the country, private demand for university education has continue to rise faster than the supply. There has been phenomenal expansion in the university education in the last decade. The number of available places has grown significantly in the recent years as the government establishes new



institutions in its effort to meet demand since 2005, the number of universities has nearly tripled from 51 in 2005 to 128 in 2013, while the intake of the existing has been one stretched to increase overall capacity. This has given rise to erosion of capacity.

**Table 2:** Federal Government Allocation (Naira) to Federal Universities (2010-2014)

YEAR	RECURRENT	CAPITAL	TOTAL	% OF TOTAL OVER SUCESSIVE YEAR
2010	101,134,141,830	11,110,830,980	112,244,972,810	-
2011	2,624,576,532	23,633,472,624	26,258,049,156	-76.6
2012	1,886,888,522	18,268,418,770	20,155,307,292	-23.2
2013	15,094,993,699	20,133,983,073	35,228,797,772	+74.8
2014	1,326,488,144	19,300,479,881	20,626,968,025	-41.4

**Source:** Afolayan (2015:16)-Capital Only and National Universities Commission (NUC), Abuja.

The federal government continue to be a major funder of federal universities. Presented in table 2 are figures of federal government allocations to federal universities excluding National open universities in Nigeria from 2010 to 2014. Allocations were terms of personnel, goods, and non-personnel service and capital projects. There were 27 federal universities during the period of under review. The federal government appropriation and amount eventually released to Nigeria universities in relation to their budgets is a sorry state. This is so because the federal government applies the "envelope" system of fund allocation. In other words the allocations had nothing to do with the actual budgets of the universities. This system of allocations has led to universities not to engage in proper budgeting. This pattern of funding has led use of out-dated equipment and general inadequacy of infrastructure. Most universities based their recruitment in budgetary provisions, if they require more staff than the budget can accommodate it could not be implemented. This results in erosions of capacities. From table 2, we observe that the allocation had been on downward trends. The current monetary policy of Central Bank Nigeria ( CBN) will also have its toll on funding. It is a fact that the source of many challenges facing universities education system in Nigeria can be traced to insufficient funding of the system. Funding short falls have therefore become the order of the day as the enrolments have increased more quickly than the government its capacity to maintain its proportional financial support.

Table 3: Staff Profile of Nigerian University System 2008/2009

FULL TIME ACADEMIC STAFF						OTHER ACADEMIC STAFF	
OWNERSHIP	NUMBER OF UNIVERSITIES	PROFESSORS	READER/ASSOC. PROF	SENIOR LECTURERS	LECTURERS 1&2	FOREIGN	VISITING PROF/SABB
FEDERAL	24	2,097	1,007	3,563	8,902	206	456
STATE	25	663	400	1,415	4,541	75	336
PRIVATE	31	278	129	496	1,574	290	147
TOTAL	80	3,038	1,536	5,474	15,017	571	939

**Source:** Bamiro (2012:31)

A very crucial dimension to the issue erosion of capacities of university education is academic staffing. From the table 3, as obtained from Bamiro (2012:31) depict the quantum of available academic staff as well as the mix based on the following cadre: Professors, Readers/Associate Professor, Senior Lecture and Teacher II and I. As can be seen from the table, there were 25,065 full time academic staff in the Nigerian university system 2008/2009. The system had 571 foreign staff with the private universities according for half of them. We also have 939 visiting professors and staff in sabbatical. According to Bamiro (2012) based on the NUC - stipulated student - teacher ratio for different programs run in by the universities (varying from 10 to 15) for science - based programs and 30 for programs in humanities social sciences, it was estimated that Nigerian university system had a shortfall of close to 5,000 academic staff in 2008/2009. It is expected that the situation even worsen currently given the scenario that more universities have come on board and recruitment is tied to availability of funds which is hardly available. The shortfall in academic staff has been impacting negatively on the quality of delivery in some of our programmes. This has raised fundamental issue of quality assurance in delivering of our programs hence erosion in the capacities.

**Table 4:** Annual Lecturer-Student Ratio in Nigerian Universities (2010-2014).

YEAR	ACTUAL RATIO	NUC REQUIREMENT
2010	1:40	1:23
2011	1:45	1:23

  

YEAR	NUMBER OF WEEKS
2001	12
2002	1
2003	24
2005	2
2006	1
2007	12
2008	1
2009	12
2011	4

  

2012	1:45	1:23
2013	1:45	1:23
2014	1:42	1:23

**Source:** Prepared from University Statistics from NUC.

Table 4 depict the overall all-lecturer-students ratio (LSR) for 2009 to 2013; compared with the NUC guideline for student lecturer- ratio average. Within the period under review we found out that the actual LSR is below the required 1:23. This was also a result of increased enrolment which led to increased need for academic staff that were not readily available relative to the demand. Generally, there was a score shortfall in the lecturer-student ratio between 2009 and 2013 as in the table 4. The forecast of demand for academic staff is based on lecturer-student-ratio combined with staffing norms of National Universities Commission ( NUC).

**Table 5:** Profile of Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU) Strikes (2001-2011)

**Source:** Prepared from Bamiro (2012)

From the table 5, we can see the trend in ASUU strike. It is pertinent observe that the strike by Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU) is pursuit of issues considered to be inimical to the entire university system has had its toll in university institutions in Nigeria. While appreciating the fact that strikes are legitimate means of pressing the demands of the union, its effects on the mandate of the universities had been rather devastating. These strikes have inflicted serious damage in the entire university system in Nigeria. The image of an unstable university system in Nigeria is counter-productive as it works against global competitiveness of our universities. Since knowledge is universal its pursuit, advancement, and dissemination can be enhanced by the collective effort international academic community. This is why incessant strikes work against internationalisation of content and context of university education hence erosion of capacities of the universities.

## Implications for Global Development

The response of university education to sustainable global development should be guided by relevance, quality and internationalisation. This paper has thrown up a number of issues that bother on relevance, quality and internationalisation. The paper looked at some of the variables that have direct impact on the traditional mandate of the university which is teaching, learning, research and community service. The findings showed that the variable were seen to grossly inadequate for the universities to make any meaningful impact in sustainable global development.

Suffice it to suggest that we have to go back to the drawing board to evolve a more stable and responsive paradigm shift in respect to of strategic vision and plan that address key issues of funding infrastructure and academic staffing, if the system is to make meaningful impact in sustainable global development.

## Concluding Remarks

The paper has provided insight into the nature and extent of deterioration in Nigerian university system. The level of decay has left much to be desired. Findings from the sources analysed suggest that there is indeed erosion in the capacities of university education in Nigeria. This calls for a paradigm shift in respect of formulation of strategic vision and plan that address key issues of environment for teaching, learning, research and funding. Specifically, if the universities will make any meaningful impact on sustainable global development, we must concentrate on staffing to ensure adequacy in quality and quantity, adequate resource inflow to support the traditional mandate of universities namely teaching, research and community service.

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