Tertiary Education in Nigeria:
The Student Predicament and Manifestations in Imo State.

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Abstract.
Education is said to be a right of every citizens. United Nations declarations and national laws and educational policies state that all citizens shall be given access to quality education. This paper opines that tacking the challenges face in giving free tertiary education: proper funding of the higher institutions will enable them expand and purchase more facilities, equipment, etc. necessary to accommodate large number of students; Grating leading colleges of education and polytechnic degree –awarding status, the establishment of more higher institutions by both the Federal and state government to cope with the increasing number of candidate; student predicament and manifestations will greatly reduced in Imo state in particularly and Nigeria in general.

Introduction

Education is seen as a major tool for transformation for individual and the nation. Higher education must engender in the individual a deposition of personal autonomy, responsibility and relevant forms of life, thought and action. According to Isuku & Emunemu (2009), higher education exercise a direct influence on national productivity, which to a very large extent determines the country's standard of living and help in stimulating local economy as an engine of growth. This stipulate why is important for government at Federal and state should redirect resource to making tertiary education available at all levels for the populace. Tertiary institutions as part of the educational institutions are purposely established to meet the educational manpower and development needs of the nation. The nation as a system has to function in an optimal level when all the part is functional. Thus Sociologist of education uses one strategy in identifying essential needs of the society by first identifying the sectors that their absence can cause disintegration or extinction of members. Identifying these will lead to making assumption that the sector that take charge of such needs are essential in the society and they must be available, functional and adequately organized, if the society must survive (Haralambos&Holborn, in Osuala 2016)..

Tertiary or higher education as emphasized by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN,2004), in her National policy on Education , is any education given to an individual after secondary education in formal institution (university, colleges of education, polytechnic and monotechnics) including those running correspondence courses. Tertiary education is an advanced place for the training of people for the work force and other societal engagements. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) highlights the goals of tertiary education thus;

    a. contribute to national development through higher level relevant manpower training;

b. develop and inculcate proper value for the survival of the individual land society;

c. Develop the intellectual capacity of individual to understand and appreciate their local and external environment.

d. acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individual to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;

e. promote and encourage scholarship and cement national unity and

f. promote national and international understanding and interaction

To achieve the above laudable goals, there is need for the populace to have free access to higher education .According to Ehiametator in Adiotomre and Ekwevugbe (2007), access to education is the opportunity to participate in the education sector, whether formal or informal. Every education opportunity worth it should search out the personality of the individual and give him or her right process to actualize it but such is beyond the reach of the poor because the cost of education in Nigeria especially in Imo state is very high. To achieve appraisable level of equal educational opportunity, solve the seemly problems student face in acquiring higher education some state government gave free education to its indigenes.

Free Education

'Free education' refers to the withdrawal of every challenge from available opportunities to solid and first-rate education.(Awe 2007) This necessitates the formation of different institutions and the accretion of the school curriculum to handle each students' development based on their skill, age and interest without any obligation in cash or kind. Examples incorporate the foundation and procurement of library offices, specialized and professional types of equipments, enrollment and maintenance of qualified and sufficient labor, educational cost free, free sustaining, free concentrating on materials, settlement, transportation, school uniform and some other needs of the learner. The sum total of these makes education free. The partial implementation of the enumerated requirements does not qualify the system as being free as the absence of any of these requirements constitutes constraint to ones education. In the a study by Osuala (2016) on the "Analyses of Students' Responses to Free Tertiary Educational Opportunity in Imo state. Using a descriptive survey design with sample size of 750 students through stratified random sampling the study among other things reveals difference in the level of aspiration for free tertiary educational opportunities between rural and urban students in Imo State, the study found that students are embracing the free education in Imo state and it has made many people to pursue higher learning. The study recommended among others that government should put in place policies and laws to sustain the free tertiary institution. From the above assertion, the key to total man success and development lies in tertiary education.

Challenges of Free Education

Article 26 of Universal Declaration of Human Right, to which Nigeria subscribe to on joining the United Nations in 1960, states that:

Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free at least to the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be made compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available, and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. Education shall be directed to the full development of this human personality.

This lofty benefit would have been good when there are no impediments in education pursue. Education as the culmination of advancement in any nations is saddled with many challenges,

ranging from funding, indiscipline, infrastructural inadequacy, policy planning and implementation, poor background - socio-economic, insufficient places in tertiary education institutions.

Funding: Education is capital intensive and the financial involvement may be enormous for some people from poor socio–economic background, thus many will be deprived of access to tertiary education. Poor state of the economy and that of the parents affects a student personality and the education he receives. This contributes to ignorance exhibited by parents, mostly in the rural areas who, due to their level of income, could not appreciate the basic value of education. Akpa &Undie (2007) Opine that the budgetary allotment of the federal Government of Nigeria has been on the decline that in 2002 it was 5.9% and in 2003 it was 1:83%. Stressing further (Dada, 2004) observe that instead of having a progressive allocation of 26% of minimum standard for developing nation, what we have is systematic reduction of the allocation to education. Charles L.W et al as cited in (Amabebe 2009), stated that lack of fund can cripple a program me of value and worth, since what determines the speed in implementation is capital and all material requirement is made available with sufficient fund.

Indiscipline: Quality education helps the student to attain greater values and development of self and nations. Values and norms of the society are inculcated in the school and schools are established as a deliberate attempt by societies to teach social values to the younger generations Mahuta (2007) .With population explosion due to free education program me, to instill discipline to the larger students' population poses a problem as the rate of students per lecturer become outrageous, lack of proper supervision and monitoring is not attainable this encourages indiscipline." the student are out-laws, they are not ready to listen to their teachers or accept positive corrections They even threaten the teachers specially those among them that belong to one negative influence group or the other. This manifestation should be tacked with appropriate provision of manpower and resources.

Infrastructural Inadequacy*:* Education cannot be said to be free when the infrastructure both human and materials are not adequate to carry out learning process of teaching and learning or are partly paid by the students. Inadequate facilities both human and material have been an impediment to free education program me, repair or expansion of old facilities face with lack of fund. As an incompetent teacher who lack knowledge of the student will definitely not be able to cater for either the age of the student or his differing abilities, so also is the non practical aspect of the courses that are not practice due to lack of equipment, render our graduate half baked. So more infrastructures need to be in place to cater for the timing student of free education.

Poor Socio-Economic Background: Financial hardship denies numerous qualified yet less advantaged students of the chance to enter the higher institution. Students who qualify for government loans, scholarships however are those from high cost public schools and private academies, which indicates that regular admissions are skewed towards students from higher socio-economic income groups. Ehiametalor (2005) in his study reveal that 70.2% Nigerians are poor and by suggestion can't stand to send their wards to school. The students found identifying with accessibility of instructive assets at home like books, electronic assets, for example, TV, PC, study table for their own utilization and general scholastic backing at home are essential, Students who have access to such assets are at preference, contrasted with those from poor families. In an examination did by Oanda&Akudolu on "Gender inequality in higher education through targeted institutional Reponses" they found out that "children from poor and marginalized background generally attend poorly resourced schools; they do not perform as well

as the others even when they meet the tertiary admission criteria .

Policy planning and implementation: Good policy planning and its corresponding implementation are necessary because it will enable the committee on education reformation to be aware of the people to plan for and to extent to be involved in implementing it annually. Accurate and reliable data to enable the planners plan well is lacking, so neither the policy planing nor its implementation will tally with the reality of free education and its challenges in the state. Tertiary education planners should not fail to involve those at the grassroots (students, parents, teachers, school authorities and well meaning individuals to plan and implement. For example, in Imo state, there are the SUBEB, SEMB and LGEA staffs respectively. These people are very important for the purpose of free education to be met Osuala (2016). Also writing on free education in Imo state went further to list what good policy planning and implementation can do for the upkeep of this free tertiary education.

Insufficient Places in Tertiary Education Iinstitutions*: Many programmes in the higher institution are not accredited, therefore the choices of student are limited to available faulty. The carrying capacity principle made admission difficult and competitive. Only 21.9% of students seeking for university admission are admitted on a yearly basis Ochuba (2001). The quest for Tertiary training is much higher the spaces available in Universities in almost all states of the federation. The Nigeria Federal Ministry of Education (FME) notes that one of the challenges to access to tertiary education in Nigeria is inability of prospective entrants to possess the basic admission requirements of having credit in five subjects including English and Mathematics in the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) or its equivalent.

Access to Tertiary Educationa

Access to tertiary education has become a predicament to stuents in Nigeria and imo state in particular as an effect of increasing understanding of the significance of higher education. Access to education implies making it feasible for everybody who is qualified for education to get it (FGN, 2003). UNESCO (2003) sees access to tertiary training as guaranteeing impartial access to tertiary education establishments in view of legitimacy, limit, endeavors and perseverance. This implies that access to the higher education means providing opportunities to all who are qualified by standards set to gain entry. This provision means that enough higher institution, personnel, lecture halls, laboratories, libraries and other infrastructural facilities should be made available to accommodate the yearning population.

Access to education is viewed from the standpoint of the number of person enrolled in the education system in comparison with those who should have been accommodated in the system and are not. As stated in section 1 (9c) of FRN (2004) ,it is government's intention to continue to expand education and training facilities in response to societal needs and makes it progressively accessible to afford the individual a far more diversified and flexible.To get access to study a desired course in tertiary education, sometimes, may go beyondnd intelligence or academic credentials.At other times, it is based on political or economic powers. Getting admitted is different from getting desire and possibly lucrative courses. Some social discrimination exists in access to certain professional courses (Maximum 2011, Ayorinde 2014.).From the foregoing insight, unequal access to higher education exists in form of political favoritism in modern societies. For example, during the apartheid era in South Africa, the Bantu Education Act discriminated against the blacks, admitting them to less lucrative courses, while the whites had access to better ones (Macionis,2009) . The table below show clear manifestation of student predicament in accessing tertiary education

Admission trend in higher education in Nigeria2003-2012.

Year of Exam.	Type of Exam.	Total No of Candidates that sat for the Exam.	Admission by Universities		Admission by Polytechnic and College of Education		Total Admission by Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education
2003	UTME	824,800	127,786	12.10	91,143	8.63	20.73
	MPCE	231,230					
2004	UTME	846,028	147,7134	17	47,996	5.67	23.06
	MPCE	-----					
2005	UTME	841,878	122,491	12.22	33,682	3.36	15.58
	MPCE	160,885					
2006	UTME	916,371	135,912	10.73	25,511	2.39	13.12
	MPCE	152,523					
2007	UTME	857,961	135,912	13.39	73.23	7.23	20.62
		156,731					
2008	UTME	957,165	168,971	13.54	100.351	8.04	21.58
	MPCE	290,165					
2009	UTME	1,122,440	199,110	13.73	128.090	8.83	22.56
	MPCE	328,201					
2010	UTME	1,327,366	197,057	14.85	155.049	11.68	26.52
	MPCE	-----					
	UTME	1,428,461	225,766	15.80	107,935	7.56	23.36
	MPCE	-----					
2012	UTME	1,468,394	233,911	15.93	117,251	7,98	23.91
	MPCE	----					
Grand Summarry		11,910,926	1,672,788		880,380		
Average		1,191,092	167,279	14,04	88,038	7.39	21.44

Source: adapted by this author from Joint Admission and Matriculation Board cited in Nwokeocha .S. (2014, p 4)

Table 1 shows the cumulative angle for a period of ten years (2003-2012) indicate 11,910,926 candidates applied to study but only 1,672,788 secured admission into the universities while 880,380 candidates were admitted by the polytechnics and colleges of education. Therefore 9, 357,758 did not succeed with the bid for higher education during the period. In terms of average , each year witnessed 1,191,092 applications with only 167,279(14.04%) admission into university and 88,0838 (7.3%) entry into the polytechnics and college of education. This is pure manifestation of the predicament faced by students. The way forward is free tertiary education

Conclusion

A lot of factors has been highlighted to been looked into by all sector of the society for a sound moral development of a complete man capable of influencing his life and nation. But for a

developmental tertiary institution, free education at all levels especially that of tertiary levels should be made mandatory or put in the legislative list. Policies should stipulate that vocation and skill acquisition certificates should have the same value in the labour market with that of university degrees, this will help decongest existing universities. Again effort should be made to advance the quality of education through even distribution of teachers and materials and increased accessibility to schools. Finally a referendum should be called every five years to review the content, curriculum and policies of our tertiary institutions.

Recommendations

Our educational system and curricula to embrace entrepreneurial skills, more higher learning institutions and hostel accommodation be built, in addition to the provision of other amenities to promote teaching, learning and study materials made available. Grants and scholarships should also be provided. The government should put in place policies and laws to sustain the free tertiary institution. Several other scholars have made suggestions, for instance Imhanlahimi and Maduewesi (2006) called for (i) the establishment of more university by both the Federal and state government to cope with the increasing number of candidate; (ii) proper funding of the universities to enable them expand and purchase more facilities, equipment, etc. necessary to accommodate large number of students; (iii) recruitment of more personnel into universities ; and (iv) eschewing catchments area and quota system, and basing admission policy entirely on merit. Nwokeocha (2014) advocate (i) Grating leading colleges of education and polytechnic degree –awarding status (ii) Consolidating the newly established universities .

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