

A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF NIGERIA'S UNIVERSITY EDUCATION AT CROSSROADS: CHECKMATING THE DECAY AND THE WAY FORWARD

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ABSTRACT

The crazy acquisition and over dependence on 'academic certificates without a corresponding excellence in knowledge, skills and competence by the holders has become very worrisome and a thing of pain wherever the issue of the quality of most Nigeria's university graduates is raised. Poor curriculum development, ill-equipped lecturers employed, and as well as government nonchalant attitude towards corruption have become recurrent issues plaguing university education, particularly with their attendant consequences clearly shown in many fatal medical errors, building collapse, banks distress, professional incompetence, and loss of trust in the certificates obtained. These revelations are, indeed, worrisome for any conscientious scholar who appreciates quality education, and also knows the importance of synergizing Nigeria's philosophy of education with the contemporary viewpoint of education in terms of developmental needs of knowledge, skills and attitudes to satisfy various global needs of learners in the country. It is based on this that this study examines the Nigeria's university education at crossroads with the aim of drawing the attention of government, parents, and all stakeholders on how their actions and inactions have individually and collectively contributed to the collapsing state of education in Nigeria. Data were collected through secondary sources and analyzed qualitatively. Among the findings, the study shows that the deterioration in Nigeria's university educational via poor funding, examination malpractices, industrial strikes, unqualified lecturers recruited through nepotism and clanish mentality, corruption amongst administrators, and as well as other related factors is unspeakable. In addition, the mere acquisition of educational certificates has failed to produce learners with appropriate and commensurate skills for beneficiaries to fit into the development of the Nigerian society. The study also sees the phenomenon of examination malpractice as being aggravated by the large scale involvement of dishonest and greedy lecturers, and parents who provide huge funds to entice examination officials and even security agents. Besides, the offering of sex by students for high grades due to much value and emphasis placed on certificates instead of knowledge, skills and competence is shocking. From the foregoing, the paper concludes that government should stop playing politics with education funding and parents should strive to give more quality time to their wards to curb cheating in examinations and above all, government should enforce all relevant laws and decrees to arrest culprits of examination malpractice so that the relevance and security of our educational certificates could be guaranteed. Finally, the paper suggests that poor funding, parental lackadaisical attitude, ill-equipped teachers, corrupt practices, and other related vices should be reversed; and, stakeholders' concerns should be tailored towards the yearnings of the educational needs of the Nigerian child, and also in revitalizing the educational sector for the good of the Nigerian society.

Keywords: Inadequate funding; ASUU; Ill-trained/counterfeit lecturers; Examination malpractice; Corruption;

1. INTRODUCTION

It is often said that a problem is half solved when its cause has been identified. This assertion, however, can be right or wrong depending on which society one operates in. For example, the many and varied problems surrounding the state of university education in Nigeria up to the present time have continued to generate much public debates and comments, in both electronic and print media in all nooks and crannies of the society even with the causes already identified, yet nothing seems to change. As a result, the state of university education has continued to be on the brink of paralysis for so long a time, and when and how its revitalization will be done to meet contemporary felt needs of the Nigerian society remains vague. An adage has it that we must all hang together or assuredly we shall separately.

Nigeria, the giant of Africa, in its entirety presupposes greatness indeed. Greatness in the sense that it is one country that is said to be fortunate in having intelligent men, women, and abundant natural resources, and including money to lay a solid foundation for a socio-economic revolution in the Black world. In other words, she has attained a height of self-discipline, restraint and good sense of economic judgments, despite the acute economic mismanagement of her abundant resources to re-write her history for posterity sake. Accepting the foregoing as a fact, why has Nigeria the acclaimed giant, not been able to solve the many and varied problems confronting her, especially those surrounding the fate of university education? Can university education ever be revived? To the question just asked, a simple mind may answer, "Yes" almost immediately giving a catalogue of all the resources at the country's disposal ranging from population to wealth, yet the question remains unanswered. Now, having not answered the question, which way Nigeria's university education?

Throughout the world, education has become a vast and complex social institution that prepares citizens for the overall development of society. Kazeem & Ige (2010) view education as an instrument for transforming individuals, community and the nation and a mechanism for knowledge and skills acquisition required for societal survival and growth. In Nigeria, and elsewhere around the globe, universities are centres of learning, training and research, and also regarded as institutes where knowledge and skills are acquired and utilized for the overall good of the society. Obviously, the quality of education obtained in Nigeria's citadel of learning and ivory towers is fundamental to the changes in all components of development that is geared towards transforming, and equipping the human resources of society and, as well serving as an instrument par excellence for national development (National Policy on Education, 2004). Arising from this declaration, we could contend that the improvement in personal endowments, building capabilities, overcoming constraints and enlarging available set of opportunities and choices for a sustained development of the society are at the heart of functional education. Corroborating, Gannie (2014) maintains that the process of education and attainments thereof has an impact on all aspects of life. Putting it differently, education equips every citizen with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values capable of enabling citizens to derive maximum benefits of being members of the society and attaining a satisfying and promising life that enables everyone to understand one's immediate environment, and therefore, contributes to the development and welfare of everyone.

It is in this context that Francis J. Brown in Ganiee (2014) holds that education brings about changes in the behaviour of society, and enables every individual to effectively participate in the activities of society and to make positive contribution to the progress of society. By implication, education is a critical and all-encompassing instrument for bringing about social, economic and political inclusion of people. Lyndon Johnson, the erstwhile American president, often referred to as LBJ, in one of his famous quotes, asserts that the answers to all national problems, comes down to a single word: education. Substantiating, he declares:

That every child must be encouraged to get as much education as he has the ability to take. We want this not only for his sake but for the nation's sake. Nothing matters more to the future of our country: not military preparedness for armed might is worthless if we lack the brain power to build a world of peace; not our productive economy for we cannot sustain growth without trained manpower; not our democratic system of government for freedom is fragile if citizens are ignorant.

When one pauses, and reflects on this inspiring and provoking thought as espoused by Lyndon Johnson, and juxtaposes it with the recent happenings in the Nigeria's education sector, one quickly observes that there is so much hurry in the present day Nigerian society to acquire educational certificates within a short period of time, usually in a fort-night. This craze for instant educational certificates goes against all norms of hard work. This, indeed, is a serious issue that leaves most conscientious Nigerian scholars who know and appreciate the quality education sighing in disappointment. The importance of synergizing Nigeria's philosophy of education with contemporary viewpoints of education in terms

of knowledge, skills and attitudes to satisfy various global needs of learners in the country is a prerequisite for achieving developmental needs of the country. However, it is very worrisome to observe with disgust that all fraudulent activities embarked upon daily have so much to do with wanting to get more educational certificates in order to be accorded recognition in a society where certificates, particularly doctorate degrees are lavishly celebrated without mirroring the sources. Thus, the love of wanting to gain long chains of educational degrees without due process is indeed very real with us. Candidly, in this aimless rush to acquire academic certificates, Nigerians seemed to have ignored the depth of Lyndon Johnson's very first sentence: "that *every child must be encouraged to get as much education as he has the ability to take*". The word, ability, as employed in this context, has been lost in the process of acquiring these educational certificates. This explains why there have been many fatal medical errors leading to preventable deaths in hospitals, collapse of architectural designed buildings with hundreds injured, killed and others maimed for life because we are attaining certificates far beyond our ability. What is more, financial institutions have been distressed because crackpot graduates have been manipulating millions of naira from depositors' accounts for their own personal use; bank assets have been drained and leaving many depositors virtually wiped. Sadly, no one is really bothered about this high level of societal moral mess being the masterminds by a few individuals whose deception, falsehood, greed and demonic influence is insulating all nooks and crannies of the Nigeria's university education. And as the year gradually rolls by, so overwhelming is the worship of academic certificates irrespective of their sources that, people are erroneously getting more of the certificates for which they have no ability, and as a result, professional incompetence, and loss of trust in the certificates underhandedly obtained now reside with us. Contributing to shady education standards that have become more or less a curse rather than a blessing, Odi and Omofonmwan (2007) assert that acquisition of education knowledge is supposed to help fight against-poverty, ignorance and disease. But ironically, the reverse is the case as the process of acquiring education has been reserved for the highest bidder with little or no consideration for the quality of education being imparted into them.

It is obvious from the treatment of the subject of education in Plato's *Republic* that it is a necessity for meaningful development and achievement of felt needs of society. But surprisingly, it is heartbreaking to observe many people are getting more education, and not just more than they need, but with a huge number of academic certificates (with high grades) without any iota of genuine improvement in behaviour and character. It is not the acquisition of these certificates that is the issue, but that the spectacular results being celebrated cannot be supported by the poor funding of university education which is observable in the obsolete books, poor quality of reagents, and other necessary tools, including the mismanagement of funds by university administrators for the country's university. Essentially speaking, picture with the eyes of your mind, if you will, the recognition and cheers accorded these degree holders irrespective of how came the certificates! The wild adulation which, holders of these over-night certificates enjoy and the quick run by others to acquire theirs are baffling. Do we really need to acquire these certificates to vie for elective offices cum political appointments? It really saddens one to admit that acquiring these overnight certificates has unconsciously been a policy thrust of successive governments. Regrettably, many political office holders have come to embrace the policy as such partly because higher certificates and getting political appointments are now arts to be excelled in. Unfortunately, the acquisition paradoxically epitomizes literacy. As a result, scores of Nigerians are today inflexibly engaged in the fraudulent business of acquiring educational certificates without any learning and character formation. With an inadequate funding and poor quality of academic staff whose recruitments were purely based nepotism and clannish identity and other factors, how does one reconcile the mass production of first class degrees in the absence of qualitative infrastructure? For instance, during the 31st convocation ceremonies of one Federal University of Technology, 153 students graduated with First Class Degrees, while 1,514 made Second Class Upper and 1,212 made Second Class Lower, 216 students had Third Class degrees and only 15 bagged Pass grades. This is coming against the background of poor infrastructural facilities. How was this achieved? Infrastructure provided? If yes, who did? Government increased funding? Worrisome as it is, the same university graduated 120 students with First Class degrees last year with the same deplorable state of infrastructure which Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) have complained about! Evidently, the high demand of paper qualification rather than performance is irritating because everyone is bent on earning a university degree at whatever cost, even those who have no business with university education. Little wonder, most graduates today cannot think independently or write anything meaningful if given the chance.

The promotion examinations conducted by Kaduna State Ministry of Education where over 90% of the teachers failed primary three examination test (Eluozo, 2018) is self evident. Paradoxically, the overemphasis on certificates, according to Eluozo (2018), is that over 90% of the first degree graduates and masters holders cannot even defend the certificates talk more of working with it. The vexing question is: of what value then is the certificate to the holder? Is it exclusively for politics where it catapults the holder to prominence? The perplexing paradox here is that, most of these individuals, now turned politicians, with this long chain of degrees are observed, to be sweet tongued while possessing their

mercenary motives to betray the electorates as never before! Regrettably, the mad rush for certificates, the urge to personal enhancement, deadly quest for social status, unbridled thirst for power and sometimes, superfluous political enthusiasm is daily attracting many a person to these scandalous mockeries of education. And it is shocking that most Nigerians are part and parcel of this plundering of the country's education for reason not unconnected with gaining social recognition.

Prior to this, the erstwhile Minister of Education in an address during the 45th meeting of National Education Council (NEC) held in Katsina, declared that the summit is to allow stakeholders in the education sub-sector and “*Those who do not now know the extent of the rot in the sector to sit and parley with us in order to understand what has gone wrong with education in Nigeria*”. Lamenting further, the Minister averred that:

I believe that if Nigerians who matter know exactly the trouble which education is passing through they will be shocked to their marrow because Nigeria's education has reached a level, which deserves the declaration of a state of emergency (Birna, 1998).

Concurring, Akindele (1999) in Ede (2005) states that:

if we are thinking of how to make our educational system to be qualitative, let us first, find out or think of what has made the system to lose the quality it once had and turn the table around by re-introducing and re-emphasizing those missing variables for the needed results.'

It is important to understand that conscious effort is needed by all the stakeholders in the educational sector- Government at all level, vice- chancellors, and lecturers, parents and students to restore the quality of university education in Nigeria.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The issue about the decay in the quality of education in Nigeria has lingered for so long. The fall in standards has become too conspicuous and disturbing that it can no longer be treated with levity because the role of education as an instrument of social transformation and development in any society cannot be waved aside. Several arguments have emerged seeking to know the actual group or sector responsible for the deterioration. Educationists blame government of being hypocritical towards the educational sector pinpointing on poor funding as well as employing unqualified lecturers to manage the educational sector. Furthermore, lecturers argue that poor working condition, unsustainable wage amongst other factors including government's dishonest attitude impede their zeal to discharge their duties satisfactorily. On the other hand, government accuses lecturers of poor commitment in imparting knowledge, and above all, on embarking industrial strikes at the least disagreement. In the middle of the divide are parents and guardians who argue that the crude capitalist system operated in Nigeria is the rationale behind the decay of the education standards. While the blame game continues, the decay in Nigeria's educational sector system via examination mal-practices, poor lecturers' remuneration, industrial strikes and other related factors despite its importance is worrisome. Therefore, this paper examines Nigeria's university education at crossroads with the sole aim of checkmating the decay and suggesting a way forward.

3. Theoretical framework

3.1 Attribution Theory

The idea that individuals are motivated to achieve a degree of control over their physical and social world has been a recurrent theme in psychological theorizing. Theorist like Worlman (1975) emphasizes the importance of personal control and researchers attest to the impact of control and loss of control on behaviour. In many diverse, but important situations, people find themselves in the position of having to describe the reasons for their actions. Which motives for behaviours are questioned, when actions go astray leading to undesirable outcomes, or when behaviour is misunderstood by others, people try to clarify causes of the action. When a description of causes of events are exchanged among two or more individuals, these causal claims serve as a communicative, informational function and present a way to control other attributions.

Within the context of attribution theory, an understanding of causes of behaviours and events if erroneous reinforces the individual's sense of personal control by the interrelated functions proving explanation for behaviour and environmental types of outcomes. Still arguing on the study of casual attribution, it is argued that one reason for studying casual attribution in achievement setting is its potentials for influencing subsequent behaviour. In identifying the casual factor

(s) responsible for one's behaviours is the first step in understanding the outcome that may influence reactions to similar subsequent situations. Horrocks (1976) observes that people utilize knowledge of their outcome to make causal attributions and then incorporate these attributions into subsequent expectations and decision-making.

Attribution theory, which has evolved from achievement theory, deals with four perceived causes of success and failure in an achievement situation. These are ability, efforts, task, difficulty and luck. Some aspects of these models are relatively stable and some are unstable. Our general perception of our ability is stable overtime and one's perception of the difficulty of a given task is reasonably stable. The amount of effort we put out at a particular time varies as does luck. Similarly ability is an aspect of internal control that the subject carries with him whereas the task and its difficulty is set by the experimenter and are external to the subject.

A person brings to a task a given level of ability and may or may not put forth effort, but the nature of the task and luck are beyond the person's immediate control. Attribution of performances to stable factors tends to influence a cognitive expectation of similar performances in the future; while attributions to unstable factors tend to influence an expectation of a possible change in future. Students who tend to attribute their general performance to factors outside themselves, that is, task, difficulty and luck, compared to those who internalized the cause of their control, as that which determine their performance. Such students exert less effort and are more inclined to depending on chance factors like fending easy questions, or questions they have actually prepared for or even cheat to ensure success. On the other hand, those who internalize the cause of their failing in the first place have accepted the blame for their poor performance. They now realize that their chance of success depends on their effort or ability, and knowing that they are in control of it, they are more likely to develop positive attitude towards their study.

4. Conceptual Clarifications

4.1 What is education?

The term education is quite elusive and very difficult to pin down to a single definition. This is so because numerous authorities in different fields have described education as its appeals to them. Etymologically, education is derived for the Latin word '*educare*' which means 'to lead out' or '*educere*' which means, 'to nourish that which has been led out'. In other words, education brings out individual's innate potential, and nurtures to completion that potential that has been led out. Thus, education must be understood as entailing a life-long formal and informal process of equipping an individual to be fully aware of his environment and to exploit, manage and dominate same for the benefit of himself and the society at large. If we look at it from the perception of Plato, education is therefore, a process of leading/ guiding an individual from the world of 'darkness' to the world of 'light' from the world of appearance to the world of 'reality'. In other words, the object of education is to turn the soul towards light. In view of this, Plato, in *The Republic*, states that the main function of education is not to put knowledge into the soul, but to bring out the latent talents in the soul by directing it towards the right objects. This explanation of Plato on education highlights his object of education and guides the readers in proper direction to building a safer world because education for character will enable individuals rise above narrow mindedness, self interest, anger, fear, miserliness. In the same vein, assist them to utilize their knowledge for the betterment of humanity rather than for its destruction and dilapidation.

Essentially, education is seen as the total process of human learning by which knowledge is imparted, faculties trained and skills developed. Put differently, education, basically, involves transfer and acquisition of knowledge and skills in certain competences through the process of teaching and learning. Corroborating, Okojie (2013) argues that education is a process for manpower development which is necessary for the achievement of rapid growth and development in any country. Prior to Okojie's position, Chukwusa (2011) asserts that education is the systematic development and the cultivation of the mind and other natural powers. It is "a process of developing the individual morally, socially, emotionally, physically, aesthetically and for his welfare as well as the welfare of the society" Education helps members of the society to acquire suitable appreciation of their cultural heritage and to live a fully more satisfying life (Okere, 1990). This includes the acquisition of desirable skills, knowledge habits and value for people living in the society. It equips the members of the society with the capabilities of personal survival in and contributing to other group's survival in the wider world (Akule 2006). It is a treasure in which every human kind should heavily invest in earthly pursue to its indefinite end. It is central to development; because it is an instrument for acquisition of appropriate skills, ability and competence both mental and physical as equipment for individuals to live in and contribute to the development of the society. Education should seek to fit the ordinary individual to fill a useful part in his environment and to ensure that exceptional individual shall use their capabilities for the development of the community.

Education encompasses teaching and learning specific skills and also something less tangible but more profound: the imparting of knowledge good judgement and wisdom. Durkheim sees education as the socialization of the younger

generation. It is a continuous effort to impose on the child ways of seeing, feeling and acting, which he could not have arrived at spontaneously. Education has as one of its fundamental goals the imparting of culture from generation to generation. Culture is a growing whole, and as such there cannot be any break in the continuity of culture. The cultural elements are passed on through the agents like family, school and other associations. Basically, education has this function of cultural transmission in all societies. The curriculum of a school, its extra-curricular activities and the informal relationships among students and teachers communicate social skills and values. Through various activities school imparts values such as co-operation, team spirit, obedience, discipline etc. Education acts an integrative force in the society by communicating the values that unites different sections of society. The school teaches skills to the children which help them later to integrate within the culture of the society. Education in its formal or informal pattern has been performing this role since time immemorial. Education can be looked upon as process from this point of view also. Education has brought phenomenal changes in every aspect of man's life.

4.2 The over dependence on Academic certificates and its implications on the Nigerian society

While it is heartwarming that education has brought phenomenal changes in every aspect of man's life, it is, on the other hand, vexing and saddening to observe that the over dependence on '*academic* certificates without a corresponding quality exhibited by the holders of these certificates at this age seems to hold sway in the Nigerian society. The mass production of first class graduates in the country's universities despite the poor quality of infrastructure and academic staff is seriously worrying. It is not the acquisition of these academic certificates that is the issue, but that poor funding and the mismanagement and diversion of available funds cannot produce these spectacular results! Unfortunately, the acquisition paradoxically epitomizes literacy. As a result, many Nigerians are today inflexibly engaged in the fraudulent business of acquiring educational certificates without any learning and character formation. In recent times, there have been many questions begging for answers. Among them: how does one reconcile the mass production of first class degrees in the absence qualitative infrastructure? Put differently, how does one grasp the continued condemnation of poor funding, stakeholders/parental halfhearted attitude, ill-equipped lecturers, industrial strikes, examination malpractices, as well as corruption, and other related factors in our universities and the huge number of first class graduates being produced yearly? For example, as earlier observed, during the 31st convocation ceremonies of one Federal University of Technology, 153 students graduated with First Class Degrees, while 1,514 made Second Class Upper and 1,212 gained Second Class Lower, 216 students, Third Class degrees and only 15 bagged Pass grades. Worrisome as it is, the same university graduated 120 students with First Class degrees last year. Since, these results are coming against the background of poor infrastructural facilities, it is necessary to inquire how these feats were achieved. Who provided the infrastructure provided? Commenting on the poor quality of academic staff and decay of culture of excellence in the country's universities, Sylvester Ibe, Professor of Genetics and Animal Breeding, cited a university that had 215 first class students out of 1,580 graduates at its 2018/2019 convocation and described the scenario as a gross violation of the normal distribution characteristics of what is expected under the prevailing circumstances. According to him, the situation contrasts with the classification of degree results in many Nigerian universities in the 1970s and early 80s.

Could it be said that universities are currently in the competition of who produces the highest number of first class graduates celebrated on convocation arenas than understudying their advancement after being thrown into the labour markets half-baked? If most of these first class graduates are unemployable, is there any point graduating this huge number defenseless graduates? Strangely enough, the mass graduation of students with first class degrees is happening against the background of the rot in the university system. At this juncture, what stops one from agreeing with Okebukola (2002), Marinho (2002) and Ekankumo and Kemebaradikumo (2014) that poor funding, insufficient staffing, non-availability of most important instructional materials, and so on, especially in higher education has led to the dysfunctional and unethical practices across Nigeria's educational system? Similarly, in this debate, the submissions of Professor Biodun Ogunyemi, National President, Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) cannot be ignored. He has at every opportunity complained about the lack of modern facilities to conduct cutting edge researches in universities across Nigeria; facilities are obviously in a shambles. In addition, he posited that libraries are no longer stocked with current materials as regularly as it used to happen in the past, and above all, the laboratories are bereft of chemicals and reagents. But If Ogunyemi's views are to be taken seriously regarding the rot in the system, is there any justification to defend or rather rejoice over the mass graduation of students with first class degrees? Under what academic environments are the first class degrees attained with the decay everywhere?

Following all this, the over dependence on '*academic* certificates without a corresponding quality exhibited by the holders of these certificates has become the very first set of thought that comes to mind wherever the issue of quality in Nigeria's education is raised. Basically, the deterioration in Nigeria's educational sector, particularly the university education via poor funding, stakeholders/parental halfhearted attitude, ill-equipped lecturers, industrial strikes,

examination malpractice, as well as corruption, and other related factors have become recurrent issues plaguing higher education, particularly with many fatal medical errors, building collapse, banks distress, professional incompetence, and loss of trust in the certificates awarded. The heavy emphasis placed on academic certificates without a corresponding hard work to attain the academic laurels is worrisome. Obviously, much food for thought!

Writing, Chinelo (2011), argues that the falling standard of education in Nigeria is linked to the lost glories of traditional education which inculcates among other things the very important values of hard-work, diligence, integrity, and high productivity. With these meaningful attributes lacking; the unfolding results are poor quality output and wastage which in themselves undermine capacity building and sustainable development. Similarly, Nnamdi (2007) opines that the quality of education in Nigeria has dropped to an alarming rate and this portends huge danger for the future. Essentially speaking, the phenomenal increase in the incidence, intensity and complexity of the quest to acquire academic certificates through any means certainly disturbs any observer of the Nigerian university educational system greatly because students are getting certificated but not educated. Most graduates from Nigerian universities can neither express themselves well in English language, nor demonstrate reasonable mastery of their subject matters.

Many scholars have made significant contributions to the study of social deviation. Among them, Robert K. Merton (1968) who views social deviation as inadequacies or failures in a social system of interrelated status and roles such that the collective purposes are less fully realized than they could be in an alternatively workable system. What this simply implies is that when social regulations are weak, the controlling influence of society on the individual to conform to rules and regulations become loose. This looseness has crumbled the constituent parts; hence the breakdown of order leading to success goals being emphasized without an equivalent emphasis on institutionalized conduct or norms. Thus, the emphasis upon this set of culture goals is imperfectly integrated with the organization of society, which does not provide equal access to those goals for all members of the society. Merton (1968) calls this condition anomie. Anomie can be described as a condition of normlessness, which is conducive for deviance to flourish. Explaining it simpler, Merton declares anomie as the breakdown in the cultural structure of a society due to a disjunction between the cultural norms and goals of the socially structured capacities of members of the group. Fundamentally, since the Nigerian society has become a society where the custom is to decorate miscreants, thieves, scam artists and violators of national trust with honorary doctorate degrees, national honours and appointing same nonentities to exalted public offices, the mad quest to purchase academic degrees cannot be halted.

The thrust of Merton's argument (1968) is that the American society, nay Nigerian society like all capitalist oriented societies enjoins everybody to strive for success goals by approved means. The approved path to success in the Nigerian society of yore was by imbibing the traditional value system of honesty and hard work. But amongst many Nigerians today, none of these is providing food on the table and have since been abandoned them. In other words, the substitution of illegitimate for legitimate means reigns supreme in contemporary Nigerian society. By implication, there has been this huge disparity between universal goals and restricted methods of obtaining success. Since the opportunities to reach these goals through normatively regulated and approved means are not equitably distributed, majority of Nigerians, particularly the upstarts, by their whims and caprices have chosen to circumvent approved means. It is in this vein that Merton concludes that:

It is only when a system of cultural values extols, virtually above all else, certain common success goals for the population at large... or completely closes access to approved modes of reaching these goals for a considerable part of the same population, that deviant behaviour ensues on a large scale,...(Merton, 1968)

The dominance of mediocre in the nation's university system, according to Prof Ikenna Onyido, former Vice Chancellor, Micheal Okpara University, Umudike, is regrettable. According to him, university education has fallen greatly compared to what was obtainable in the 60s and 70s. The Professor emeritus of Chemistry described the nation's universities as caricature of universities and contended that mediocre have taken over the nation's university system because many who have no business being in the system dominate. It is such that the nation's universities have degenerated so badly that many would- have-been scholars have ended up being Google Professors because they cannot do serious academic works. Unfortunately, it is these Goggle lecturers cum Professors that are severally lacking in moral and intellectual qualifications (Otokunefor, 2011) that subvert and pervert examination and evaluation mechanisms. As an interested partner in the system, Professor Tosanwumi Otokunefor contended that his colleagues in the academia are severally lacking in moral and intellectual qualifications. Concurring, Prof. Biodun Ogunyemi, National President, Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), decries the recruitment system in the universities, regretting that many people not qualified to teach had found their way into the system. Substantiating, he states:

Some lecturers have no business being in the classrooms, but politics has done so much damage to us that sometimes merit is sacrificed on the altar of mediocrity and political connections. The recruitment policy has done a lot of damage to the university system as not all people in the class are able to teach. Teaching is all about passion and not about preference of any sort. It is something natural. We hope that we shall restore the credibility of the system as we have been trying to argue over the years.

It appears, from Otokunefor's submission, that due to internal and external brain-drain, thieves, rogues, and sexual predators have been recruited as academic staff into most Nigerian universities. Shockingly, it is these same fraudulent people that are empowered by the rudderless university leadership to approve who should be certified as worthy in character and learning despite the soiled manner through which they were hired and the various unethical practices they daily perpetuate in the system. As a result, the manifestation of their dirty and unscrupulous practices are visibly observable in the selling of grades, upgrading of failed grades at result computation level, hiding failed grades, using best 120 credit units out of the 148 required for graduation, selling of examination questions, demanding sex for higher grades. Where there are omissions in this analysis, there are deliberate, solely not to sour anyone's day, but then, these unscrupulous individuals have become like a main sewer that collects and accumulates dirt everywhere and soils whatever it comes in contact with. As earlier observed, Nigeria is the only country in the world where any person and every person can be a lecturer in the university. Admittedly, most people in the universities have no business being in there but rather were recruited by same corrupt and rudderless administrators in the system to continue to perpetuate their despicable acts, while sending their wards to foreign universities in Europe, and elsewhere. Needless to also contend that there are many mushroom universities in the country that ought not to be going by all standards acceptable in all civilized countries, but they exist because of the rot and mediocrity in the system. In fact, some commentators have contended that the approvals for university licenses are presently being given to politicians who view education purely as an economic venture! One would not have bothered if these politicians had concentrated their wealth in the only commerce they know and understand better: hospitality industry, which is booming in every nook and cranny of the Nigerian society rather than ventured into establishing their mushrooming universities!

Lamenting the predicament, Otokunefor(2011) says since our quality determining scale, quality evaluation framework, examination system is not only subjective and weak but steep in subversion and perversion, the human elements in the system are no longer competent to embark on any error free assessment because when the bad eggs among the students pass through these black-market avenues, they are accepted and graduated into the main realm of the society and industry as those worthy in character and in learning. Regrettably enough, these graduates become liability to both themselves and society, and remain unemployable, and if any employment opportunity comes, the same crooked mechanism that graduated them, hires them to the collective detriment of our educational system. But how did the Nigerian educational system get here? Responding swiftly, Awa (1984) points to criminal socialization --- *a situation where the leadership innovate alternative means other than the societal approved means so as to achieve societal approved goals, and in so doing provides example for the rest of the citizenry to adopt.* At this juncture, one could argue that the parental roles in modeling and reinforcement cannot be overemphasized. Parents played roles are vital as far as modeling is concerned in the social and psychological development of students. Likewise, in Nigeria's educational system, lecturers command a cult-like followership across all age brackets not necessarily because they are all charismatic but because majority determines who graduates and who does not. As a result, the newly graduated students, being bereft of any new academic ideas to forge ahead of their mentors, all seem to adopt those standards of self-reinforcement that correspond with the standard of the models to which they have been exposed. A cycle of rot is entrenched thereby ensuring that any person and every person can teach in the university.

In all societies, probably decadent ones, critical writers relentlessly emphasize on value judgement. Though they are often confronted with the same old cliché: dogs don't eat dogs! Despite this, some are never deterred to write on the need for change in attitude in a manner deemed sanctimonious, while others, not willing to be tagged, become unadventurous in examining the ugly situations around them. For all intents and purposes, all commentaries, whether radical or conservative, have values of their own. Agreed, many commentators have been helplessly misjudged and their thoughts or philosophies misinterpreted as self righteous and crucified, and doubtlessly celebrated when they are no more as it happened to Martin Luther King Jnr's famous speech of: *I have a dream.* In all this, the argument still remains that we cannot continue to be sleeping and snoring when efforts are required to halt the crazy quest to denigrate Nigeria's educational certificates! Similarly, it was Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia who rightly observes that: *"throughout history, it has been the inaction of those who could have acted; the indifference of those who should have known better; the silence of the voice of justice when it mattered most; that has made it possible for evil to triumph"*

4.3 Poor funding and its effects on state of infrastructure in the educational sector

Nigeria is one of the most resource-endowed nations in the world, but its educational system is in shambles. The budgetary allocations to education have been grossly inadequate as agitations by lecturers and students increasing by the day. The obsolete equipment, old and outdated textbooks and journals including poor remuneration for academic staff, have also heightened the level of brain drain in the country as many renowned academics are, on yearly basis, migrating to different parts of the world, not necessarily for greener pastures, but job satisfaction. Finding available the infrastructure with which to work with gives job satisfaction than the monetary incentives accruable.

From this sequence of events, Nigeria's university education is a paradox; there are enormous challenges facing Nigeria's tertiary education despite being one of the richest countries in the world! After six decades of oil exploitation, Nigeria is ranked as the sixth biggest producer of oil in the world accounting for almost 31% of the entire global production. For a serious minded individual, there is obviously a persisting paradox of a rich country inhabited not only by poor people, but plagued with inadequate funding, inconsistent policy changes; infrastructural decay and disruption of the university educational system. Concurring, Ibara, (2011) asserts that Nigeria has never in its history met the 26% benchmark specified by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for developing countries. Unmistakably, poor funding which has led to frequent strikes by teaching and non-teaching staff since the early 1990s has been identified as one of the major *raison d'être* for the rot in the tertiary education. Indeed, the Federal Government's allocation to the education sector in the last 10 years has been miserly. Out of a budget of N55.19 trillion, only N3.90 trillion or 7.07 per cent was allocated to the sector. In 2009, the Federal Government allocated N221.19 billion (7.25 per cent) of its N3.049 trillion budget to education. The figure was reduced to 4.83 per cent in 2010 when education got N249.09 billion of the hefty N5.16 trillion appropriations. There was a marginal improvement in 2011 when education got N306.3 billion (6.16 per cent) of the N4.972 trillion budget. The marginal improvements continued in 2012 (8.20 per cent), 2013 (8.55 per cent), and 2014 (9.94 per cent) until 2015 (7.74 per cent) when a significant drop in allocation to education was recorded.

In 2016, the sector had its second-worst allocation in 10 years when, of the N6.061 trillion budget, only N369.6 billion (6.10 per cent) was appropriated for education. However, there was a slight rise in 2017 (7.38 per cent) and if the 2018 proposed N8.612 trillion is approved, education will get N605.8 billion or 7.03 per cent. For many years, teaching and non-teaching unions in tertiary institutions have been complaining about poor funding, poor conditions of service and welfare, over which they have embarked on industrial actions on several occasions almost on a yearly basis, and between 1992 and 2017, there have been almost 20 industrial strikes with the attendant adverse effects on the quality of education at the tertiary level in the country. Fundamentally, both Federal and State government owned universities' complained of inadequate funding and the effects are obvious in the deterioration of physical facilities; internal and external brain drain among the faculty, dead of quality scientific research and managerial capacities of Nigerian public university system (Okojie, 2010). Substantiating, Famurewa (2014) observed that with this type of funding, it would be difficult for Nigeria's education to compete favourably with their counterparts in Europe and the United States. While Nigeria's tertiary education seems to be hard hit with inadequate funding, mismanagement of available funds is also unmistakable in the sizeable number of uncompleted or abandoned projects in every nook and crannies of Nigeria's universities. Obviously, since crucial elements of learning environments in universities such as buildings, lecture halls, laboratories, and equipment- education social infrastructure are in a sorry state, how then are these students able to graduate with first class degrees? Put differently, since the effects of the decaying social infrastructure are reflected in almost all the sectors of the Nigeria's university education, how genuine is the continued production of these first class graduates? Ironically, these first class graduates are products of government universities that Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has accused government of underfunding in the past twenty years.

There is a strong evidence that high-quality infrastructure facilitates better instruction, improves student outcomes, and reduces dropout rates, among other benefits. Infrastructural facilities make easy the transference of knowledge and skills from the lecturer to the learner. Based on various researches conducted over the years, the impact of infrastructural facilities is widely noticed in the educational achievement of learners. In the research conducted by Katrien, Weerd, Dupont, Mols and Nuytten (2011), it was discovered that there was a significant contrast in satisfaction levels between students attending schools with good quality infrastructure as compared to those in schools with poor infrastructures. By and large, it is important to define social infrastructure in the context of this paper to include libraries with current and relevant books, well equipped laboratories, recreational facilities, and the like are needed for the functioning of a viable university educational system. These facilities enhance the achievement of university educational goals. Infrastructure as a significant aspect of the university holds much in the lecturers and students performances in teaching and learning process most especially in professional education.

Despite the importance of socio-economic infrastructure to university education, it is disheartening to observe that these facilities are generally in a deplorable and decaying state. Perhaps, it is in this vein that Oyeboode (2008) acknowledges that no society is capable of rising above the level of its universities. In other words, since the life and times of the country's universities have been somewhat chequered due to poor funding, the rise in the mass graduation of first class graduates is questionable. Writing earlier, Adedipe (2007) asserts that inadequacy of physical resources in education like lecture halls, laboratories, ICTs and other academic resources which translate to poor results are obvious and cannot be seen to guarantee these high classes of degrees being awarded yearly. Apparently, the general improvement of the teaching and learning environment ranging from lecture theaters, classrooms, laboratories, workshops are needed to shrink the negative impact of poor infrastructure on undergraduate students' outcomes, but as long as these are ignored, undergraduate students learning and outcomes would be affected.

Closely related to the stated, is the level of mismanagement and misappropriation of the funds marked for the execution of the projects for educational development. Writing, Acho & Abuh (2016) argue that in spite of the inadequate funding, the little funds available are appropriated and mismanaged and as a result, the quality of education is bound to decline. Contributing to the discourse, Ololube (2016) asserts that university leaders spend millions of Naira to erect super gates when their libraries are still at foundation stages. Furthermore, they expend millions to purchase exotic vehicles for university officers even though they lack basic classrooms furnishings; spend hundreds of millions in wall-fencing and in-fencing when student's accommodations are inadequate. In most universities, hundreds of millions of naira are expended on mundane administration cost rather than on providing boreholes and power supplements (ASUU, cited in Ololube, 2016). In addition, Ololube (2016) asserts that out of the 701 development projects in Nigeria universities, 163(23.3%) are abandoned and 538(76.7%) are perpetually under on-going projects. In this context, some of the educational projects have been abandoned for over fifteen years and others over forty years. Most worrisome, according to ASUU (2016), is the fact that 76% of Nigerian universities use well as source of water, 45% use pit latrines and 67% of students resort to using the nearby bushes as toilets. Prior to ASUU revelation, Nsikan and Emmanuel (2015) aver that failure in the proper and prudent management of funds is due to unfriendly policy implementations, inability to access funds, inconsistency and complete lack of courage on the part of successive government and university leaders to implement viable educational policies to make a difference. There has been a decline in the standards of university education due to inadequate funding, political interferences, quality of lecturers, and lack of quality assurance, examination malpractices, industrial actions, and misappropriation of funds. Others include poor research, poor supervision and mentorship, ethical violations, sexual harassment and exploitation of students, corruption and appointment of inept university administrators without any fundamental policy framework in planning, organizing and controlling mechanism. These, among others, have persisted and worsened the quality of graduates over the past years despite the fact that the number of first class degrees is increasing geometrically. While the entire exposition is vexing, critical scholars have argued that university education can be revived, and functional once more if funds meant for development of university education are not misappropriated. Aligning to this, Ololube(2016) writes that the Budget and Monitoring Committee of the Academic Staff Union of Universities, Obafemi Awolowo University branch accused the management of the institution of expending 3.5 billion Naira meant for hostel renovation and construction of new lecture theaters in breach of due process and transparency. The funds are part of the 100 billion Naira unrestricted funds of the federal government for all universities in Nigeria. Guidelines for accessing the intervention funds by Nigerian public universities are clearly stated by the implementation and monitoring committee of the federal government, but how and why the management of Obafemi Awolowo University failed to abide by the guidelines (The Budget and Monitoring Committee, 2016) remains a puzzle. It is probably in recognition of this blatant abuse of procedure that prompted the Global Corruption Report on Education, Transparency International and Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) media launch to posit that corrupt practices have wrecked university education. Summarizing his thoughts, Ololube (2016) citing SERAP says that massive embezzlement and misappropriation of funds running into millions of dollar and billions of Naira are visible in all levels of education. Earlier, Chikowore in Mapolisa, Ncube, Tshabalala and Khosa (2014) stated that the number of cases of embezzlement and mismanagement of funds by higher education leaderships in Nigeria are quite frightening.

4.4 ASUU's propaganda and its implication on attaining quality higher education

Presently, Nigerians, according to Professor Ochonou (2019), do not like the truth; they prefer self-comforting narratives because many who have become suckers of ASUU's propaganda. They have continued to spew the predictable ASUU talking points without much critical reflection on them. Unfortunately, Ochonou argues that the definition of stupidity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different outcome. That is what ASUU has been doing in the last 15 years or thereabouts, and this has increasingly become less productive and is even counterproductive. The golden age of the ASUU struggle, according to this erudite scholar ended about 20 years ago. For the past fifteen years or so, the union has been struggling to redefine itself and find a new identity, but has ended up simply reinventing the

proverbial wheel even when the challenges of today's university system call for a different toolkit than periodic strikes that worked in the 1980s and 1990s!

In contemporary Nigerian society, academic industrial strikes have become a recurrent decimal in the country's educational sector. The state of affairs in educational sector was so terrible in 2013 that, at a stage, lecturers at the three main levels of tertiary education – universities, polytechnics and colleges of education – were on strike for over six months. Due to this ugly development, no Nigerian university, according to Webometrics Openness ranking, in the first half of 2018, is among top 1000 universities in the world. Currently, Nigeria has a total of 174 universities; 43 Federal Universities, 52 State Universities, and 79 Private Universities. What is the state of these universities? Are they glorified universities or really worth their establishments? Simply put: In the name of all good and acceptable criteria should our country's universities be really called universities? The solution to the question poses a dual problematique for a division or demarcation that could introduce bias in the arguments of contributors to the discourse. Within what criteria therefore were these universities established? The patriotic zeal, devoid of economic gains which great men employ in their different countries to establish universities seem to be lacking in Nigeria. The second question that behoves every present day critical observer of Nigeria's higher education to answer is why the mass graduation of students with first class degrees in the midst of decay infrastructure, and absence of quality lecturers who sell grades for sex and others who were inappropriately recruited and seem to have no business imparting knowledge as they seem to have none whatsoever to give out other for money. Finally, what are the justifiable reasons adduced for the mass approvals given to prospective applicants to own universities thereby turning them purely into economic ventures rather than socio-economic ventures? In giving taste to the bitterness of this question, it would be noteworthy to reflect on the recent ranking of universities. The Times Higher Education, body which has, since 2004, been providing trusted performance data on universities for students and their families, university academics, university leaders, governments and industry, released an annual ranking of all universities around the world. The ranking, a definitive list of the top universities globally, included more than 1,250 institutions across 86 countries in 2019. It is the only global university league table to judge research-intensive universities across each one of their core missions: teaching (the learning environment); research (volume, income and reputation), international outlook (staff, students and research); citations (research influence); industry income (knowledge transfer). It uses 13 carefully calibrated performance indicators to provide the most comprehensive and balanced comparisons, and all data is independently audited by professional services firm PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), making the World University Rankings the only global university rankings to be subjected to full, independent scrutiny of this nature. In the ranking, only four Nigerian universities made it to the top 1000, Covenant University being the only private school on the list and also topping the list, University of Ibadan, University of Lagos, and University of Nigeria Nsukka.

Prior to this recent ranking, the statistics of previous ranking in 2018 by Google, showed that the University of Nigeria Nsukka was ranked 1433, University of Ibadan is placed 1613 among the first 2,000 universities. Less than 50 Nigerian universities were ranked of which nine – University of Ilorin (2114); Covenant University (2161), Nnamdi Azikiwe University (2173); University of Port Harcourt (2190); University of Lagos, 2243; University of Calabar (2333); Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (2364); Ahmadu Bello University (2372 and Obafemi Awolowo University(2473) were among the first 2,500. The ranking, according to Google, was based on the volume of research articles published. In other words, it relies on information (statistics) of web publications of a university for a specific period of time available on Google scholar.

While this research is being carried out, there is verifiable information that the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has embarked on yet another strike! Unfortunately, the proposed strike is not about a plan by the federal government to introduce fees, but about the government newly introduced Integrated Payroll Personnel Information (IPPIS) to curb leakages, corruption and ensure accountability in the Nigeria's educational sector. But ASUU is against the programme, and insisting on a prototype of the IPPIS, called University Transparency and Accountability Solution (UTAS), which it urged the government to implement rather than the IPPIS. Substantiating their preference to UTAS, Ogunyemi, National President, Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), argued that all the personnel information and the payroll system would be uploaded and there are about five components which they have segmented and developed. Accordingly, Ogunyemi declares:

Not everybody will have access to all of these, so we are saying that the best way to ensure university autonomy is to develop a system that will be resident in the university; but those in government can have access to control and monitor it. This will secure and safeguard the autonomy of the universities and that will also give government the opportunity to monitor what is going on in the system as regularly as they want to.

Come to think of it, among the reasons advanced for ASUU rejection was that it violated university autonomy. Perhaps, the pertinent question to ask at this juncture is: which autonomy? Why is ASUU always talking about autonomy in selected cases? These questions are hinged on the fact that most prominent members of ASUU are senate members of their respective universities, what have been their contributions in the selection of Vice chancellors? How democratic have the appointment of Vice chancellors been in line with safe guarding this autonomy? Still on autonomy, has the Senate or any other organ either visible or otherwise in any of the universities in Nigeria overwhelmingly elected Vice chancellors democratically without financial inducement given to majority of the members by government?

It is pertinent to understand that no one university in Nigeria is self sufficient or preferably put, economically viable without government subvention? Ordinarily, it ought not to be, but it is real today. This is simply because universities in Nigeria are established without cognizance to the law of comparative advantage. Despite the numerous egg heads in the educational sector, the essentials of the ingredients of the law of comparative advantage in establishing universities are ignored. The fundamental argument has been: it is our quota and no one can deny us of it! Whether the proposed courses to be offered will make the university viable or not is not important. Presently, Nigeria has nearly 174 universities, many more are still coming. The most vexing issue here is the fact over 80% of these universities offers the same courses without any slight modifications in the curriculum. In this vein, jettisoning the law of comparative advantage calls to question the quality of the personnel involved in the establishment of these universities.

As long as government keeps subsidizing education, where is the justification for autonomy arising from? At this point, the question that begs for answer is: why has the usual ASUU propaganda which Professor Ochonu (2019) queried, and is designed to curry sympathy with parents, students, and the general public still operational? As always, it is ASUU against the government's non-implementation of the revised 2009 agreement -- revised because it was renegotiated in 2013 after a prolonged strike. But as with other recent strikes, ASUU leaders, Ochonu (2019) avers, are always on industrial strikes because of "poor funding," a vague, misleading, recurring, and overused propaganda in ASUU's rhetorical repertoire. Much of what ASUU leaders are fighting for, according to Ochonu, is actually their own benefits. Since there is nothing wrong with pursuing their own benefits, decency demands that honesty ought to have been their watchword in the pursuits. But since realizing that no Nigerian will support any industrial action if it is couched strictly in terms of their earlier agreement with the Federal Government or in terms of earned but unpaid allowances, ASUU leaders have recycled, as they have always done, the hackneyed narrative of poor funding. For additional emotional appeal, they decided to highlight an old, largely discredited federal government proposal - a mere proposal - about the introduction of tuition fees and the establishment of education banks. Evidently, ASUU strikes have become counterproductive in several ways. The government usually waits it out until ASUU is desperate for a deal because of financial hardship occasioned by several months of its members going unpaid, and also because of pressure from parents and students, who, in recent years, have turned decisively against ASUU, influencing public opinion that now sees ASUU honchos as selfish, money-grabbing activists who do not have the interest of students at heart. Whether this assertion is fair to ASUU or not, Professor Ochonu says is not the point. The point, rather, is that a wise, self-reflective, and self-critical body of activists tries not to overplay its hand or lose the support of its constituency or the public (Ochonu, 2019). A wise trade or professional union knows when to fight and when not to, and knows when a particular method of struggle has exhausted its effectiveness, its lifespan, and has begun to yield diminishing returns, but same cannot be said of ASUU.

4.5 Corruption and ill trained and counterfeit lecturers

The issue of decay or preferably, the falling standards of education in Nigeria has remained on the top burner among contemporary problems in the country (Iruonagbe, Imhonopi, & Egharevba, 2015). Arguing further, they assert that the decline in the quality of education has become too conspicuous and disturbing within the last 20 years till date. Accordingly, the subject can no longer be treated with levity having known the input and role of education as an instrument of social transformation and development in any society. The axiom that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers clearly demonstrates the role of teacher and teacher education programmes in national development (Oyenike, Adesoji, Oladipo & Onuoha, 2009). One of the super-factors that subvert standards of university education is hiring of unqualified lecturers (Otokunefor, 2011). Corroborating, Oladapo (2013) notes that "some 49% of the teaching force is unqualified". These unqualified staff, grossly incompetent in the act of teaching is now ferried into

the classroom under certain administrative misdemeanours, and the consequence has been that the ‘unqualified’ lecturers who have nothing whatsoever to offer in the first place are nowadays increasing the rot in the educational standards in Nigeria. Contributing to the debate, Olagunju, Lasisi and Okuntade (2013) accused lecturers for the fall in quality of university education. Concurring, the National Policy of Education (2004) declares the decay should be placed on teachers’ education since no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Similarly, the National Development Plan for the period of 1975 to 1980 upheld that “the quality of the teaching staff is probably the most important determinant of educational standard at all level (Ukeje and Aisiku, 1982). This view is re-echoed by the National Council for Teachers Education that “the teacher is the most important element in any educational programme, and also responsible for implementation of the educational process at any stage (NCTE, 1998).

It is in this circumstance that the National Policy of Education (NPE, 2004) places emphasis on teachers’ education as the basis for quality education at all level of learning. But the reality at the moment shows that teachers have refused to develop themselves not necessarily because the research culture is dead in Nigerian universities as seen in the unaccessed N3 billion TETFUND research fund and the existence of other intervention funds demonstrate, but because they are not meant to be universities (Ochonu, 2019). But that lecturers are not required by ASUU-FG agreements to satisfy a rigorous research or teaching requirement for promotion and because their salaries and allowances are not tied to their teaching or research efficacy but is instead determined by the periodic strikes of ASUU and the salary structures that result from them.

4.6 Examination Malpractice and the devaluation of Nigeria’s educational standards

World over, the examination process makes the difference in educational systems. Though examination malpractice is neither a recent phenomenon nor is it peculiar to Nigeria, but the alarming rate of examination malpractice in Nigeria’s universities calls for concern from all stakeholders. Like a canker-worm, examination malpractice has eaten very deep into all facets of our educational system; from the primary to the university levels. Strange enough, parents, students, and even lecturers aid and abet examination malpractice directly or indirectly. Parents go to the extent of bribing their way through or rather offering lecturers some irresistible ‘Greek gifts’ to ensure that their wards get unearned grades and become certificated graduates with nothing to show thereafter when taken to task in their fields of study. It is in this vein that Obanya (2002) quoted by Fidelis, E. O. (2006) observes the products of our educational system are half-baked, ill-equipped, and ill-trained, of poor quality, of poor standard and sometimes confused. This clearly explains why over 90% of our graduates are vying for elective political offices and appointments where the brain is never tasked! But come to think of it, these lecturers who indulge in this scam called examination malpractices do so primarily because they possess nothing academic to impart to students, and secondly too, they want to be praised for job they never did when these students pass their certificated examinations. Examination malpractice as a chronic sore has eaten deep into the credibility of examination system in the country and this has resulted to loss of self confidence, loss of integrity and loss of transparency in the system.

Noting that the monetary rewards accruing to beneficiaries of examination malpractice is enormous and unimaginable, Aminu (2006) rhetorically asks: How can students, teachers and others shun examination malpractice when criminals are being set free through legalisms and court room gymnastics or worse, through wretched and criminal influence peddling? If the police can openly accept bribe on the highways, why would those involved in the conduct of examinations not accept monetary incentives to subvert the conduct of examinations? Parents and guardians are ready to induce lecturers and pay costs because they desperately want their children and wards to acquire certificates. As a result, the standard of educational attainment has been bedeviled by examination malpractices.

Consequent upon this social problem, Eze (2008) lamented over its presence everywhere in our society and referred to a recent survey carried out across the country which revealed that in the last couple of years, Nigeria has lost as much as 107 billion naira to examination fraud caused through public external examinations. Similarly, lecturers in public tertiary institutions extorted about 50 billion naira from students selling fake examination question papers and fees charged for aiding examination malpractice. The phenomenon of examination malpractice seems to be aggravated by the large scale and shameful involvement of dishonest and greedy teachers, school heads, parents, students, examination officials and even security agents due to much value and emphasis are placed on certificates instead of knowledge, skills and competence. Agreeing with the current trend, Olatunbosun (2009) avers that the value and functionality of any educational system lie in its ability to actualize the goals of education. This explains why till date, examinations still remain the best tool for an objective assessment and evaluation of what learners have achieved after a period of schooling. Hence, any action that undermines examinations poses a great threat to the validity and reliability of examination results and certification.

Disheartening as it is, the state of education today has become a matter of great concern to various stakeholders in the sector as a result of examination malpractice. In the past couple of years, Nigerians have been witnessing an alarming rate of failures in examinations. Evidence abounds of increasing incidents of examination malpractice by students, teachers and parents. The phenomenon of examination malpractice has become endemic in the educational system to the extent that every examination season witnesses the emergence of new and ingenious ways of cheating. Parents who ought to be models of perfections have succumbed to bribing their way through to ensure that their wards get unearned grades while teachers encourage examination malpractices not necessarily because they lack the zeal to work but that they are products of a malfunctioning educational system that has lost focus and relevance. A better picture of this assertion is observed with the fact that out of the 11,307 candidates that sat the West African Senior School Certificate Examination, only 1,937 candidates, representing 17.13 per cent, obtained a minimum of credits in five subjects and above, including English Language and Mathematics, while the results of 1,021 candidates, representing 9.03 per cent of the total candidature for the examination, were being withheld in connection with various reported cases of examination malpractice. Earlier, in 2016, the results of 14,756 candidates, representing 11.07 per cent of candidates, were withheld for alleged examination malpractice.

There have been established recurring cases of mass failure of examination results in the country and that the situation is prejudicial to the interest of Nigerian students and parents. Statistics showed that in both 2009 and 2010 WAEC, only 25.99 and 24.94 percent respectively passed with 5 credits including Mathematics and English, while the remaining others constituting 70 % failed. Noting further he informed that in 2011 May/June WAEC, only 86,612 out of 1,540,250 candidates that participated in the examinations got credits in Mathematics and English Language. In 2012 May/June WAEC, only 649,159 out of 1,672,224 candidates that wrote the examinations which represent just 38.81 percent got 5 credits and above including in the core subjects of Mathematics and English language; "Disturbed that in 2013 WAEC, only 29.17 percent candidates actually passed the Nov/Dec WAEC examinations while 70 percent failed. In both 2017 and 2018 recent January/ February private examinations, only 26.01 percent and 17.13 percent candidates have passed with 5 credits including Mathematics and English language respectively, while the remaining over 70 percent of the total candidates who sat for the examinations failed. Recently, BBC documentary showed how lecturers mortgaged their primary responsibilities in some universities of imparting knowledge to students to demanding for sex for higher grades.

Since the market place value and reward for the level and face value quality of certificates promote tendencies for and acts of cheating in the process of certification, Nwadiani (2005) avers that the process of examination in schools has become 'contemporary shame'. Succinctly put, it is a reflection of moral decadence of our country. The evil of this terrible monster is unquantifiable. At this juncture, many questions abound. Among them are: (a) is it possible to conduct credible examinations without turning them into a flourishing economic ventures? (b)Where is the place of good educational standard in the midst of massive academic dishonesty? (c)How can our graduates be employable when possibly some of them cheated their way through? It is regrettable, but the truth is that the future seems to be unpromising unless an urgent step is taken to get this hydra-headed monster arrested.

4.7 The Absence of Parents Academic Staff Association/ Stakeholders in the University education

The University is conceptualized in this study as a formal and organized functional social system comprising appropriate plant index, students, teaching and non-teaching staff, whose core goal is to inculcate and stimulate desirable behavioural outcomes in the students for a better living within the community. Therefore, the underlying principle for Parents Academic Staff Association (PASA) and Stakeholders' relationship cannot be over emphasized because they convey a partnership that exists or is supposed to exist between the parents of students, members, of the community and the university as represented by university authority and subordinates staff. It designates according to Igwe (1999), the complex network of relationships and interdependencies located at both individual and group levels such that their activities and roles cut across the social, economic, cultural and educational realms all in favour of better student academic outcomes, better university effectiveness and educational development.

But in Nigeria, the absence, or rather the non-existence of Parents Academic Staff Association (PASA) in the overhaul of University Education has continued to be the bane of the poor quality of graduates produced yearly from our universities. Writing on the revival of the educational sector in Nigeria, Adebayo (2013) described a group of people whom he called stakeholders including Parents Teachers Association as those with vested interest in the education sector. Applying same to the university system, we can contend that Stakeholders/Parents Academic Staff Association(PASA) are a group of individuals with interest in developing, delivering intended results and maintaining viability in educational progress, and also influencing programme of activities and services offered by a university to guarantee the welfare, success and progress of university education. In the university, these stakeholders include

Chancellors, Pro-Chancellors, Vice-Chancellors, Lecturers, Students, Parents Academic Staff Association, Community Members, University Senate/Management Committee, Elected Officials, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), National Universities Commission, and Ministry of Education.

Reading from the work of Zuniga & Alva (1999), we could substitute Parents Teachers Association with Parents Academic Staff Association (PASA) and hold that the Parents Academic Staff Association (PASA) and Stakeholders' involvement in university administration is an important component of educational reform. In most nations of the world, though stipulated in their national education goals, the place of Parents Academic Staff Association (PASA) and Stakeholders are known to promote and increase participation in promoting the social, emotional and academic growth of students to achieve desirable results. In consonance with the above international experience, the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) section 12(104) agrees that systems and consequently their management and day-to-day administration shall grow out of the life and social ethos of the community which they serve. Literature on parents' involvement in school reveals to a large extent that, universities typically decide what parents should know and teach their children and therefore set agenda for Parents Academic Staff Association (PASA) relationship. It is through this PASA partnership that parents can be taught informally what is worth knowing in relation to their expected roles in that partnership and what they should teach their undergraduate students at home.

However, the skeptics argued that Parents Teachers Association should be limited to the first and second tiers of education, but the initiator of the body was adamant for he knew what he intended to achieve and eventually did achieve as a Vice Chancellor. Parents, for the very first time had to speak out of their experiences; the issue of cultism which has been a rampaging plague in the universities, and the extent to which both 'the public and the academia are caught up in the web of cult groups being taken a mystery and dreadful; organizations was tackled headlong. Parents saw and admitted their failings as parents, and admitted that if nothing was done, university educational development would be crippled a hundred fold in that instance.

Perhaps, it is instructive to recall that the first ever Parents Academic Staff Association (PASA), was engineered by the then Vice Chancellor of the University of Calabar, Professor Etta Ogon. Laughter and cynicism greeted its inaugural meeting. To many, Parents Academic Staff Association (PASA), in the university is absurd and ought not to be. The argument often advanced remains that the minimum entry age into the university in Nigeria is sixteen (16), and at such age, no pampering or feeding bottle is required for the student because he has come of age. Put simply, such undergraduate students are adults, and by implication, mature and can be accountable for their actions. Here, we go again equating age with maturity! Further, the skeptics argue that Parents Teachers Association should be limited to the first and second tiers of education, but the initiator of the body was adamant for he knew what he intended to achieve and eventually did achieve as a Vice Chancellor. Parents, for the very first time had to speak out of their experiences; the issue of cultism which has been a rampaging plague in the universities, and the extent to which both 'the public and the academia are caught up in the web of cult groups being taken a mystery and dreadful; organizations was tackled headlong. Parents saw and admitted their failings as parents, and admitted that if nothing was done, university educational development would be crippled a hundred fold in that instance.

Holding on to the position that age is maturity is, certainly, a dangerous trend considering the extremes to which our young people can go because of their youthful exuberance. Due to their limited experience, and refusing to agree that age is maturity, they are bound to engage in activities without realizing the full adverse implications of their actions. This probably would have been the reason for the country having youth whose values are completely at variance with the norms of the society. As young as they are, their energies, inventiveness, character and orientation will define real development for the country if properly assisted. Through their creative talents and labour power, the country can make giant strides in economic development and socio-political attainments. In their dream and hopes, Nigeria will find her motivation; on their energies Nigeria will find her vitality and purpose. From their good dreams and aspirations, the future of the country shall be assured success, growth and subsequent development since Nigeria relies largely on the enforcement attributes of the youth. Therefore, the high expectations on our youth require the strategic engagement of Parents Academic Staff Association. However, it is unfortunate that the Association died with the exit of Professor Etta Ogon. Regrettably, the roles they were to play in order for their wards to learn better and attain their potentials in its fullest forms were also thrown overboard. Candidly, the roles they were set up to play remain inevitable to the progress, and achievement of university set academic goals and objectives. These roles include among others advisory roles by developing strategies to train and re-train both academic and non-academic staff in order to improve lecturers' integrity. International collaborations and academic programmes with other countries universities will enhance and promote efficiency of processes and production of reliable scholars. For the realization of the goals of arresting the rot in the university education sector, the following functions are expected of them:

- Identifying the needs of universities and assist in the provision of essential facilities to promote effective teaching and learning outcome of undergraduate students
- Providing financial support through the establishment of educational endowment to improve the quality of standards through workshops, conferences, training and retraining of both academic and non-academic staffers in key areas of needs and by implication, ensuring the achievement of academic excellence.
- Showing great interest, trust and support in the organization of prize giving day celebrations for undergraduate students in various fields;
- Encouraging parents to provide needed learning material to students for effective academic work;
- Making regular input into the university curriculum through the National University Commission(NUC) to enhance academic performance
- Providing adequate security of life and property through the establishment of effective security groups, and erection of perimeter fence round universities
- Showing keen interest in and contributing to exhibitions mounted by universities from time to time on various aspects of the curriculum.
- Emphasizing to the undergraduate students to understand the need for attendance and participation in all university activities
- Discussing and finding solutions to the continued poor standards of university education
- Encouraging universities to embark on collaborations with foreign universities in order to compare notes and improve academic excellence;
- Ensuring that political considerations do not influence lecturers' recruitment exercises so as to employ the best hands available
- Encouraging members to contribute both in kind and cash by rendering skilled or technical services to universities
- Participating in the guidance committee of universities in order to help in implementation of the counseling programme to checkmate social problems such as drug abuse.

In the realization of the stated for a better quality of undergraduate students with skills, competence and other standards appreciated, the country's former President, Olusegun Obasanjo, in one of his numerous reactions to issues of the moment has cautioned Nigerians to desist from seeing education only as means of getting meal tickets and jobs. Reading his mindset, we could aver that Obasanjo is not comfortable with the over dependence on certificates over skills and competence; Nigerians must change to begin to appreciate the intrinsic value of education, which is the total development of the individual to be able to make meaningful contribution to the society. Fundamentally, the profound emphasis placed on academic certificates without a corresponding academic stress to obtaining these certificates seems to be the albatross in obtaining good quality of university education. Evidently, it is not the love of these certificates and the spoils of political office it fetches Nigerians, especially politicians who are neck deep in the rot of acquiring these certificates that is the issue, but simply how they shamelessly acquire them, and also how they criminally and arrogantly showcase them during live-telecasts. By acquiring them, they proudly arrogate the divine power of life and death to themselves and play god, and infamously go further to make everyone articles of sacrifice for political office. And as the year gradually rolls by, so overwhelming is the worship of academic certificates irrespective of sources that the beneficiaries of this rot, the politicians wholesomely hallucinate that acquisition of these certificates is the only route to political stardom. This kind of hallucination has unconsciously become the main reason for the uncanny impetus, which arrogates the foolish pursuit to continue the mass acquisition of certificates in the Nigerian society.

In a way, everything in our Nigerian educational system these days is driven by the desire for success irrespective of the means employed in obtaining these certificates. The importance 'of these must-achieved certificates from our universities has become the anomie that now characterizes the Nigerian universities with reckless abandon. According to Merton (1968), anomie is the breakdown in the cultural structure of a society due to a disjunction between the cultural norms and goals of the socially structured capacities of members of the group. In this conception, anomie gives birth to aberrant behaviour and non-conformity, which is a symptom of dissociation between culturally prescribed goals and socially prescribed means for realizing these goals. A society that places exceptionally strong emphasis on goal achievement without a corresponding emphasis on institutionalized means of achieving these goals is bound to exert pressures on some members of the society that may eventually resort to the use of any technically expedient means in achieving these goals irrespective of whether the means employed is legitimate or not. The process whereby exaltation of the end generates a de-institutionalization of the means to the end occurs in many societies where the two components of the social structure are not highly integrated. Ndibe, cited in Ojeikere (2004) says the Nigerian society has become a society where the custom is to decorate miscreants, thieves, scam artists and violators of national trust with national honours and appointing them to exalted public offices. Put differently, socio- economic and political vices

are celebrated and rewarded in the country while virtue is punished. Noting that the monetary rewards accruing to participants of examination malpractice is enormous and unimaginable, Aminu (2006) rhetorically asks: How can students, teachers and others shun examination malpractice when criminals are being set free through legalisms and court room gymnastics or worse, through wretched and criminal influence peddling? If the police can openly accept bribe on the highways, why would those involved in the conduct of examinations not accept monetary incentives to subvert the conduct of examinations? Parents and guardians are ready to give encouragement and pay costs because they desperately want their children and wards to acquire certificates.

In the attempt to halt the decay in the university educational sector, the functions of stakeholders/parents cannot be overstressed in the discharge of their responsibilities effectively in order to facilitate rapid educational improvement. The extent to which stakeholders/parents will be allowed to play these roles the way and manner it should be played is left to posterity. However, regular interactions are fundamental to the success of the reorientation.

5. Conclusion

This paper examined the deterioration in Nigeria's educational sector via poor funding, stakeholders/parental halfhearted attitude, ill-equipped teachers, industrial strikes, examination malpractice, as well as corruption, and other related factors with the aim of drawing the attention of parents, and all stakeholders in the educational sector on how their actions and inactions have individually and collectively contributed to the collapsing state of education in Nigeria. Of all these factors, poor curriculum development, ill-equipped lecturers employed, and as well as industrial strikes, examination malpractice have become recurrent issues plaguing university education, particularly with their attendant consequences clearly shown in many fatal medical errors, building collapse, banks distress, professional incompetence, and loss of trust in the certificates obtained. These findings are, indeed, worrisome for any conscientious scholar who appreciates quality education, and also knows the importance of synergizing Nigeria's philosophy of education with the contemporary viewpoint of education in terms of developmental needs of knowledge, skills and attitudes to satisfy various global needs of learners in the country. Based on the above, the following strategies have been proffered to checkmating the decay and improving the quality of university education.

6. Recommendations

Based on the conclusion, the following suggestions geared toward changing the ugly trend are hereby proffered.

- (a). The budgetary allocations to education, including real funding of university education in Nigeria have been grossly inadequate over the years. The inadequacies have created loopholes in the quality of graduates produced, particularly those with first class degrees in the absence of infrastructure, instructional materials, qualified lecturers. Therefore, this inadequacy cannot be ignored; it is the root of other problems that have undermined quality of graduates produced yearly. The issues of obsolete equipment, old and outdated textbooks and journals including poor remuneration for academic staff, have heightened the level of brain drain, not necessarily for greener pastures, but job satisfaction. Nigeria has never in its history met the 26% benchmark specified by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for developing countries. Above all, all hands must be on deck to reverse the trend by ensuring that the budgetary allocations to universities are increased for a proper and effective management, planning and control of the quality of higher education in Nigeria.
- (b). Competency and leadership skills should be taken seriously in the appointment of university administrators to ensure proper planning and effective administration to change the educational woes because no organization functions excellently without fundamental policy framework in its planning, organizing and controlling mechanism. In other words, nepotism and clannish mentality should be jettisoned in the appointment of Vice Chancellors. Also, a special welfare scheme should be introduced for lecturers. In fact, academic staffers should have a robust salary structure. In addition to this, their job environments should be enlarged and enriched to make their job interesting and worthwhile. These put together will enhance the academic staffers' image and commitment to their job.
- (c) There should be sincere implementation of legislation by government and other agencies on examination Malpractice Act No. 33 of 1999. In the past and even recently, decrees, laws, edits (Decree No. 27 of 1973, Special Tribunal (Miscellaneous Offences) Act Cap 410, Examination Malpractice Act No. 33 of 1999) have been promulgated and enacted with sanctions and penalties spelt out for offenders and participants in examination malpractice. But these penalties have not been effectively enforced by the

authorities and bodies initiating them. This time, government should amend, promulgate and enforce examination malpractice degree without favour. Such laws should not only bind students but parents, lecturers, non-teaching staff who aid and abet examination malpractice directly or indirectly. Offering lecturers some irresistible 'Greek gifts' to ensure that their wards get unearned grades and become certificated graduates with nothing to show thereafter when taken to task in their fields of study is not good for our tomorrow.

- (d) Furthermore, since the mismanagement of funds meant for universities in Nigeria has shown the menace of systemic corruption on all facets of development. Therefore, all unauthorized, misappropriation, intentional or illegal use of the appropriated funds for university education by institutional leaders for other unauthorized purposes be stopped forthwith because it has negative effect on proper and effective management, planning and control of the quality of university education in Nigeria. Put simply, government should begin to be transparent in enforcing all relevant laws against corruption without fear or favour, and also stop judges from the incessant dismissal of corrupt cases on technical grounds, as well as, mandating the Judicial Service Commission to beam its searchlight on all corrupt judicial officers.
- (e) The axiom that no educational system can rise above the quality of its academic staff clearly demonstrates the urgency to halt the hiring of unqualified lecturers who continually subvert standards of university education. Since Oladapo (2013) asserts that "some 49% of the lecturing force is unqualified", Professors must, therefore, do the needful by refining these half-baked academic staff for the best. These unqualified staff, grossly incompetent in the act of teaching should no longer be ferried into the lecture rooms because of the increasing rot they cause to students.
- (f) Besides, possessing doctorate degrees should not be a pre-requisite to lecturing without adequate supervision by senior colleagues. Since one of the super-factors that subvert standards of university education is hiring of unqualified lecturers, they should be groomed by senior colleagues within the department or improvement strategy alongside a greater focus on how to impart knowledge and attain performance standards. Such in-house programmes should be funded by the university.
- (g) Efforts should be made to de-emphasized certificates and paper qualification. Unfortunately, Nigeria's education system is largely certificate oriented. So much value and emphasis is placed on certificates instead of knowledge, skills and competence. The market place value and reward for the level and face value quality of certificates promote tendencies for and acts of cheating in the process of certification. Many university graduates have certificates without knowledge and skills.

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