

# **REVISITING RESEARCH IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS: THE ROADMAP FOR HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT**

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines the status quo of Nigerian tertiary institutions of learning in the light of (he ongoing human capital development agenda. The authors express optimism that quality research will influence human capital development which will in turn bring about improved output and productivity. The main thrust of this paper, therefore, is to analyze the relevance of research in tertiary institutions vis-a-vis human capital development in Nigeria. Conceptual clarification of the basic concepts: tertiary institutions, research, development, human capital and human capital development were duly examined for better comprehension of the paper. The challenges facing research in Nigerian tertiary institutions were also discussed. Finally, workable remedial strategies were suggested, among them are: the removal of unnecessary administrative bottlenecks in accessing research funds in tertiary institutions (especially TETFUND) plus the establishment of well equipped research centres in Nigerian tertiary institutions, to ensure optimal performance.

**Keywords:** Research, Education, Development, Human Capital Development, Tertiary Institutions.

## **Introduction**

Research is an enquiry into the unknown. Without advances in research, human capital development will be at a standstill. In fact, research cannot be divorced from human capital development. Education through quality research is needed to produce knowledge innovations and entrepreneurial skills to achieve national development. There is ample evidence to show that research and education (especially the higher education) has contributed to the rise and expansion of the world knowledge-based economy. Research is the easiest way to learn to do things better. In recognition of the need for education, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) noted that education is that process concerned with the transmission of worthwhile values, skills, and knowledge suitable for developing learners' potentials for national development. University is classified among tertiary institutions. Unlike colleges of education and Polytechnics that take care of teacher education and provide technical skills for technicians, respectively; the university

on the other hand, is an institution at the highest level of education where people can study for different degrees or conduct researches. Tertiary institutions, all over the world are centres for change and all round development. Research is a diligent search aimed at discovery new knowledge or facts. Research involves the discovery and interpretation of facts that are known to exist. It could be used to revise earlier accepted theories or laws in the light of new ideas or development (Egbule & Okobia, 2017).

For any organization, institution or even a nation to function effectively, there must be human and material resources. But among these resources, human resources are the most paramount, since other resources cannot be utilized without human beings (Odionye, 2014). We increase in human capital through education, training and motivation (enhanced benefits) that will lead to an improvement in the quality and level of production. It is the quality of human capital that can be relied on to move a nation forward, developmentally. As an indisputable asset, human capital should be accorded major priority and attention.

According to Esene and Mgbonyebi (2014) the quest for expansion of knowledge and the intrinsic desire of man to improve himself has led them into research for more knowledge within and outside their domain. Research entails investigation and it is aimed at improvement and development for the benefit of mankind. Research is the most important tool for advancing knowledge and relevant skills. Knowledge induces production.

### **The Conceptual Clarification of Research and Tertiary Education Research**

Research is a careful search and systematic investigation towards increasing the sum of knowledge. Okorodudu (2013) defined research as a diligent and systematic attempt to provide plausible answers to questions by the process of logically designed operations. Aigbokhaevbolo and Ofianson (2012) cited in Esene and Mgbonyebi (2014) defined research as the scientific study of a problem by way of an investigation undertaken in order to find solution and increase knowledge. Flowing from the above definitions, research is simply, the search for new<sup>r</sup> knowledge and contribution to existing knowledge in any field it study through modification and invention.

### ***Tertiary Education***

According to the Federal government of Nigeria (2014) in her National Policy on Education sees tertiary education as the education given after secondary education in universities, college of

education, polytechnics, monotechnics including those institutions offering correspondence courses.

In other words, UNESCO (1971) in Peretomode (2008) refers to higher education as educational establishment to which access is available for people who have completed secondary education and in which the course of study last for not less than two years, but more generally from three to six years.

### **Conceptualizing Development, Human Capital and Human Capital Development**

It is pertinent to state that development is not only an economic exercise, but also embraces socio-economic, human capital and political issues and pervades all aspects of societal life. Chrisman in Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011) views development as a process of societal advancement, where improvement in the well being of people are generated through strong partnership between all sectors, corporate bodies and other groups in the society.

### **The Philosophy and Goals of Education in Nigeria**

According to the FRN (2014). a nation's policy on education is government's way of realizing that part of the national goals which can be achieved using education as a tool. No policy on education, however, can be formulated without first identifying the overall philosophy and goals of the nation. The overall philosophy of Nigeria is to:

Live in unity and harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principles of freedom, equality and justice;

Promote inter-African solidarity and world peace through understanding. The five main national goals of Nigeria, which have been endorsed as the necessary foundation for the National Policy on Education, are the building of:

A free and democratic society

A just and egalitarian society

A united strong and self-reliant nation

A great and dynamic economy

Land full of bright opportunities for all citizens.

In Nigeria's philosophy of Education, the nation believe that:

Education is an instrument for national development, to this end, the formulation of ideas, their integration for national development, and the interaction of persons and ideas are all aspects of education;

Education fosters the worth and development of the individual, for each individual's sake, and for the general development of the society. & Every Nigerian child shall have a right to equal educational opportunities irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities each according to his or her ability;

There is need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive, united Nigeria; to this end, school programmes need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive; while interest and ability should determine the individual's direction in education.

Nigeria's philosophy of education therefore is based on:-

The development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen.

The full integration of the individual into the community; and

The provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system.

For the philosophy to be in harmony with Nigeria's national goals, education has to be geared towards self realization, better human relationship, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity, as well as towards social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress. The national educational goals, which derive from the philosophy, are therefore:

The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;

The inculcation of the right types of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.

The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and

The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mental and physical, as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his or her society.

### **The Goals of Tertiary Education in Nigeria**

Tertiary education being the agent in focus in this context has the role of ensuring human capital development for adequate manpower needs of the society and institutions thereof. The goals of tertiary education as stipulated in the Nigeria Education Policy document, should be to:

Contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training.

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

Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society.

Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society.

Promote and encourage scholarship and community service.

Forge and cement national unity; and

Promote national and international understanding and interaction. Looking at these goals as stated, one may agree that the major role of tertiary education through its institutions is that of human capital development, which involves the task of inculcating the skills, aptitude, attitude, knowledge, morals, values, creative ability, etc.

### **The Place of Research and Tertiary Education in Human Capital Development**

Tertiary institutions, especially the university are a veritable instrument of discovery, through a quality research. Researches can therefore, improve human capacity through knowledge and innovations acquired through research findings. Tertiary institutions bring valuable assets to developing new technologies through access to up to - date knowledge base (Maduabuchi, 2014). Gupta (2012) in Maduabuchi, (2014) observed that successful companies in Ohio viewed higher education as stakeholders in their business. In fact the university plays the role a stakeholder to national economics through projects and programme proposal (recommendations). Research has contributed immensely to nation's development. Hence, in his opinion, Nworgu (2006) asserted that the improvements in the conditions of human existence today have been made possible by the application of the findings of scientific research.

Another major contribution of research job is creation. According to Maduabuchi (2014) benefits accruing from research findings of a faculty can attract individual laboratories to local areas. For instances, the managers of industrial laboratories may decide to site a lab in an area if local universities can provide a steady supply of highly qualified science- and engineering graduates. Thus, research has contributed to job creation and national development. If we are to develop in our. professions, we must give research a chance.

- It is evident that research has played a positive role in the advancement of technology and improved production in China and the four countries (Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and South Korea) which constitutes the Asian Tigers. Research findings could bring about revolution in industrial and technological advancement for economic growth and development. On this note, scientific societies were established in Europe to put to use scientific knowledge to practical purposes. The various scientific societies and universities in Europe contributed to her social and material progress (Mumford, 1934) in (Maduabuchi, 2014)

Research is the key to the Millennium Development Goals of the Federal Government and the programme of putting Nigeria in the league of first twenty world economies by 2020 (Osuya & Ukueku, 2014). The reality of the 21<sup>st</sup> century world is that tertiary institutions are learning organization and knowledge centres. Tertiary institutions should produce students who are industry ready. They should focus on functional research and the institutionalization of global competitiveness. The university is a place of research where studies and discoveries are made for the improvement of the society and that of mankind (Osuya & Ukueku, 2014).

Higher education is considered as the facilitator, the bedrock, the power house and the driving force for strong socio-economic, political, cultural, and industrial development of the nation. It has been argued that only human capital can sustain growth (Kors ,2008) in (Peretomode, 2008). Thus higher education is intimately related to economic growth through human capital development. Contributing to this discourse, Peretomode (2008) states that higher education is one of the basic pillars for achieving development and improving the capabilities of our youths and preparing them for the future.

A higher education institution, especially the university, is considered as a strategic market place for ideas, a centre of change and a fulcrum of transformation. The three pronged missions, to a large degree, depend upon the quality of knowledge these higher institutions generate, advance, share, disseminate, manage and apply to the betterment of the nation (Peretomode, 2008). He further stated that we need to understand these essentials that are "higher" in higher education so that with an enhanced higher education system Nigeria can become a major participant in the contemporary knowledge -based economy and even have comparative advantage in certain areas This is important because this "invisible" resource called knowledge has become more important than the traditional factors of production referred to as land, labour and capital.

### **Research in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions: Evidence of Relegation**

The primary objective of tertiary institutions in Nigeria -is to advance knowledge and research. Some challenges facing research in Nigerian tertiary institutions are discussed below:

### **Poor Research Funding**

Inadequate funding is a major threat to quality research in Nigeria. Although, research feature prominently in universities vision statement, the tertiary institutions' research efforts are suffering from chronic under funding. Quality research is disappearing from Nigerian tertiary institutions due to poor funding. Research is capital intensive. Hence, adequate collaboration with external bodies in research projects, are highly recommended. Investment in research is investment in human capital.

### **The Problem of Fraud Research**

Peretomode and fbeh (1992) in Okobia and Chukwuma (2013) expressed fear that knowledge generated through fraud research affect the needed changes and the reliance on unscientific ways of thinking by those responsible for decision-making would directly or indirectly hamper the quality of our educational process and products. Ann (2000) in Okobia and Chukwuma (2013) sees fraud research as a person who produces a research work for the public through cheating. Such cheating in research as stated by Ann includes the following: plagiarism, fabrication of data, falsification of information and citation, dry-lobbying, sabotage and professional misconduct (improper grading of research papers). Some basic reasons for fraud research are: greed, poor research allowance, inadequate monitor: stringent promotion requirement, etc.

### **Politicking and Moral Meltdown among Students and Lecturers of Tertiary Institutions**

The Federal Government of Nigeria observed that tertiary institutions shall cam-out research and ensure that education and research meet the requirements laid do\\n for economic growth and national development. Unfortunately, most lecturers and students are busy politicking within and outside the campuses, instead of engaging in meaningful research for human, material and economic development. Also, although unpalatable, the climate of our tertian institutions are now associated with negative trends. In fact, all the vices seen in the wider society: corruption (selling of grades), kidnapping, cultism, rape, robbery, killing, sexual harassment, indecent dressing, prostitution, drug abuse and addiction, alcoholism, nudity and strip and night clubs etc.) are rearing their ugly heads in the academic institutions. Rather than fostering positive development, tertiary institutions are now serving as preparatory group for "criminality development".

### **Low Enrolment of Postgraduate Students**

Research is an important and serious aspect of postgraduate programme. However, Sawyer and Barry (2008) in Maduabuchi (2014) lamented that there is low enrolment of programme study in most African universities. In developing countries of Africa, the equipment facilities and materials needed for meaningful researches are lacking. In most cases where they are available, most of these equipments and facilities are obsolete. Hence, rich Nigerians prefer to run their masters and Ph.D programmes abroad.

### **The Publish or Perish Syndrome**

The publish or perish syndrome tends to divert the attention of Nigeria academia from engaging in meaningful research and developmental activities. In fact, tertiary institution authorities place too much emphasis on number of publications for promotion, rather than the quality or impact of research on the society. According Osagiede (2013) the crave for publication for promotion make lecturers busy themselves with scratching the surface of their discipline in the bid to write and publish as many papers as possible to earn promotion.

### **Inadequate Research Skills in Modern Methods and Constraints of Facilities**

There are innovations in global educational systems (research inclusive). Education is no longer localized, rather, it is now globalized, hence, there is need to update ones knowledge to flow with the trend. Also, the constraints of facilities materials and equipments for carrying out the state - of- the -art research, is another major threat to quality research in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

### **Attitude of Stakeholders towards Research Recommendations**

In most developing countries (Nigeria inclusive) the society, industrialists and government seem to have poor attitude towards research. Related to this is poor communication between research institutes and the productive sector of the economy. Inadequate and difficulty in accessing research grants, use of out-dated methodology, a shift from collaborative to individual research are also among the challenges militating against effective research in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

### **Conclusion**

Research is a major source of generating and advancing the frontier of knowledge, skills training and expertise for manpower development. Research is an indispensable tool for sustainable national and economic development. However, the place of human capital development in achieving national development cannot be underrated. This paper has explored and exposed the



disputable truism that research in Nigerian tertiary institutions is an incontrovertible imperative for human capital development.

### **Recommendations**

Arising from the findings of this study, to invigorate research in Nigerian tertiary institutions, the following recommendations are made below:

Partnership to ensure quality research should be encouraged. For instance, Nigerian tertiary institutions should partner with American foundations such as Carnegie Corporation of New York, Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation and so on.

Research grants from foreign aid should be maximally utilized to enhance outcome.

Nigeria needs pragmatic and qualitative education which is capable of strengthening the link between human capital development and national development.

Having underscored the importance of education as a yardstick for human and societal development which the ancient philosopher, Plato referred to as "one great thing", the government should as much as possible ensure access and equality in educational opportunities to all her citizenry

The private sector like the Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Alumni Associations, industrialist) should partner with the Nigerian government to fund research in the tertiary institutions.

Researchers (both students and lecturers) should be adequately trained on the use of internet and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities to enhance the data collection and analysis.

Workshops aimed at teaching students and lecturers on the use of online (internet) research skills (current pedagogy of researching) and research ethics to avoid fraud research are also recommended, if Nigeria must catch up with the developed world.

Research grants should be made available and adequate to ensure optimal performance. Unnecessary administrative bottlenecks in accessing research funds (especially TETFUND) should be removed.

Students pursuing masters and doctoral programmes should be mandated to take intermediate or advance courses in both research methods and statistical analysis.

Ailing research institutes/centres should be ameliorated, while more and well equipped ones should be built, especially in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

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