



Change and Innovation, Problem and Prospects in Tertiary Education in Nigeria

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Abstract

All organizations require constant change and innovation for improvement. Changes are often perceived as being so problematic, that is, it is not the nature of the change itself but the nature of the knowledge, skill and attitudes of those involved and the way that these are expressed in action. Change and innovation is a hard and long-term process. Any progress in history is as a result of change and innovation, hence, the focus of this paper on change and innovation in Nigerian University considering its challenges and prospects was guide timely. The paper critically examined the concept of change and innovation, the need/importance for change and innovation in tertiary education were wisely discussed. Along the line the problems and possible prospect to change and innovation in Nigerian University were highlighted and discussed. The paper concluded by stating the way forward and recommended among others, that the Education Trust Fund (ETF) should return to it original idea of being solely a research and innovation trust fund and be dedicated to their functions.

Keywords: Change, Innovation, Problem, Prospects, Tertiary Education, Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

Education in Nigeria has been regarded as instrument per excellence as stipulated in National policy on Education (2004). Thus, this statement shows education as a means to be used in achieving national development. For education to serve this purpose, it must be responsive to basic needs of the citizens, in order to train the minds of the members of the society to cope with the demands of the changing world order. Based on the perception of the author of this paper, Education is seen as a change agent for innovation in the educational system. Education change involves the adoption of a new idea or behavior in a school. Here, a system which must interact

with the society positively or negatively. Through this interaction school modify or renew its own programme and alters its objectives which results to change (Uchendu, 2014).

Change according to the context of this paper is conceived as a process through which new programmes or practices, techniques and approaches are put in place or injected into the operations of a system to replace, old or ineffective ones (Odo, 2014). Change is any modification in the structure or technology of institution. Change is a reality which is constant in every organization. Since, human society is dynamic, so it is subjected to various changes. Ebuara (2011) was of the view that change is a process through which new practices and methods are put in place into the operation of the system to replace old ones. However, the process of change in every organization requires the engagement and participation of people involved. But, from the individual perspective, a change may start with change in behavior (Oredein, 2009).

Innovation on the other hand is an aspect of educational change which involves the alteration of some aspects of educational programmes. Its basic aim is the renewal of inputs, processes and product of school organizations. The basic aim of innovation is the injection of new ideas and technology into the system of schooling as a means of bringing change in the educational system (Nwogu 2013). According to Ebuara (2014), an innovation does not mean the same thing as creativity, change, improvement, product development or invention, but each of these activities may lead to innovation in short terms, innovations are not ends in themselves but means towards ends. In the Nigerian educational system, innovation is a special kind of change which may involve renewing inputs and products. It means not only adapting to new conditions but creating new and better conditions.

Tertiary Institutions are recognized as centers of knowledge generation and dissemination. It maintains triple mission of teaching, research and community service. The role of these components aspects of tertiary education are all meant to develop the human society, be it at individual, national or international level. It is very evident that research occupies the main center stage in the mission of tertiary institutions. Innovation is necessary for direct contribution of the universities for sustainable development and knowledge creation (Michael, 2012). A good researcher is one who develops new ideas in the minds of the students. Unique is the special services it provides for its immediate community, such specialized services are derived from result of researches conducted by universities.

According to Odia (2014) advancement in innovative skills through research has given rise to the growth of science and technology which in turn, has led to industrialization through the creation of job opportunities, increased income, production of goods and services creation of wealth, improved quality of life, transportation/communication system, networking regions of the world, clustering of people and integrating nations of the world both socially economical and politically. Change and innovation is very necessary in university, Education, because of the dynamic nature of knowledge. Therefore, applying the concepts of change and innovation in the Nigerian University system with concrete aim on its problems and prospect has been the focus of this paper.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION OR FRAMEWORK

Attempt is made to address the following:

- Concept of change;
- Innovation;

- The importance need for change and innovation in higher Education;
- Brief History of University Education in Nigeria;
- Concept Problems & challenges of change and innovation in Higher Education.
- Prospect of change & innovation.

Concept of Change

Change can be described as the adoption of an innovation, where the ultimate goal is to improve outcomes through alteration of practices (carlopio 2008). According to Fullan (2002) change is a process of learning new ideas and things. It is learning to do and learning to understand something new. Of all these definitions, people are given an idea that change is a process of improving your practice. The process of change is complex with many different types of change possible. Furthermore, there are number of different strategies, with the success of implementation being highly variable. Handling change is not easy and can sometimes be a painful process.

Therefore implementation is the most important procedure in the change.

Applying the concept of change in education is shaped by the unique nature of educational system and the organization. The motivational force for change in education can be traced to either, demands for the school to respond to the socialization needs of the society; or use of the schools to solve some social problems. Bassey (2009) pointed out that, the federal government of Nigeria motivated change in its tertiary institution especially the Universities by stating that research findings should be used to assist national development, based on national development, based on nations developmental goals. Also change in educational policies in Nigeria is also another form of change which must be well managed by the educational policy makers for knowledge integration. For instance, the 1977 National policy on education revised in 2004 is an effort by Nigeria to make education more relevant to the needs of the society for all round national development.

Concept of Innovation

Innovations are changes that do occur in most aspect of the social system, be it in education, commerce, government, religion, culture or political organizations aimed at improving the system. Sometimes, occasioned by man's thirst for variety and improvement, some innovations emanate from within the system when the old order becomes less efficient and ineffective or from the outside when there is a desire to provide answers to some in-system problems. Jung (2007) noted that "to innovate is to re-examine our ways of seeking and doing things, to look over the fences (the geographical and mental fences) to be active, to reinvent constantly our vision and approaches". He further noted that to innovate is to be alert, to live consciously, to create and to enjoy creating and by doing so, to share innovative experiences with others.

Okwo (2006) described an innovation as "a new technique, method or approach deliberately designed and developed to improve effectiveness and efficiency in a given setting" Innovations are characterized by careful planning, and high sense of creativity. To innovate does not always involve a complete break from existing order. It could come in the form of modification, restructuring or even re-organization of an existing system to ensure greater effectiveness and efficiency (Achunine, 2006). Innovation is aimed at curtainting wastes, using men and materials to effect better productivity, as well as saving time and energy.

Applying Innovation within the context of education simply means the introduction of changes in ideas, structure, techniques, methodologies and technologies designed to improve

educational processes and outcome Mengesha (2002) broadly described innovation in education as a dynamic policy, a programme, a project, a method, a technique, a pattern or a design, formulated, planned, devised, created or invented to bring about a change in the educational policy, programme, structure and operation in a given system of education so that the system:

- Meets the changing needs of the individuals and the society at large effectively and or;
- Increases the efficiency of the various resources item plays in the performance of its task.

It involves a deliberate and purposeful effort to bring about a change of some sort in education to improve it. Education as a system was shown in the past to adapt new changes owing to what observers would call the conservative nature of teaching and teachers. More recently the situation is changing fast as societies wishing to catch up with the developed world have a choice than to embrace new ideas and technologies and transmit same through the schools.

The Importance/Need for Change and Innovation in Higher Education

Change and Innovation in the educational system often come about when the current practices are challenged and questions are being asked about the way things are done. The search for a more efficient way of achieving educational objectives may lead to proposals for either a new way of doing something or restructuring the current provisions to enable the achievement of some set goals. There are a number of reasons why change and innovation is very important in the field of Education:

For the Transformation of the Society

As noted in Achunine (2006) one of the roles of education is to meet the needs of the society. Schools are instruments of change and societies' problems are expected to be solved through its education system. As observed by Yoloje, (2002) the education system of a country as a subsystem of the social system is often saddled with the task of bringing together into more harmonious relationship all the elements of the social system, towards greater development. The education system devises newer and more efficient ways of solving these problems, which is done through change and innovation. The need to transform the Nigerian country into a scientific and technologically oriented state led to the demand for manpower with science and technology orientation. This in turn led to greater emphasis in science and technology based programmes and the development of specialized universities of technology, science and Agriculture, Monotechnics and polytechnics. Education has to respond to increasing demand for society's transformation and growth through educational change and innovation that are cost effective and result oriented.

The Need to Truly Professionalize Teaching

The teaching profession is the mother of all professions. At a stage in the development of the profession, it appeared that only lip services were being paid to this otherwise noble profession. Many teachers/Lecturers left the profession for other "more prestigious professions because of low status being accorded to teaching. There arose a sudden realization that the teaching profession has to be raised to a status comparable to other more highly recognized professions.

Teachers/Lecturers are the pillars of the education system and the most essential determinant of education effectiveness. If teaching is to be transformed into an enviable profession it is meant to be, there must be positive changes in the quantity and quality of teachers, teaching materials, methodology and organization including adopting newer ways of motivating staff for improved productivity (Achunine, 2006).

To solve the Problems of the School system

Population explosion in the university system has become a serious issue in educational planning and management, so are other intimidating problems like examination malpractices, apparent fall in educational standards and outcome. The education system is therefore challenged to discover new ways to improve education delivery. The decentralization of teaching through the use of learning devices and correspondence programmes, appears to check population explosion to some extent. The introduction of new media such as audio & visual equipment, computers and other electronics (outside-system innovations) have their influence on education delivery as they generates new methods of educating the learners. Innovation emerge to help solve the problems of the school system (Ekeh, 2014).

To Solve the Problem of Insufficient Funds

In the late 1980s and early 1990s the educational system witnessed a heavy short fall in government funding. Universities had to change from total dependence on change from total dependence on government for funding programmes and projects to embarking on innovative self-sustaining programmes like sourcing for donations in each and kind from wealthy individuals and friends of the school, engaging in commercially integrated farming, endowment fund and alumni fund arising. Moreso, because of dwindling resource allocation to schools there arose a strong need for government, communities and schools to develop newer ways of funding education. This led to the establishment of the Education Tax Fund (ETF). The Education Tax Fund was established in 1993 under Act No. T by Federal Government in reaction to a agitation for reform in education funding. The main source of income available to the fund is 2% levy paid from the assessable profit of companies registered in Nigeria. This is seen to be a dynamic intervention which has greatly improved the level of funding of educational Institution in Nigeria. Also multinational companies, especially oil companies are being approached by host communities to contribute to education. They in turn award scholarship to students, provide equipment, books and laboratories for institutions (Achunine, 2006).

Inadequacies of the Existing Practice

Whenever the existing practices are found inadequate or incapable of achieving desired educational objectives, the need to try out new ideas, skills and innovations arises to accomplish the goal. For example, the old practice of lecturing student-teachers as a method of preparing them for teaching was found to be autocratic in the sense that student teachers were told how they have performed and where they went wrong. The emergence of microteaching session in teacher preparation is seen to be more effective as the student teacher is able to practice in a non-

threatening environment and is able to do self-evaluation based on feedback of actual teaching donvia audio/visual technique, video tape recorder (VTR) etc (Ekeh, 2014).

Research Development

Research studies have generated more knowledge in the education sector be it, in psychology, curriculum, adult learning, administration, methodology etc. New discoveries and better understanding in all areas of education lead to the introduction of innovation. Research results led to the change from subject-centred learning to child-centred learning as a better teaching approach for children. Programmed instruction and computer-assisted instruction and are all results of researches which indicate that students different characteristically in their learning needs and methods. These devices tend to address these differences to achieve better results. There is need therefore to accommodate research results through the introduction of educational innovations (Ekeh, 2014).

Brief History of Tertiary Education in Nigeria

Federal Universities in Nigeria are often categorized on the basis of the years that they were founded. This gives rise to first, second, third, fourth and so on, generation of federal universities in Nigeria. Those that were established in the 1960s are often referred to as the first generation universities include the university of Nigeria, Nsukka, which was founded on October 1st 1960; the university of Lagos October 2nd 1962: Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria was founded October 10th 1962; university of Ife was founded on October 24th 1962; the university of Ibadan that gained autonomy from the university of London, by ceasing to be a campus of the latter, on December 27th, 1962. The university of Benin, although it was founded in 1970 is often counted among the first generation universities in Nigeria. The territory where the university of Benin is located was carved out of the former Western region of Nigeria in 1963. The university of Benin was founded in 1970 in order to satisfy higher education needs of that new political entity (Ocho, 2006).

The second generation universities in Nigeria are seven in number and they were all founded in 1975. These are the university of Maiduguri in Borno State, the university of Kano, University of Jos, University of Calabar; University of Ilorin, University of Port Harcourt in Rivers State and the university of Bachi. Except for the university of Maidugiri, Borno State, the other six were founded initially as campuses of the first generation universities. In due course, they all assumed their independence. The seven newly-founded second generation universities plus the six earlier ones added up to 13 universities in Nigeria in the year, 1975, when Nigeria assumed a 12 states political structure from her three former regions (the Eastern, Northern and western regions of Nigeria ceased to exist in 1975). Each of the 12 newly created states that had no federal university in the its domain was given one (Etuk, 2006).

In 1976, seven new states were created and seven universities of technology were founded with each located in the seven new states that were then created. That gave Nigeria a 19-state structure and 19 federally managed and federally funded universities. Thus, universities of technology were the third generation universities in Nigeria from thence on there was an embargo on the creation of more states and more universities until 1991 when the next set of federal universities were created under the military leadership of General Ibrahim Babagida. The next embargo on establishing universities by the federal government was lifted in 2013 under the presidency of Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan when nine new universities were founded. These

nine became the fifth and the latest generation of federal universities and added up to 38 federal universities in Nigeria in the year 2013.

The main purpose and relevance of higher education in Nigeria is the provision of much needed manpower to accelerate the socio economic development of the nation. Such specialized education at the higher level is regarded as an instrument of social change and economic development. The universal idea of the higher education is a community of scholars, free to pursue knowledge without under interference from any quarters. It is also a place where instrument is given and received without harassment and undue interprise that produce and distribute public goods which is knowledge. The production of knowledge has always been the focus of higher institution through teaching and research. Higher education also advance and diffuse consciousness of the entire society. Therefore the role they play in the society cannot be ignored.

Problems of Change & Innovation in Nigeria University system

From all indications, it is evident that change and innovation is concern with laying new foundations to support and diversity educational structures and provide programmes that truly represent the educational needs of the socio-cultural environment, methods of effective educational delivery that considers the environment and characteristics of the learners and new ways to produce qualitative teaching personnel. Introducing change and innovation in the university system is more often than not a difficult task to accomplish. Some fail out rightly, while some succeed with immense problems. Some of the constraints facing change and innovation in our university system are as follows.

Economic Constraints

According to Achunine (2006) inadequate finance appears to be the greatest problem with the introduction of change and innovation in the school system. With the rising inflation, and rising cost of materials, as well as galloping student enrolment, it is difficult for the packages of innovation in whatever form to reach the entire target group. More often than not, innovation meant for particular school level stop at the pilot study because of inadequate finances to see the project through. It is necessary that adequate analysts of financial implications of institution innovations and the sources of finance to sustain and innovation be identified beforehand. Institutions should not fold hands but discover newer ways of generating funds to sustain innovations once introduced into the system.

Human Beings Attitude of Resistance to change

Psychologically, human beings tend to resist changes or innovations for fear of the outcome or where the outcome will generate pain or add to working time. This is also true of teachers and innovations. A number of reasons may be adduced for this attitude, (a) self-interest (b) lack of understanding and trust of the outcome (c) uncertainty of the result, that is fear of the unknown (d) preference to maintain the status gun. Some teachers find it difficult to accept and adapt to any innovation that is introduced in the system. The issue of continuous assessment and teacher's performance on the task is one strong case in point.

Also important is the barriers to acceptance of innovation that is religion-based. Certain religious groups refuse or reject innovations that are contrary to their faith and belief. Also some school administrators, desirous to maintain the status quo resist and despise innovations that go

contrary to their experiences. Such constraints can be reduced or eliminated through massive awareness campaign and reorientation programmes before actual introduction of the innovation or changes in the institution Achunine (2006).

Personnel Constraints

This would include shortage of adequately trained manpower. Some lendable innovations lack people with specialized knowledge and skill to implement them in the schools. This is true of computer education introduced in the system as well as the introductory technology that emerged in the curriculum in the secondary education in the 1970s. Lacks of personnel with technical know-how do hinder the effective use of some innovations. Utoni (2000). Equally important is insufficient reward or motivation for the implemented of innovations. Most innovations demand extra time and more energy release on the part of lecturers. Commitment and resolve to achieve demand that some incentives and encouragement be added to the work environment. Incentives to induce greater commitment can come in the form of in-service training, seminars and conferences, monetary reward, and better office accommodation, etc. (Ekeh, 2014).

Frequent Changes in Educational Policy and Practice

Changes are meant to stabilize in a given system and evaluated before being thrown out or modified. In the same way, agencies of policy implementation have to be allowed sufficient time to plan, implement and evaluate their activities, following which their relevance can be determined. This does not appear to be so every often. In 1991, the negotiation for the world Bank credit began with NPEC as the implementing agency. Soon after, in December 1991, NPEC was dissolved and the entire implementation process was thrown into disarray. This is also true of many agencies set up for programme and project implementation which are nonetheless dismantled before they achieve their onjectives (Achunine, 2006). Lack of effective inbuilt monitoring and evaluation mechanisms also besoil many school innovations.

Political Barriers

The political class tends to manipulate technical decisions designed for improvement of the system. This also applies to the educational system. Politicians in meddling with change and innovations in education find themselves in areas where they lack competence and experience to operate (Ekeh, 2019) of course they find themselves there for reasons other than improving the educational innovations. It is witnessed that forceful termination or change of political governments in Nigeria does result in cut backs in experimentations on change and innovations in Education. Every government comes with its own policy emphasis and manifestoes. Lack of continuity of policies and programmes therefore become the bane of progress in succeeding administration.

Procedural Barriers/Bureaucratic Bottlenecks

Quite a number of procedural matters hinder change and innovation e.g late delivery of materials needed, insufficient quantity of materials, poor coordination and communication among people connected with initiating and implementing the innovation. Procedural barriers constituted major hindrance to the effective implementation of certain educational policies from both the primary,

secondary and university education. There is need to sufficiently sensitize and mobilize implementers and recipient groups of innovative strategies or projects to ensure commitment and active participation (Ekeh, 2014). Equally important also is to have clear division of labour among the cooperating stakeholders, clear identification of fund sources and the level of contribution from each major stakeholder.

Prospects of Change & Innovation in Nigerian Universities

The 21st century is marked with challenges brought about by globalization and advancement in technology in all aspect of human development, including tertiary education. Globalization has brought with it the growth of “transnational”. Cross border or borderless education and the development of international partnerships and new networks (Moses, 2014). Therefore Nigerian Universities needs to be repositioned to cope with the pressures brought by globalization and commercialization of education in a knowledge driven economy and new challenges in information and communication technology.

The most competitive nations of the world have centralized research in driving their ambition for economic strength, sustainability and renew ability of resources and innovation, (Steve, 2003). The world has changed. Innovation is becoming the most important engine of growth and Jobs in an emerging knowledge-based economy. For that reason, challenges inhibiting effective change and innovation need radical improvement, and better long-term planning.

Secondly, Nigerian Universities defines and limits their roles in the development process to teaching and production of man power at the total exclusion of research in order to advance and improve society. Though manpower production is central to modern development as it facilitates the decolonization and Nigerianization of the Nigerian state, economy and even the universities, (Olukojo, 2004). The whole consciousness, policy, conduct and business of making research in the Nigerian University and research centers is essentially an indispensable in the country. At the national level, the school should be able to develop its own research priority agenda and strategic plan which all researchers must abide to and execute. This should lead to creating research institutional framework within the Nigerian Universities and dedicated research centers, (Eric, 2009). There should be an undertaken in the conduct and functions of research itself. Research as it exists should not simply be as exercise in acquiring of degree and career development for lecturers/university administrators, but should be subordinated and dictated by the national research priorities and goals.

If Nigerian University is to contribute more actively to change and innovation, there is a need to support closer interactions among governments, universities, the industry, and other relevant actors. The various national policy frameworks are not in themselves sufficient, but provide a start as well as incentives and help clarify the role of each stakeholder in advancing innovation, (Ekeh, 2014). There is no shortcut to promoting strong university. Industry linkages without strengthening the academic and managerial capacity of universities.

Nigerian University needs a larger base of continuing, long-range academic research program in areas that interface with national, regional, local economic and social contexts (Okneo, 2006). Universities cannot be expected to deliver prompt solutions to immediate problems. Rather, it is through sustained change and innovation efforts that expertise is built in disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields. Such expertise, if aligned with the knowledge needs and demand of national and local industry can have a meaningful impact in economy activity.

The prospects for improvement in the present state of the Nigerian educational system are very minimal. One of the reasons is that of corruption which has made it difficult for people

charged with the responsibility of planning and administrating schools and institutions of learning (Ekeh, 2014). This has often given rise to diversion of resources meant for the development of education in Nigeria. The nature of the Nigerian State and leadership are geared toward primitive accumulation to the detriment of the masses.

Furthermore, governments have to intensify efforts at funding of university system so as to meet up with the challenges of today. Adequate remuneration to Lecturers/university educators and provision of infrastructure should be intensified in order to attain quality and effective teaching and learning in schools. Above all, is the issue of adequate and proper planning. No human endeavor can be successfully carried out without planning ahead; therefore all educational programmes should be properly and adequately planned before implementation to ensure success.

CONCLUSION

For tertiary education institutions to remain vibrant, competitive and justify their enormous costs, there is an urgent need of a reform package, which should have components dealing with funding and strategy. The products of higher education institutions need to be creators of knowledge, change and innovation. It is simply impossible for Nigerian Universities to thrive with the present funding arrangements and too much emphasis on teaching and less issues on innovation. Already quality has been declining largely because of underfunding of the institution. An effective and mutually beneficial linkage between the institution and industry can go a long way in ensuring robust academic activities. Innovative practices and increased in flow of financial resources to the institution, and only then can Nigerian universities compete favourably with sister institutions across the world. This paper examines the problems as well as prospects of change and innovation in Nigerian university system and has established that, the educational sector has undergone serious of innovation most of which have brought about some levels of improvement. However, most of the policies and programmes have failed due to inadequate funding corruption, poor remuneration, poor planning as well as implementation.

Recommendation

The following recommendations are made toward a prospective change and innovation advances in Nigerian University:

- There should be a decisive shift at the funding of innovation, in which public and private contribution should be clearly designated and earmarked in terms of volume and investment capital;
- More research and innovative centers should be developed and the already existing ones should dedicate their efforts towards efficient and vibrant innovative activities;
- Government should take the lead by creating enabling school environment for effective management of change and innovation for knowledge integration. In the same view, technological institutions should be well equipped and made functional to contribute to national development;
- An effective policy on university –industry partnerships backed up with legislation should be involved;
- The Education Trust Fund should return to its original idea of being solely a research and innovation trust fund and be dedicated to their functions;

- A committee of experts in education (NUC) could be set up to draft a guideline that will unify educational innovation across the different institutions; it will go a long way to harmonize the conduct introduction of change and innovation in our tertiary education institutions.

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