RE-ENGINEERING EDUCATION FOR GOOD GOVERNANCW, SECURITY, CREATIVITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN COVID-19 ERA

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ABSTRACT

It is an honour and privilege to deliver the Keynote address at the Faculty of Education National Conference, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The conference theme: *Re-engineering education for good governance, security, creativity and environmental protection in covid-19 era* is apt and timely because it conveys the message of the moment. Governance and security in all sectors today are turbulent worldwide cutting across levels and cultures. The Nigerian scene is worrisome, but creativity and innovation are apparently the way forward from the skirmishes that include tackling of environmental issues for survival and advancement. It is a widely known saying that a smooth sea never made a good sailor. This conference is an effort in the right direction to address the prevalent problems. I appreciate the organizers, especially the Dean whom I have known for decades as an amiable personality and a scholar of excellence. The keynote is focused on implications of the conference theme for higher education and specifically the university system.

Keywords: Re-Engineering, Education Governance, Security, Creativity and Covid-19 Era

Introduction

Existing gaps between Nigerian universities and their world counterparts are attributable to the operational difference, which is redeemable through conscious streamlining of governance issues. University governance incorporates human resources/personnel management, funding, socio-cultural issues, quality assurance, internationalization, knowledge production, professional development, academic and scientific planning. In the context of Covid19 pandemic, health issues have taken the frontline with lockdowns, closures, social distancing, remote teaching, blended learning, researches on required vaccine/curative measures, personal protective equipment, and protection of the physical environment with climate change among others are factors that are to contend with in today's university operational environment. Being a public concern, education at the university level in Nigeria is the responsibility of government to ensure its provision to society either through public and or private sectors, while ensuring its regulation. It is the right of students to receive university education and services auxiliary to the social responsibility and accountability of institutions in society, including safety and security.

Governance

The concept of governance is a process of decision-making and series of processes in which such decisions are implemented or not implemented. UNDP provides a definition of good governance as a synergistic and constructive relationship between the state, private, and public sectors adding that the characteristics of good governance are namely: Participation, Rule of Law, Transparency, Responsiveness, Consensus Orientation, Equity, Effectiveness and Efficiency, Accountability, and Strategic Vision (LAN dan BPKP, 2000). The idea of good governance is a derivative of the concept of governance by best-practice and it is currently the mainstream in the administration and management of public corporations, which includes the university. Whether one is dealing with cognitive matters such as level of factual information about politics or conceptual sophistication in its assessment; or such motivational matters as degree of attention paid to politics and emotional involvement in political affairs; or questions of actual behavior, such as engagement in any of a variety of political activities from party work to vote turnout itself: education is the universal solvent, and the relationship is always in the same direction. The higher the education, the greater the 'good' values of governance. The educated citizen is attentive, knowledgeable, and participatory and the uneducated citizen is not.

University is an economic concept within the education industry, to which the concepts of good corporate governance constructively apply. It is the repository of human resources essentially cultivated to grow national economies in diverse classifications. The notion of participation mentioned in corporate governance process, implies providing for autonomy of association and expression/sharing of ideas in universities, while the rule of law stands for comprehensive enforcement of regulations, protection of human rights and use of independent judiciary. To this effect, transparency in university governance characterizes all decision-making and implementation in a manner that allows open access to information by those influenced by such decisions. It facilitates responsiveness by ensuring that universities serve stakeholders accordingly within a time frame and achieving consensus from diverse interests is premium, because it promotes equity and inclusiveness to serve all involved. The whole process effectively meets desirable corporate goals through efficient utilization of available resources, for which management is accountable, in the course of accomplishing institutional strategic plans (Sabandar, Tawe, Musa, 2017).

The regulatory framework under which Universities in Nigeria operate is the National Universities Commission (NUC), founded in 1962 as an advisory agency to the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN); on financial needs and development of university education in Nigeria (Adeoti, 2015;). The Nigerian university system may be traced to 1948 (71 years ago) with the University College, Ibadan, which has become the University of Ibadan, Ibadan and has given birth to over 170 public and private universities in Nigeria.

Collaboration and competition are major features of Nigerian universities in the context of fast paced globalization. They contribute to the global production and delivery of knowledge, while participating in global educational advancement and research networks as centers of worldwide networks of knowledge in various perspectives. Sustainability has also become an integral part of Nigerian university governance structure, policy making, curricula innovations and programmes operation, in the effort to consistently provide quality education. To achieve sustainable reforms and transformation in the system, it fosters responsiveness to issues of access, innovative teaching/learning, efficient and effective financing, and good organization/governance. The reforms principle stem from an anticipation of significant progress through careful reworking of the university education process and management, guided by Nigeria higher education philosophy as contained in the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2013) to:

i. Contribute to national development through high-level relevant manpower training;
ii. Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of society;
iii. Develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments;
iv. Acquire physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;
v. Promote and encourage scholarship and community services;
vi. Forge and cement national unity; and
vii. Promote national and international understandings.

In view of the new normal and phenomenal creativity ensuing from the Covid19 fallouts, the following governance reform related questions were posed by Kpolovie and Lale (2017) to seek answers that could help Nigeria university system chart a progressive way forward:

i. On groundbreaking research, how many universities in Nigeria have positioned lecturers for academic productivity of h-index up to 100? (h-index of 100 means that 100 publications received 100 citations each)
ii. How many universities in Nigeria have organized to successfully developed street running water wash-hand equipment to facilitate Covid-19 protocol?
iii. How many Nigerian universities have organized to engineer modular refineries, for raising internally generated revenue (IGR) to support the national economy, currently driven by crude-oil?
iv. How many Nigerian universities have organized to generate at least 100 million dollars annually from its collaboration with global others?

Answers to the above questions may not be readily available partly because of policy issues, resource and administrative bottlenecks, which hinder universities from functioning to expectations demanded by them. The future of higher education in Nigeria depends on the practices of the system today and the expectations are interconnected with the level of

its adaptation to the ever-changing technological, socio-economic, political and digital global practices (Lemoine, Yates & Richardson, 2015). These expectations and standards are subject to in-depth situational analysis and informed decision-making in all sectors of the system. Global evolution and advancement of new technologies, new political landscapes, novel problems (Covid-19 pandemic), new priorities, novel opportunities, emerging and improving professional standards are outcomes of continuously expanding higher education; which constitutes requirements for effective placement of trained personnel and utilization of the products.Implementation related factors such as methodology; personnel, instructional strategies, communications technology, teaching styles and equipment may be more responsible for low skill level of the average product of Nigerian university education system, than curriculum related factors. Agbonna, Ajidagba, Olumomi and Okafor (2011) listed these factors as including but not limited to short duration of training, inadequate exposure to job training schemes (Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES), Industrial Training and Practice.

Creativity

To serve our purpose, creativity is discoursed here in terms of transition from traditional face-to-face approach to remote teaching and learning to address covid-19 exigencies and in terms of promoting cosmopolitanism in knowledge production/publications within the university system.

a) Transition to remote teaching and learning

The world is currently experiencing the pandemic of a novel infectious disease called coronavirus disease, otherwise known as COVID-19. While some governments have temporarily instructed the use of public television stations for teaching primary and secondary schools, some tertiary institutions have adopted virtual teaching platforms to reach out to their students The incompatibility of Covid-19 with regular human physical contact has brought about a paradigm shift in the traditional practices, processes and concepts of brick and mortar to online virtual learning setting in many nations of the world(UNESCO, 2020). Virtual form of learning has advanced as a major means of education in the developed world even before the pandemic (Kyari, 2018). This form of learning is adjudged to be better than the usual face-to-face interaction because it has the advantage of reaching many learners, who are not limited by space and time. The virtual learning process entails the use of three broad categories of technological tools: Real-time social media channels such as WhatsApp, Telegram, YouTube, Facebook; Asynchronous learning processes that involve the use of a Discussion board and Digital library; Video conferencing tools such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Google Hangout, WebEx, Skype, Google Meet, among others. The increase in the repositioning of technology in learning and teaching processes has led to an increase in investments in educational technology. For instance, in 2019, investments in education technology companies increased by 18.66 USD

billion in some parts of the globe, implying that to underscore the shift to intense utilization of technology deployment in learning and teaching processes, the sum of investments to the educational technology companies in 2018 - 2019 far outstrip such investment for the period between 1998 and 2017 (MarketInsider, 2019).

Although physical distancing, including quarantines, isolation and even lockdown as well as contact tracing seems to be most effective in limiting the further spread of community transmission of COVID-19, many African countries do not have the resources to prepare themselves for the crisis. Therefore, the response rate to virtual teaching and learning process as an alternative in this pandemic time would depend on the level of a nation's preparedness for the emergencies. The United Nations asserted in 2019 that more than half of the schools in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) including Nigeria have no access to the internet and computers facilities and Nigeria was ranked 62nd position among nations in terms of institutional e-learning readiness (Kyari, 2018). This, points to the inadequacy of infrastructures and shortage of ICT facilities as compared to the teeming number of students in the universities (Olibie, 2014). Similarly, the new virtual learning is disproportionately easier for staff and students of private institutions as compared to those in public schools added to the fact that many lecturers saddled with the responsibility of teaching the students are not themselves ICT compliant because most of them have no exposure to such training (Anene, 2014; Olugbeko, 2020;Obiakor and Adeniran and Izu, 2013).A comparative study of the effectiveness of face-to-face and online teaching and learning in higher education using Distance Learning as a case study, suggests a blend of the two models in the learning and teaching processes. The study also indicated that lecturers trained for face-to-face teaching expected to be retrained for online teaching. Others studies echoed the importance of further training to increase the competencies of the lecturers in teaching courses online adding that most online teachers and faculty have not been adequately sensitized for the task, which requires supply of laptops and data bundle to both staff and students.

 In the final analysis, there is no special setting for the training of online teachers because the same virtual setting trains both students and lecturers. (Crawford-Ferre&Wiest, 2012; Aborode, 2020; Ananga and Biney,2017;Gray, 2004). Formatting may be difficult for online learners,but in terms of attitude, retention outcomes and achievement, there is no significant difference between traditional learners and online learners(Solimeno, 2008).With the stop-gap solutions to continuing teaching and learning, the quality of learning is heavily dependent on the level and quality of digital access. Only60% of the globe's population is online. While virtual classes on personal tablets may be the norm in some parts, many students in less developed economies rely on lessons and assignments sent via WhatsApp or email and these are not usually adopted. It means that the digital divide may continue to widen because the less affluent and digitally savvy individual

families are, the further many wards are left behind. When classes transition online, these learners lose out because of the cost of digital devices and data plans.

b) Promoting internet presence in knowledge production and publication

With the present turn to online academic activities, current global practice in knowledge production and publication is the h-index, which was proposed by Hirsch (2005) and published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*. The h index is a quantitative metric based on analysis of publication data using publications and citations to provide an estimate of the importance, significance, and broad impact of an author's cumulative research contributions. It is calculated as number of papers (h) that have received at least *h* citations. An *h* index of 10 means that among all publications by one author, 10 of those publications have received at least 10 citations each. Hirsch argues that the *h* index is preferable to other single-number criteria, such as the total number of papers, the total number of citations and citations per paper.

For an author with a relatively low *h*, but has a few seminar papers with high citation counts, the *h* index will not fully reflect that author's accomplishments. Hirsch stressed that the full career publications for an author ought to be used for the *h* index. This measure of academic impact has garnered widespread interest since its introduction in 2005, as well as proposals for other indices based on analyses of publication data such as the *g* index, *h (2)* index, *m* quotient, *r* index, to name a few. Several commonly used databases, such as Elsevier's *Scopus*, Clarivate Analytics' *Web of Science*, and Google Scholar provide h index values for authors. h index of 20 after 20 years of scientific activity characterizes a successful authorship, while h index of 40 after 20 years of scientific research, characterizes outstanding authorship. In the midst of these assessment criteria, growing research and development (R & D) capacity in Nigeria and many African countries is significant in the of search for solutions to the novel Covid19 pandemic. The need to intensify synergy between governments and universities in the continent to transform research development pace for greater achievements is evident. A major challenge of university knowledge production and research publication system is the dominance of particular epistemological traditions that render other ideas invisible or swallowed-up. Some authorities assume that having originated in a particular socio-cultural context, a finding, discovery or best practice may not address problems of global scale.

Tabulawa (2003) explains that an ideological tool could be more effective in one socio-cultural setting than others. He added that the learner-centred pedagogy is universally accepted to produce individuals whose worldviews would be compatible with neoliberal democracy and free-market economic systems and its efficacy is understood in cognitive/educational terms. But there are societies where the principles of learner-centred

pedagogy challenge learning traditions because respect for teachers and elders are an enabling factor in such societies for students' meaningful education. It follows that learner-centred pedagogy, which is an established best practice in most parts of the world could be mixed up in the processes and prospects of epistemicide, which refers to the destruction of existing knowledge. Many curriculum scholars argue that Western scholars control the projects of knowledge production and dissemination in most fields and oppose the creation of global spaces where scholars from all over the world can trust each other and contribute to intercultural and transnational knowledge projects. Rather than accepting the ensuing oppressor vs oppressed practice, we could practice *cosmopolitanism* in order to disrupt single-story narrative that promotes epistemicide. Cosmopolitanism holds that our political and moral existence should play out on a world stage and that each of us belongs to a community of people that transcends the particularities of local affiliation (Kymlicka& Walker, 2012).

Security
Development issues in Nigeria are not separable from the security challenges. Within the Covic-19 situation, security is the ability to stay safe and operate normally in the context of safety. Security can only be achieved when education is made a priority by states and their institutions. Education is an asset to fight poverty, inequality, insecurity, and disease in order to ensure a well-educated, tolerant, and peaceful nation. Given the estimated 40-60 million unemployed youths, it is apparent that an upheaval is imminent if nothing is done to address threats that manifest as youth unemployment, terrorist activities in learning institutions, and other noticeable displays in the Nigerian society that depart from acceptable standards. Security is the absence of threats to acquired values and the absence of fear that such values will be attacked. It is thus the ability of a state to protect its internal values from violence, financial pressures, religious conflicts and crimes (Dambazu, 2014 & Igbo, 2015). It follows that the security of a people is their ability to preserve core values of society, the territorial integrity and physical well-being of citizens. The two major sides to it are: Freedom from want and freedom from fear (UNDP, 1994). These include economic, food, health, environment, personal, community and political security. In its broad sense, security requires the cooperation and participation of all stakeholders as well as the commitment of all citizens and institutions. On the other hand, insecurityis an unsafe feeling, a state of mind characterized by self- doubt and vulnerability. It is a feeling of being a target for hurt or harm. It is plain fear and lack of safety in the immediate physical, financial and emotional environment of people (Nnaemeka, Chukwuemeka ,Tochukwu, Chiamaka, 2015).Given the foregoing definition of security in Nigeria it is pertinent to briefly discuss the concept in association with multicultural education and wider access to education.
Multicultural education is based on the idea that students can obtain knowledge and associated values from being exposed to different cultural messages, ideals, attitudes,

and values; as evidenced and communicated by participation in interpersonal relationships (Goo, 2018). The aim of these educational programs is to be more inclusive towards students coming from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds (Hadjisoteriou, 2015). In educational settings, multicultural education has been effective in resolving barriers stemming from the environment such as poverty and crime. Through this process the curriculum contents incorporates contents that hinder the ruin of morality, maintain, restore, and revive cultural values of the Nigerian society and world view. Emphasis is on communication skills, inter-cultural relations, patriotism, and affective components of indigenous education on character building for enhanced sense of social responsibility and security. Cognitive and affective components of attitudes and values could be facilitated by formal and non-formal processes to inculcate the right values in learners/students to think of their reference system with openness to constantly evolving changes and innovations in society. This cultivates the willingness to change perspectives with sensitivity to social, political, economic, and technological variations beyond physical national/state boundaries. Other aspects include being conscious of the times, engaging dynamically with new trends of development and cooperating with the views of other people that were previously perceived as negative (Durste, Fenner, Hinzen, 2004).

Apart from bringing into effect the national goal that urges us to build a land full of bright opportunities for every Nigerian citizen, all Nigerians have equal right to educational opportunities. All trends towards globalization ought to be channeled to more humane paths of development beyond mere expansion and duplication educational delivery methods. In the face of poverty, violence, homelessness, HIVAIDS added to covid-19 pandemic; it obvious that the present educational provisions are deficient in accommodating new complexities and social conditions in a world that is virtually drawing closer together at a fast pace (Seitz, 2001). There are over 10 million out of school children in Nigeria (GDR, 2013), the youth and adult population has only 65% male literacy and 49% female literacy.

Table 1: Summary of literacy level in Nigeria by geopolitical zones in 2012 (NMEC, 2014).

Zone	Male	Female	Total	Literate	Illiterate	% literate	% Illiterate	Total
South-South	12,499,055	12,069,632	24,568,687	17,503,260	7,065,427	71	29	100
South-East	9,451,250	9,481,065	18,932,315	14,467,278	4,465,037	76	24	100
South- West	16,498,932	15,984,378	32,483,310	26,375,402	6,107,908	81	19	100
North-West	21,339,307	20,487,123	41,826,430	20,990,176	20,836,254	50	50	100
North-East	11,451,287	10,818,833	22,270,120	8,842,654	13,427,466	40	60	100
North-Central	12,242,517	11,971,137	24,213,654	12,902,019	11,311,635	53	47	100
National	83,482,348	80,812,168	164,294,516	101,080,789	63,213,727	62	38	100

It is possible to link the security issues bedeviling Nigeria to this malady because unfulfilled needs of people produce frustration and encourage aggressive behavior stemming from failed expectations, unjust denials, unjust punishment and mistreatment. Such is exhibited as anger, frustration, aggressive behavior and a desire to seek revenge against persons or institutions responsible for the frustration. With the covid-19 situation, adopting electronic based techniques is imperative to address admission, carrying capacity, funding and personnel issues. The situation recorded in the following bar chat has not changed and workplace human capacity building to match the job demands of the times cannot also be overemphasized. As a panacea to these challenges, the Open Distance Learning (ODL) is uniquely equivalent to the regular university experience in terms of relevance in easing the rising difficulties posed by the surge in demand for education in Nigeria and other developing countries of the world. ODL is a veritable tool for attaining the mandate of Education for All (EFA) if considerable attention is paid to its delivery in Nigeria.

ATLAS/Data: *National Bureau of Statistics. JAMB.*

With an alarming more than 60% illiteracy in some northern parts and a troublesome 19% in some southern parts (Table 1), there is still much left to be desired given a national average illiteracy level of 38%. The steady rise in level of unemployment and poverty in Nigeria has taken an unacceptable dimension with over 20 million employable Nigerian unemployed youths (Okonjo–Iweala, 2014; Igbo, 2016).States in the Southern part of the country recorded the highest unemployment rates in the country and this is despite being some of the richest states in the country in terms of oil revenues and internally generated funds.
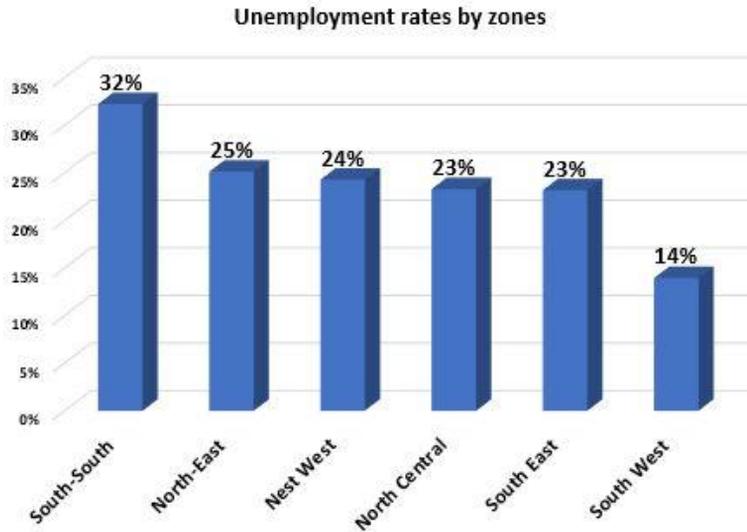
Figure 2. Source: Adesoji (2019). *Unemployment rates in Nigeria by zones.* **The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).**

Environmental issues

COVID-19 has the impact of a pandemic, but another major challenge is climate change. We need a change of attitude and behavior towards climate change and environment. Addressing climate change requires action at all levels of society, including individuals, business organizations, local, state and national governments and international bodies. It cannot be addressed by only a few individuals with privileged access to information, but it rather requires transfer of knowledge both intellectually and affectively to decision-makers and their constituents at all levels. Education is key in the process because, in the case of climate change, learning from experience is learning too late. The delay between decisions that cause climate change and their full societal impact can range from decades to millennia. As a result of this, learning from education rather than experience is essential to avoid those impacts. Education is the most powerful element in preparing societies for the global challenges that climate change brings. It plays a central role in several processes that can accelerate social change and climate change alleviation. Effective climate change education increases the number of informed and engaged citizens in building social will and pressure to shape policy toward building a workforce for a low-carbon economy. Indeed, several climate change education efforts to date have delivered gains in climate and energy knowledge and motivation.

All societies are facing challenges in coordinating initiatives across audiences and managing resources to make effective investments at a scale that is commensurate with the climate change challenges. These challenges are deepened by issues that include

deforestation, industrial pollution and pollution from transportation of all sorts, intense heat and greenhouse emissions. Education promotes informed decision-making at all levels of society to address impact of these on classroom activities of teachers and learners alongside survival issues that may be related to food and meat processing (open grazing instead of ranching, mixed cropping, environmental greening, community farming of organic food, water supply, clothing) among others.

Conclusion

Education is the instrument per excellence for mitigating the issues that form the theme of this conference namely: governance, creativity, security, and environmental protection. Innovative strategies are the effective means of accomplishing the sustainable target in the face of Covid-19 realities coupled with climate change challenges.

Recommendations

Intensified implementation of national policies on the following laudable programmes and schemes: Civic Education, Multicultural Education, Literacy Education, ICT Compliance, Environmental Education and Covid-19 Protocols.

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