STRAINS AND STRESSES IN THE NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM: SUSTAINABLE QUALITY ASSURANCE PROSPECTS BY PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

By

Prof. N.O. ADEDIPE
Pro-Chancellor
Fountain University,
Osogbo, Nigeria
STRAINS AND STRESSES IN THE NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM: SUSTAINABLE QUALITY ASSURANCE PROSPECTS BY PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

BY

PROF. N.O. ADEDIPE,
PRO-CHANCELLOR,
FOUNTAIN UNIVERSITY,
OSOGBO, NIGERIA

Preamble

Protocol

In the name of Almighty Allah the Beneficent, the Merciful, I seek protection from the accursed devil, as I set out to deliver this Convocation Lecture.

Sometime mid-July 2013, a long-standing friend and Dean of Social Sciences in this University, Professor Bello-Imam, gave me a phone call. I immediately suspected, and it was fleetingly confirmed, that it was all about an invitation to deliver a Convocation Lecture. This resulted from the fact that I was unable to accept the invitation for the preceding year due to clash of engagements. Mindful of a chance meeting with the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Abdul Kareem at the Port Harcourt Airport following my Keynote Address on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Committee of Deans of Postgraduate Schools in Nigerian Universities, at which the issue was tangentially raised on the airplane, there was no way, in deference to the two personalities, that I could decline the invitation. It thereby necessitated a reschedule of my engagements for the specified date. The acceptance was also occasioned by my position as Pro-Chancellor of a sister Islamic faith-based University, Fountain University of the Nasrul-Lahi-L-Fathi Society of Nigeria (NASFAT). This was also in view of the fact that I similarly delivered the third Convocation Lecture of the third leg tripod of another sister University, the Crescent University Abeokuta of the Islamic Movement for Africa (IMA). To
push the instant invitation acceptance further, it was done to honour both Founders, the one being the learned Judge (Prince) Bola Ajibola of Crescent University; and on the current occasion, the other being Alhaji (Chief) Abdul Rahman Oladimeji, a well recognised industrialist; both of whom are nobly honoured for their courage and commitment to the cause of the Islamic faith on the one hand, and the dedication to education, per excellence, on the other hand; in fact, as a covenant with Almighty Allah. May Allah reward them abundantly for this singular deed of grace and honour. Ameen.

In formally conveying the invitation, the Registrar and Secretary to Council, Alhaja (Chief) R.M. Oladimeji, suggested the title “Revamping Nigeria Educationally and Morally: The Role of Private Universities”. For reasons not too far-fetched, and as a reflection of the matters of the moment, I craved the indulgence of the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the Governing Council, our revered elder statesman, a gentleman of all seasons, Alhaji (Dr.) Ibrahim Ahmadu Coomassie, GCON, to amend the title to read “STRAINS AND STRESSES IN THE NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM: SUSTAINABLE QUALITY ASSURANCE PROSPECTS BY PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES”.

Consequent on these preliminary statements, it is now my distinct pleasure to recognize the Visitor to the Federal Universities, President, Commandant-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, GCON; the Honourable Minister of Education, Professor Ruqayyyatu Ahmed Rufa’I, OON; the Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission (NUC), Professor Julius A. Okojie, OON; Founder/Chancellor, Alhaji Rahman Oladimeji; Pro-Chancellor, Alhaji (Dr.) Ahmadu Ibrahim Coomassie, GCON; the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Abdul Kareem; Principal Officers of Al-Hikmah University; Visiting Principal Officers of other Universities, Gentlemen of the media, among others.
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

We are here gathered to celebrate the third Convocation of this university which is already making its mark among Nigerian Universities only eight years after its establishment in 2005. The proprietorship is a partnership of the Abdul-Raheem Oladimeji Islamic Foundation (AROIF) and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY). A good testimony to the viable partnership lies in the University’s steady growth in student intake to the current tune of over 4,000, the more than modest physical development of infrastructural facilities and a crop of devoted academic staff in spite of stiff national competition.

While wishing Al-Hikmah continuing growth and development in its quest to meet the dictates of its motto, that is Learning for Wisdom and Morality, we should commend it for its strife to achieve the provisions of its vision statement, which is, To serve as a fore-runner in the provision of quality University Education of international standard.

It is that vision, encapsulated in its case for social, spiritual and academic life of its students that informs my quality assurance mien, reflected in the topic of my lecture.

May I, therefore, hasten to congratulate the graduands and their parents in advance on this auspicious occasion, hoping that, as thoroughbred graduate of Al-Hikmah, they will go into the world that is no doubt full of strains and stresses, but armed with the competitive socio-spiritual armour that will make them ‘who they want to be’. Ameen.

May I now confidently say:

Al-Hikmah University, here I come.

In so coming, my lecture will be guided by eight main topics, as hereunder:

2. Global Overview of the Origin, Establishment and Roles of Universities
3. Evolution and Establishment Profile of Nigerian Universities: Federal, State and Private
5. The Myth and the Reality of the Ranking of Universities
7. Generic Reform Agenda for the Nigerian University System.
8. Summary and Conclusions.

1. **Contemporary Issues of Pains and Gains in the Nigerian University System**

   Everybody, and indeed the whole wide world, know that the singular damning problem of Nigerian Universities holistically, the emerging exception of the private universities notwithstanding, is the pains inflicted by way of the unnecessary and paradoxically necessary tussle between the Federal Government of Nigeria and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). It need be stated, *ab-initio*, that what obtains with ASUU is also relevant with the other trade unions in the Universities and even in the Polytechnics. The paralysing tussle has become so frequent and so endemic as to constitute a national embarrassment that has cast global doubt on the quality of higher education in Nigeria.

   The choice of the title of this lecture has, consequently, been hinged on the contemporary issues of trade unionism and dispute resolution with the far-reaching generic futuristic negative impacts on the required siamese synergy between education and national development. I therefore intend to utilize the opportunity of the recurring and this particular industrial action to draw attention to the need for reason, not brunt or might’
towards quality-based development of higher education on which depends the lower levels.

What seems to be in contention is clearly attitudinal. Simply, the Federal Government signed on Agreement and reneges on the implementation of that Agreement by seemingly disowning the agreement, not unmindful of the principle of continuity in governance. In other words, Government is a trustee of the citizens and owes them a respectable level of managing the “assets and liabilities” of preceding administrations. As a consequence, the Government really has no reasonable and respectable choice but to honour that agreement.

A sympathetic mechanism or strategy that Government can plead for is a rescheduling of the time-frame for implementation.

As for ASUU, and indeed the other Unions, the time has come for them to face the reality of operating with the written and inferential provisions of the University Autonomy Act of 2007, for which ASUU itself fought hard. Having been so instrumental to the enactment, it should also accept the “assets and liabilities”, the assets being the gains (for example, appointment of Vice-Chancellors and the 70 years retiring age of Professors) on the one hand; and the pains (for example the devolution of matters relating to conditions of service to each Governing Council as the employer of all staff). Another pain that the Unions will need to live with is the global practice of a good level of sacrifice in the pursuit of future accruals of benefits; in this case, the global best practices of a “strike fund” to mitigate the implementation of "no work, no pay”. That, for me, and in my international exposure elsewhere, is the path of honour in the protection of the hard-earned autonomy. I must say that the Federal Government itself has not been courageous enough to implement this practice in industrial relations basically because it has not instilled rational
allocation of financial resources, based on equity in prioritization. It is clear that, with Nigeria’s resource endowment, far more than ASUU demands can be accommodated, if the Government gets its priorities right; and given the stark findings of the Government’s Needs Assessment Exercise by a Panel consisting of a ‘rainbow coalition’ of relevant stakeholders.

The cases in point include series of irritating expose on the payment of salaries, perquisites and indefensible allowances by type and by magnitude to the principle actors in government. It would seem like government deliberately looks the other way in the face of glaring disparities in remuneration.

In the so-called democracy, that we immaturely practise, it is perhaps “nice” to embarrass those in the academic sector by publishing their comparatively paltry remuneration, but it would have been “nicer” if government causes to be in the public domain, the salaries of government political appointees, if only for the sake of transparency and accountability, pursuant to good governance as the kernel constitutional responsibility of government. To make matters even worse, the insensitive and uncoordinated so-called National Salaries and Wages Commission enthuses self-incapacitation in the discharge of its duties. Those observations have attracted honestly guiding advisory comments through newspaper editorials as well as the electronic mass media, including the social media; and, significantly, by dignified and respectable elder statesmen with hindsight facts and figures.

The situation is dangerously approaching the imagery of Chinua Achebe’s "No longer at Ease”. It should, however, not be allowed to metamorphose into his “Things Fall Apart”. It is now obvious that the first part of the title of my lecture, that of Strains and Stresses, is highlighting institutional
problems and challenges; (that is, the strains), the latter encapsulating organically festering wounds inflicted on the nation (that is, the stresses).

This modality of thinking and approach is hinged on the incontestable fact that education is the inalienable right and the driver of national development. In this regard, I invite you to listen to these short sayings of wisdom:

SOCRATES, the great philosopher:

"There is only one good, knowledge, and one evil, ignorance”.

NELSON MANDELA, the exemplary and iconic humanist:

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world"

ANONYMOUS:

"If you think that education is expensive, Dare to try ignorance”.

CHUKWUKA OKONJO, a Professor Emeritus of Econometrics and Demography, a Natural Ruler and Pro-Chancellor of the University of Ilorin, and incidentally, my secondary school Principal, has this to say:

“In the past, Nigeria’s educational system was the toast of all in the continent of Africa as it boasted one of the oldest, biggest and most comprehensive University Education System. In the 1970s, people of different nationalities moved “en-masse” to acquire qualitative education in Nigeria. But after many years, the story became Different as Nigerian Public Universities later became breeding grounds for cultists even as incessant strike actions"
and all other vices took over the schools.

It is, therefore, not for fun that the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) prescribed 26% of national budget for the Educational Sector. Nigeria has been hovering around an average of 9% when our neighbour, Ghana, which started its university system same year as Nigeria’s in 1948, is reported to have exceeded this guiding minimum. In the face of our low resource allocation to education, the allocation to the sub-sectors of Education is devoid of such prioritizations as would make for a knowledge-based nation. You will be right to situate this as "double jeopardy". If the powers-that-be of this nation, as a matter of deliberate act, will not listen to mortals, ancient and contemporary, how about listening to the words of the Scriptures, since we are reportedly and sarcastically regarded as a hyper-religious nation. The Holy Quran (Charter 39:9) says

"Can those who know be like those endowed with understanding that take heed?"

For good measure, did not the Holy Bible also state:

"My people perish for lack of knowledge“ (Hosea 4:6)

From all of these pronouncements and observations, it is evident that the time-bomb is ticking, and Nigeria needs to prevent the consequential explosion and implosion.

In a manner of speak, shall we say: those who have ears to hear, let them hear.

I now wish to proceed with the characterization of the concept of the University and the practice governing its role in, and for, the society at large.
2. Global Establishment Origin and the Functional Roles of Universities

*How, really, did Universities originate?*

**Origin of the Concept of the University**

Using anatomical or morphological imagery, it is apt to commence our understanding of the concept of the university by stating that universities do not arise *de novo*, that is, out of nowhere.

Their origin can therefore, be likened to the Departments (as nucleated cells), which grow into Faculties (as tissues) into larger bodies of Colleges/Schools/Institutes (as organs) and finally to the University (as an organism). These are illustrated by Fig. 5.

![Morpho/Anatomical Imagery Representation of the origin of the University.](image)

Although it is generally believed that universities as we know them in contemporary times, originated from Europe, the antecedental structures had been based on Arabic, Islamic and Jewish cultures as revealed by Adebayo (2005). Essentially, it was based on secluded intellectualism, hence the term *Ivory Tower*, to denote its sacrosance and, possibly, intellectual arrogance bound by the apparent cocoon of its domain. Consequently, it operated with a self-evolved and self-imposed set of rules, regulations and guidelines which,
overtime, have come to be legally formalized into the University Law (Adebayo, 2005). This is usually by acts of parliament in democratic settings and "by fiat" in autocratic governance, the latter being particularly relevant to Nigeria under military rule. In this development, with regard to the anatomical analogy, and as it were, the nucleated cells (Departments) have developed into tissues (Faculties), organs (Colleges/Schools/Institutes), terminating in the organism (the University).

The Eco-Health Approach to the role of the University.

This approach has been adapted by me as a coordinating senior author participant in the Global Millennium Eco-System Assessment of 2001-2005, involving activity visits to five continents, all aimed at sustainable development in its wide ramifications. Essentially, the University is to be governed by A (Inputs) and Z (Human Well-Being Delivery). The inputs are structured for administrative convenience into macro and micro Units of Colleges/Faculties, Departments and Divisions cut out for academic contents. Embedded as part of the academic programmes is the conduct of research which generates products which are meant for Human Well-Being for the survival and comfort of the society at large. Examples of such product/dividends
are: Knowledge for its own sake, but with synergy towards tangible products such as Healthcare, Poverty Reduction, Food Security, Affordable Shelter, Transportation, etc.

The success of the role is governed by two sets of Drivers, (Provisioning and Conditioning), that is, the Human Capital and Structural/Infrastructural/Equipment/Operating Environment, respectively. Success is also governed by the new concept of Trans-disciplinarity in contrast to the old concept of Ultra-disciplinarity. The new one infuses the dissolution of individual disciplinary expertise into a common pool of collaboration throughout the conceptualisation, through conduct and analysis, ending in a socially accepted product delivery for human well-being.

Each university therefore owes it as a duty to have positive impact on society. We can, and should ask ourselves, with persistence reminder as to what our universities have delivered to society.

The big question is: How does trans-disciplinarity complement multi-disciplinarity? Simply put, the one is a conscious diffusion of specific expertise or specialists; and, as Hirsch and Weber (2002) aptly observed, it consists of more research and teaching across the boundaries of conventional disciplines, while creating and imparting knowledge at their interception (see also Schopf and Hirsch, 2002). How does it work? The schematic diagram below briefly illustrates the complementarity for a purposeful and sustainable healthcare delivery, as an example.
**Multidisciplinarity, Interdisciplinarity and Transdisciplinarity: Model for Dedicated Research Collaboration**

This in fact, is the reason why universities are expensive to run, and run they must for the benefit of society. We shall return to this when we consider sustainable financing of universities.

3. **Evolution and Establishment Profile of Nigerian Universities: Federal, State and Private**

Despite its infancy in global companions, the Nigerian University System (NUS) has come a long way in tertiary education.

It is now composed of 129 Universities (40 Federal, 39 State, and 50 Private), with the following features:*
Student enrolment (Undergraduate): 862,601
Student enrolment (Postgraduate): 98,804
Total Student enrolment: 961,405
No. of Academic Staff: 39,780
No. of Senior Non-Teaching Staff: 37,535
No. of Junior Staff: 44,100
Total No. of Staff: 121,415

*Source, NUC, 2013.

This is against the background that the only one (University College Ibadan, UCI) that commenced in 1948, precursor to the University of Ibadan (UI) had 104 students and 50 total staff.

3.1 Federal Universities: 40

It is against the globally determined role of the University, if only partially, that of dispensation of Hussan well-being, detailed section 2 above, that the British Colonial Government set up two Commissions in 1943, one under: the Chairman of the Lord Justice Asquith, to consider the development of higher education in the colonies; and the other under the Rt. Hon. Walter Elliot to investigate the need for higher education in West Africa in particular and how that need could be met (Mellamby, 1953). Based on their 1945 Reports, the University College, Ibadan (UCI) was established in 1948 under special relations with the University of London, with Dr. Kenneth Mellamby as Principal. It was subsequently transmuted into a full-fledged University of Ibadan (UI) in 1962.

More Universities were thereafter established, prominently by the Eastern Region Government (University of Nigeria, Nsukka); the Western Region Government (University of Ife, Ile-Ife, now Obafemi Awolowo University); the Mid-West Region (University of Benin with Mid-West Institute of Technology, Benin as precursor); and the
Northern Region (Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria). The Federal Government took over these universities and constituted them into **First Generation Universities**, along with the University of Lagos, variously between 1960 and 1975. Justification was on the basis of **Felt Needs of National Development**.

**The Second Generation Universities** (Bayero, Kano, Calabar, Ilorin, Jos, Maiduguri, Usman Dan Fodiyo, Port Harcourt) were all established in 1975, as well as Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Akwa (1988), Uyo (1989) and the University of Petroleum Technology, Effurum (2007).

**Third Generation Universities**

On the basis of “States where there were none, “also tied to the need for technology-driven development, the Third Generation Universities emerged as Federal Universities of Technology (FUTs) at Abeokuta, Akure, Bauchi, Makurdi, Minna, Owerri, Yola (1983/84). Soon after their establishment, based on the ‘down-turn’ of the Nigerian Economy, Abeokuta was merged with Lagos, Makurdi with Jos, and Bauchi with ABU, 1984/85. Also, soon after, in 1987, the NUC Adedipe Panel on Demerging of merged FUTs (Adedipe et al., 1987) recommended the regain of their autonomy based on indicative multiple factors and conditionalities. Significantly, two of them (Abeokuta and Makurdi) were re-established but as Universities of Agriculture in 1988, against the panel’s recommendation and in the wisdom of the Federal Government. A third University of Agriculture at Nmudike was established in 1992, apparently to satisfy the old three-region balance. It was subsequently renamed Michael Opara University of Agriculture, Umudike by the Obasanjo regime.
**Fourth Generation Universities**

With increase in number of States to 36 plus the Federal Capital Territory Abuja, there was, most recently, 2011 – 2013, an addition of 13 new Universities. For a second time, it was on the basis of *States that had no Federal Universities*.


3.2. **State Universities: 39**

State University, Gadau, 2011; Northwest University, Kano, 2012; the Technical University, Ibadan, 2012; Jigawa State University, Kafin Hausa, 2013.

**Private Universities = 50**


African University of Science and Technology, Abuja, 2008; Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti, 2009; Godfrey Okoye University, Ugwuomu-Nike, Enugu State, 2009; Nigerian Turkish Nile University, Abuja, 2009; Oduduwa University, Ipethumodu, Osun State, 2009; Paul University, Awka, Anambra State, 2009; Rhema University, Obeama-Asa, Rivers State, 2009; Wellspring University Evbuobanosa, Edo State, 2009; Adeleke University, Ede, Osun State, 2011; Baze University, Abuja, 2011; Landmark University, Omu-Aran, Kwara State, 2011; Samuel Adegboyega University, Ogwa, Edo State, 2011; Elizade University, Ilara-Mokin, Ondo State, 2012; Evangel University, Akaeze, Ebonyi State, 2012; Gregory University, Uturu, Abia State, 2012; Mcpherson University, Seriki Sotayo, Ajebo, Ogun State, 2012; Southwestern University, Okun-Owa, Ogun State, 2012.

*Being Text of the Third Convocation Lecture of the Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Nigeria*
Comparative Characterization Features

From the Proprietorship characterization above, it is evident that more institutions access space had been created by Private Universities, than either by the Federal Government or the State Government.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Undergraduate</th>
<th>Postgraduate</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federal</td>
<td>506,048</td>
<td>78,975</td>
<td>585,023</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>293,622</td>
<td>18,928</td>
<td>312,550</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>62,621</td>
<td>881</td>
<td>63,502</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td><strong>862,291</strong></td>
<td><strong>128,784</strong></td>
<td><strong>961,075</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source, NUC 2013.

From the student enrolment table, the average number of students per University:

- Federal - **14,625,575**
- State - **8,225,000**
- Private - **1,270**


As we know and operate it, the Nigerian University System, broadly, consist of two levels of Governance, Macro-Governance and Micro-Governance.

The structure arising from the University of Ibadan as a model has become anachronistic notwithstanding some Americanized modification by the University of Nigeria (fostered by Michigan State University); the then University of Ife, now Obafemi Awolowo University (fostered by University of Wisconsin); Ahmadu Bello University (fostered by Kansas State University), all in early 1960s.

The damage was obviously done, but what lessons for damage control?
With the establishment of the National Universities Commission (NUC) in 1962, a number of positive changes were introduced in its oversight policy trust of harmonisation and orderly development some of which became overbearing and stifling to the point of each university losing its uniqueness. Perhaps if the Federal Government had not exhibited its “Greed Syndrome” in converting the regional universities (OAU, UNN, ABU, UNIBEN) to Federal Universities, we might have had the fortune of each university carving out through niches of excellence and distinct institutional grants, albeit under the regulatory watch of the NUC.

Soon after the “Federalization” of these first generation universities and the establishment of the second and third generation universities, and for the clear good health on sustainable development, the NUC coordinated the funding of the universities. This was accompanied by better accountability and transparency than what now obtains such that each university makes, as it were, direct presentation and defence of its budget.

One of the most positive policy intervention was the introduction of *Minimum Academic Standards* which was evolved by the accreditation committee of the NUC Board, of which I was Chairman. The tools formed the basis of Programme Accreditation in the NUS.

My observations thereafter led me to make documented remarks in 2001 on a number of critical issues, the prominent ones including the SWOT Analysis, which I reproduce hereunder:

*For the Nigerian University System,*

what I conceive as perhaps the greatest STRENGTH is the fact that the acquisition and application of knowledge base is fundamental to National Development.
It promotes societal and personal influence, respect, dignity and intellectual development. Consequently, the NUS must market these attributes of its strength in contrast to our “drift mentality”.

The obvious weaknesses of, and in, the system are over-centralization, lack of commitment and transparency which are a reflection of a Nigerian society at large, hyper-bureaucracy, rote modality in the learning process (itself resulting from inadequate infrastructure audiovisual equipment and consumables). This, I must say, is part of the function of the establishment of minimum standards.

But have we, the operators of the system, seriously believed in it to guide our performance and integrity?

The OPPORTUNITIES are limitless provided the system is willing to task itself sufficiently. Efforts at Strategic Planning, with emphasis on Vision, Mission and organizational structure constitute the major positive ripple effect, which can be coupled to an innovation mediated sense of ownership by all actors, buttressed with commensurate legal and organizational reforms.

The THREATS to the system are many and varied, but the major ones in my perception are low level of political and financial commitments to the course of education in general (to think that Nigeria still spends less than 10% of national budget on education is obviously a misnomer); insecurity, cultism to the point of a self-destruct syndrome, stratified and zoned admission requirements, are a disservice to true national development; while hyperactive trade unionism and unhealthy sectoral union rivalry are
gradually killing the system, to the extent of adversity affecting our credibility

My dear listeners, is this the summary not as relevant today as when made over 10 years ago? The NUS System may have grown (reflected in the numbers game), but has it developed (as is to be reflected in quality assurance)? The recent Needs Assessment Report is a fitting confirmation of my observations and myriads of those of others, personally and by group/corporate efforts.

5. The Myth and the Reality of Ranking of Universities

In the last two decades emerged the increasingly popular practice of global academic ranking of universities. It was intended to characterize the performance of universities and to provide a rational basis of choice by potential students as well as funding agencies including social and corporate support. Nationally, this had produced the unintended value judgments leading to "cut throat" competitions, thus creating a "Myth Syndrome", despite reasonable reliable database for assessment of performance, by way of overview classification on the one hand, and sectoral/disciplinary specializations on the other.

Currently, there are a good number of ranking institutions and agencies, but the following have been consistent, finding global favours of superiority:

- The Forbes World’s Best Universities which commenced eleven years ago
- The academic Ranking of World Universities by the centre for World-Class Universities at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China, which commenced ten years ago and is known of the Shanghai Ranking. It is now regarded as rallying agency for other world-
ranking agencies, convoking Biennial International Conferences on Ranking.

- The Guardian Higher Education Network Top 200 QS World University Ranking
- The Times Higher Education Ranking. Invariably, their respective rankings are based on data generated by the website of the universities, hence the analysis is exclusively *webometric*, using a set of criteria that do differ, with periodic recalibration but are reasonably indicative of the placings.

Shanghai, for example, bases its ranking on a set of objective indicators and third-party data. It adopts 6 objective indicators, including:

- the number of alumni and staff winning the Nobel Prizes and Fields Medals (10%)
- the number of Highly Cited Researchers, selected Thomson Routers (20%)
- the number of articles published the journal, Nature and Science (20%)
- the number of articles indexed in Science Citation Index (20%)
- Expanded and Social Sciences Citation Index (20%)
- Per capita performance (10%)

The differences among other ranking agencies are in the classification of the indicators and the weight attached to each. Let us examine the top 10 universities in the world according to Shanghai on the one hand and Times Higher Education on the other, for 2012/2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Shanghai</th>
<th>Times Higher Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*Being Text of the Third Convocation Lecture of the Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Nigeria*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harvard, USA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts IT, USA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge, UK</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford, USAUK</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC Berkeley,</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanford, USA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princeton, USA</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCLA, USA</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U of Tokyo, Japan</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yale, USA</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the data above, it is clear that:
- USA dominates the top 10 Universities league, with Harvard, MIT, Stanford, Berkley, Princeton and Yale, making 70%
- UK comes next with Cambridge and Oxford, making 20%
- Other countries make the bottom of 10%

The reality factor is three-fold,
- it would be a natural miracle for 20th Century established universities (including Nigeria) to belong to the upper league of up to top 500.
- The webometric basis of ranking realistically also rules out the very young universities to be part of the league table. The ranking weighs heavily on matters relating to research and publications.

The NUC Assessment and Ranking of Nigerian Journals in 2007, which I co-ordinated is instructive. Of the 211 Journals, only 4 or 1.9% met the International Category.

These new universities, for now, should concentrate on the fundamentals of strengthening the minimum academic standards through a formulation of an assessment and ranking based on the combined tools/product of both programme accreditation with which we have been familiar for over 20 years; and the newly emergent
institutional accreditation evolved in 2009 and selectively implemented for the first time in 2011.

**Lessons of Webometric Ranking**

The reality of the lessons of global ranking resides in the fact that the NUC has been able to institute overall accreditation. The output can next be used for internal ranking that will eventually enhance our graduation into the “World of Global Ranking”, using our own adopted indicators that were used for the first batch of institutional accreditation in 2012.

- Institutional Vision, Mission and Strategic Goals (30 marks)
- Institutional Resources (50 marks)
- Quality of Teaching, Learning and Research (45 marks)
- Institutional Efficiency and Effectiveness (45 marks)
- Extension, Relationship with Internal and External Constituency (8 marks)
- Transparency, Funds Generation, Financial Management and Stability (20 marks)
- General Ethos (7 marks)

The computed overall score can be effectively used to rank the universities.

Our way forward is to perfect this first step with periodic recalibration of the indicators based on experience gathered overtime.
5. Prospects of Quality Assurance by Private Universities

**Enabling Law for the Establishment of Private Universities**

Private Universities are those proprietored by other than Government, Federal or State. By the provisions of the guidelines of establishing institutions of higher educations in Nigeria, this is pursuant to the promulgation of the *Education (National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutional) (Amendment Decree (now Act) of 1993.*

The Act states in Section 19A:

‘An institution of Higher Education may be sponsored or owned by the Government of the Federation or of a State or Local Government or by any of the following, that is:

a. By a Company incorporated in Nigeria; or
b. By an individual or association of individuals who are citizens of Nigeria, and who satisfy the criteria set out in the schedule to this Act for establishment of institutions.

The NUC is mandated to handle that of the University on behalf of the Honourable Minister of Education; and by extension the Federal Government of Nigeria.

The criteria have been made tightly demanding, to the extent that, for Private Universities, the NUC is operationally assisted by its Standing Committee On Private Universities (SCOPU) that has had 6 chairmen to date (Professors Okebukola, Okojie, Adedipe, Aminu, the late Onwuliri and currently, Essien). They have, invariably been Vice-chancellors or NUC Executive Secretary.
The SCOPU processes of analysis and verification visitations are so rigorous that most applicants do not make it at all, or make it over after a good number of years. In contrast, the universities established by Government (Federal or State) are mainly backed by the promulgation of an Act, followed by, in my own opinion, not-so-rigorous a process compared with those attendant on the private universities; including the stringent requirement of 100ha of land. As detailed in Section 3 above, there are currently 129 universities (40 Federal, 39 State and 50 Private). Consequently, Private universities now constitute the largest single category, most of them faith-based with a handful of individuals as proprietors.

**Quality Assurance Expectations**

In terms of quality assurance therefore, the Private universities do possess sound foundations in terms of formal strategies of development. In this regard, since the oldest are within 14 years of establishment, their facilities are adequately modern, with fast-tracking into Information Communication Technology (ICT) driven resource base for teaching, learning and research. They also have better prospects for meeting the demands of NUC Quality Assurance tenets.

**Growth Patterns of Nigerian Universities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERIOD</th>
<th>FEDERAL</th>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>PRIVATE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-59</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-69</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-79</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-89</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-99</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lessons of Experience from Ranking Performing Private Universities of the USA

In Section 5 above, we provided information on world ranking of universities. As stated, the USA in 2013 recorded 70% of the top 10 universities. The most outstanding performances are those of Private Universities, notably Harvard, MIT, Stanford, Princeton and Yale, together constituting 50% of the world best 10.

What are the features that make these Private Universities commendably outstanding?

According to Okebukola who had a team of Vice-Chancellors to some of these global centres of excellence in 2004, the lesson of experience of the Study Tour was summarized thus:

- Lean student enrolment in tune with the principle of carrying capacity, since the biggest is not necessarily the best; indeed, small is, and can be outstandingly beautiful;
- Funding of universities should be from a wide variety of sources;
- Alumni relations is key to university development;
- Availability of state-of-the-art research facilities predisposes to the conduct of quality research with global acceptance of findings;
- World class universities, boast neat and leaner-friendly campuses;
- Decentralized employment and wage structure remuneration based on productivity;
The Boston area alone has about 50 universities;
Decentralized staff unions: no nation-wide strike;
Availability of power and water supply on 24-hour basis.
Hostel accommodation is supportive of building university culture;
Use of adjunct Professors from industry.

Nigerian Private Universities have imbibed most of these features, and have given early signs of keeping into the path of excellence in setting high standards of quality assurance in their supportive access to higher education. Since these prospects are clearly bright, the Federal Government owes it a duty to fund private universities, directly through budgetary provisions; and indirectly through the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) capital and capacity building projects. They certainly and unequivocally merit it for two main reasons:
- their products are going into the national pool of human capacity;
- for justice and equity, the proprietor, staff and parents are tax payer who contribute to the TETFUND.

For sometimes, and reinforced recently at the granting of Operating License to a new batch of approved private universities, the NUC Executive Secretary, Professor Okojie, stated thus:

*What we have going for us are the Private Universities. I have no apologies to say this; the future of university education in Nigeria lies with the private universities.*

Professor Okojie should, and does know a product of Yale, similar to the Ojukwu imagery of "I have been involved"
We are aware that the NUC is making efforts in this direction. The Federal Government, should accentuate its acceptance of funding private universities.

It is instructive that State Universities, of which the Federal Government is not Proprietor, have been brought in as beneficiaries of TETFUND. It must therefore, justifiably also bring in the Private Universities. They are, as Local Governments, increasingly closest to the communities, whose human well-being, has been emphasized as the primary role of the universities, both conceptually and by best global practices.

7. Generic Reform Agenda for the Nigerian University System

It is on record that for over 15 years, intensified in the last 9 years, I have been educating critical reforms for the good health of the Nigerian University System. Given a high number frequency and depth of perturbations in Nigerian University Education, I hereby consolidate my suggestions as hereunder sketched, having been involved at various levels of the system:

7.1. The Matter of VISITOR

In order not to overburden/encumber the Head of the Government (Federal and State) as Visitor and Proprietor, the concept of Visitor should form part of the function of the Chancellor. This was the recommendation of the Longe Report of 1991.

7.2. Composition of Senate

In the NUS, almost invariably, the Senate composition is constituted as VC (Chairman), DVC(s), the University Librarian, Provosts, Deans, HODs, All Professors and a stipulated percentage of professorial constituents
representing Congregation. In my well considered opinion, based on globally exposure elsewhere, the composition has made Senate too large and functionally unwieldy to the point of declining productivity, minimal efficiency and cost effectiveness in decision-making. This is also characterized in low attendance by Professors, thereby resulting in low quality of debate and real output due to the preponderance of the so-called Congregation representatives, notwithstanding reasonable impact by a few of the latter. This “All Professor Syndrome” must be clinically abrogated.

In 1991, the University of Agriculture Abeokuta, of which I was Pioneer VC for two terms of eight years, blazed the trail in formulating an innovative, lean and thoroughly professionalized Senate, which did not give All Professors automatic membership, while also structuring Colleges and Congregation representatives.

Essentially, in addition to the \textit{ex-officio} members listed above, Colleges were represented by 2 elected members, while Congregation elected a fixed compact number of representatives, ensuring non-professorial bifurcation; contradistinction to the old system of the latter increasing with increase in the number of professors. A good number of private universities have adopted this system.

7.3. \textbf{Collegiate System and Structure}

Most Universities have not adopted the Collegiate Structure as recommended by the NUC. The point of confusion and departure is a 2-tier rather than a 3-tier Collegiate Structure demanded by Council but eliminating the interviewing Faculty Component. This would cut down on bureaucracy, overstaffing, programme overlaps and the attendant overhead costs. It also makes for joint ownership and maintenance of expensive equipment and associated teaching and infrastructural facilities.
It also promotes reasonable autonomy, thus off-loading the encumbering centralized management of the University.

7.4. **Appointment of Academic Officers of Colleges**

Concomitant with, and soon after the establishment of the first Generation Universities listed in Section 3 above, the Deans have invariably been elected while the HODs were, and are, being appointed by the VC, for a split term of 4 years.

It has therefore, become obvious that this mode is essentially *a popularity contest* which has, increasingly degenerated into *patronizing political jobbery and sycophancy*, with the attendant crises bedevilling the system, thus breeding, in a good number of cases, *academic leadership mediocrity*, and oftentimes leading to indiscipline and management incapacitation.

It is my belief that for the Provost and/or Dean, an appointment modality for 4 years (if possible renewable for another and final term of 4 years) with external participation, will ensure the capture of truly distinguished, competent and respectable academic leadership that is required to meet the envisaged vision and challenges, while also winning fairly sustainable interactions with professional associations and captains of industries/commerce, and well-positioned/connected Alumni, to the funding support benefit of the University, as part of key challenges of University Autonomy.

The benefit of such a system as sketched in the following diagram:
7.5. Structural Reforms in Academic Ranks

Currently in the NUS, there are seven academic ranks (Graduate Assistant) Asst. Lecturer, Lecturer II, Lecturer I, Senior Lecturer, Reader/Associate Professor, Professor. Although it is inherited from the colonial British System, we ought to have moved forward with innovative climes, particularly the USA, from which we borrowed the *course system*. The present structure does not make for concrete contributions to teaching, learning, public/extension service; and tends to make research output rather sketchy and peripheral, in contradistinction to goal-oriented and consistent depth of research publishable in truly international journals, as discussed in Section 5 above in relation to the attainment and retention of world-class status, glibly included in vision/mission statements of our universities. Moreover, the current multi-rank structure creates a burden on the governance and managements through multiples of frequent promotion exercises and the attendant human and material resource development; particularly in the prevailing atmosphere of financial constraints rocking the NUS.

*Being Text of the Third Convocation Lecture of the Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Nigeria*
Consequently, I suggest the adoption of a 3-rank structure of Lecturer, Senior Lecturer and Professor to make settled and seasoned time-tested contributions to scholarship.

7.6. **Non-Academic/Non-Teaching Support Staff**
This section has been widely recognised as “overblown” through many reports in the last 20 years. Of course, it’s expansive and uncontrolled structure and member can no longer be defended in this age of ICT as management, driver and tool.

As for the Academic, there is the need for strategic rationalisation of ranks.

7.7. **The Power of Governing Council as Employer**
As stated above, the University Autonomy Act has rightly instituted the Governing Council as the employer of staff in each university.

As is often the case, the Governments, through its meddlesome bureaucracy, has bitten more than it can chew by involving itself in matters that belong to the purview of Council as employer. Now that it has suddenly woken up as a result of the current/recent ASUU Industrial Action, it will have the courage to let the each Council be, in matters of appointments, promotions, discipline, salaries and wages. Again, as stated in some Sections above, there is nowhere in the progressive world, particularly in the University Systems, where salaries and conditions of service are nationally as well as uniformly prescribed.

My dear Colleagues, what sense does it make for salaries of workers in, say, Lagos, Ibadan, Port-Harcourt, Kaduna, Kano, Enugu, Benin cities to be
equal to those in the far-flung obscure and rural areas? Salaries and condition of service are a function of localized cost-of-living, mediated and moderated by productivity and personal achievements of staff and their contribution to the development of the University. In this regard, and as discussed above, there is no way we can have peace in the NUS as long as there are National Staff Unions. Unions must be decentralized, with Governing Council assuming and retaining its statutory functions.

7.8. **The Role of the Postgraduate Schools in Capacity Building for the NUS AND THE Nigerian Economy**

In the mid-60s, UI produced its first PhD then Miss Saidat Anibaba, now Prof. (Mrs.) Saidat Mabadeje who recently retired from the University of Lagos, Department of Biological Sciences. Since then, and as would be expected, UI tops the list of higher degree products, particularly at the PhD level. As at 2007 on the occasion of 60th Anniversary, UI produced 1,894 PhDs, the highest being 311 in 2003, with an all-time average of 200. Significantly, other first Generation Universities (ABU, UNN, OAU, UNILAG and UNIBEN), in combination produced the same number.

NUC has, rightly, pronounced PhD as the minimum qualification for University lecturers. There is quality-damage given that only 43% of lecturers possess PhD in the Federal/State Universities; much worse in Private Universities.

Consequently, shortage in the NUS first Generation Universities must now be the vanguard of rapid production of PhDs, and should be funded as such.
UI is already on its way to being a PG University, given its current 8,000 PGs and 12,000 UGs, that is a 40% PG University, which should rise to 60% as target in the next few years. The minimum Academic Standards for PG studies was produced in 2011. I have given details of the needed guidelines for a return to high quality PG programme regulation, in my 2012 Keynote Address on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the Committee of Deans of Postgraduate Schools in Nigerian Universities.

7.9. The Tuition Fee Payment Issue as Determinant to the Expansion of Access to Quality Assured University Education

With the average student enrolment per Federal University being about 15,000; State University 8,000; and Private University 1,000; as detailed above, it is clear that potential access lies in the Private Universities since the Federal and State Universities have invariably exceeded their carrying capacities.

For example, in the on-going 2013/14 admissions exercise, UI was allocated a quota of 6,000; but, wisely, has pegged admission to 3,000.

Ironically, since the Private Universities charge tuition fees between N300,000 and N1,500,000, the potential access enhancement is “actually unattainable” due to the high fees. It is, therefore, logical for the Federal Government to make some “grant funding” to Private Universities to enable them expand access, or more appropriately, to fill the gaps. Increasing student enrolment in the Federal, and to some extent, State Universities, is counter-productive since this would compromise the carrying capacity component of quality assurance.
Also, the Federal Government must now face the reality of the need for reasonable tuition fees, as practised by State Universities. The State Universities must now differentiate fees charged between “in-state” and “out-state” students, again, as practiced in USA and higher fees charged from foreign students in the UK.

7.10. **The Matter of “Centres of Excellence”**

The matter of Centres of Excellence remains unclear despite the existence of Nigerian Universities for 65 years. This is despite two major doses of development assistance to the ailing and haemoragening NUS, by the World Bank, the one in the 1990s, and the more recent, the STEP-B Project of 2006-2013.

In the latter, some Universities were only nominated and described as Centre of Excellence without a credible Impact Assessment. It is about time that such vital issues are addressed, and to hopefully lead to “earned and credible Centres of Excellence”, which in other climes, actually evolve from past records of achievement of the universities; hence, world ranking by specialisation in programmes and purposeful research.

In this quest, each University should, based on its past record of achievements and current Strategic Plans, concentrating on a reasonable narrow band of branded programmes, as earlier observed for world ranking.

The current effort of the NUC in formulating policies for African Centres of Excellence Project is a step in the right direction and should be pursued vigorously, with formal verification and the use of both programme and institutional accreditation.
7.11. **The Need for Institutionalised Nomenclature for the Committee of Pro-Chancellors and the Committee of Vice-Chancellors**

As a matter of global convention, the two vital committees (for Governance and for Management) should assume the names of Association of Governing Councils of Nigerian Universities, and the Association of Nigerian Universities respectively. The current names give the impression of personal/ex-officio rather than corporate/institutional representation. This will be in consonance with other such organisation elsewhere, for example, the Commonwealth Association of Universities and the African Association of Universities, among others.

8. **Summary and Conclusion**

In this Convocation Lecture, I have outlined and analysed the Strains and Stresses bedevilling the Nigerian University System.

In so doing, I have traced the origins of the concept of University, and the evolution of global ranking of Universities. I have also provided a historical sketch of the establishment and growth of Nigerian Universities from 1 in 1948 to 129 in 2013.

I have consequently prescribed the need for a Reform Agenda in the NUS in areas of Governance and Management, Quality Assurance in Programme and Institutional Accreditation towards global ranking; the realities of University; and rapid production of PhDs; all aimed at a globally competitive Nigerian University System.

I have come to the conclusion that the future of quality-assured access expansion lies mainly in the Private Universities, this being so, the Federal Government needs to fund the private universities.
9. **Acknowledgement and Appreciation.**

I do acknowledge the strides made by Al-Hikmah University in the slippery and spikey terrain of providing University education with strong value content, while wishing it continued growth and development.

I thank the University for the honour of this third Convocation Lecture, while thanking you all for your attention.

9. **KEY REFERENCES**


**Adedipe, N.O. 1988** Thought on Academic Programmes and Research in Nigerian Universities of

Adedipe, N.O. 1995


Adedipe, N.O. 1997


Adedipe, N.O. 2005


Adedipe, N.O. 2005


Adedipe, N.O. 2006


Adedipe, N.O. 2006

Some Fact Sheets on NUC recent Initiatives and Programmes towards Quality Assurance in the Nigerian University System. Nigerian
Diaspora Day, Nigerian National Volunteer Service, Abuja


*Being Text of the Third Convocation Lecture of the Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Nigeria*
**Amodu, J.A. 2013**  
Private Universities: The Journey So Far.  


**Aminu, J. 1986.**  

**Gaudet, G.L, M.P. Wong, A. Brady and R. Kent. 1998.**  
The Transition from Environmental Quality to Ecosystem Health. Ecosystem Health 3: 3-10.

**Hirsch, W.Z. and L.E. Weber (Eds.) 2002.**  
As the Walls of Academics are Trembling Down. Economia. Paris, France. 204pp.

**Longe, G.A.E., O.O. Akinkugbe and A. Hassan. 1997.**  

**Mellamby, K. 1958.**  
The Birth of Nigeria’s University. Methuen and Co. Ltd., London, and Ibadan University Press, Ibadan. 263PP.

**Okebukola, P., N.O. Adedipe and I.I. Uvah (Eds.).**  
Labour Market Expectations of Nigerian Graduates: A National University Graduates Employer Needs


Nurudeen Olorun-Nimbe Adedipe

*September 20, 2013*