Proliferation of Illegal Tertiary Institutions of Learning in Nigeria: Implications for Quality Education, Self-reliance, Economic Growth and development

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Abstract
This paper examined the proliferation of illegal tertiary institutions of learning in Nigeria. These institutions are termed illegal because their establishment and operation are without legal authorization. They exist without permission from the higher education regulatory bodies such as National Universities Commission (NUC), the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and the National Board of Technical Education (NBTE). The characteristics of some of these illegal institutions identified in this paper included among others poor, obsolete and inadequate infrastructure, inadequate and inexperienced academic staff, high tuition fees and other forms of exploitation of students as well as lack of control, monitoring and discipline. The implication of these factors on quality education, self-reliance and national growth and development was examined in this write up. Recommendations such as closing down of such illegal institutions, blacklisting the institutions if they operate in defiance, greater awareness campaign against patronage and expansion of accredited federal, states and privately owned tertiary institutions of learning among others were put forward.

Keywords: proliferation, illegal institutions, quality, self-reliance, development

INTRODUCTION
In Nigeria, it is no longer news that the existing higher institutions of learning- Universities, Polytechnics Colleges of Education as well as Colleges of Agriculture and the Monotechnics that are licensed to operate are inadequate to accommodate on a yearly basis, the teeming graduates, who by their “O level” results or certificates are very qualified for admissions to higher institutions of learning. From five (5) universities and a total enrolment of 3,646 students in 1962, the Nigerian university system according to Moti (2010) has grown to 104 institutions made up of 27 federal universities, 35 state universities and 42 private universities with a total enrolment of about 726,760 students. Between 2010 and 2012, the number had increased to 124 outside Polytechnics, Monotechnics and Colleges of Education and yet the problem of access seemed not reduced. This according to Moti (2010) is because of the social benefits of education in a society that social mobility depends largely on the level of education acquired.

In fact, each year, thousands of applicants sit for the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) examination and less than twenty percent (20%) on the average as Moti (2010) noted gained admission into the universities. Apart from this gross inadequacy, the carrying capacities of these existing higher institutions are low. These make competitions to be so keen, stressful and frustrating to many youths of this country that show high zeal for progress in their studies.

This protracted difficulty in admission has provided opportunities to some Nigerians to establish some private institutions of higher learning especially when the policy of private participation in higher education became pronounced. In 1999, the first Private University Education first kicked off in Nigeria under the President Olusegun Obasanjo’s administration (Jiduwa, 2010). And since then, many private universities, polytechnics and colleges of education had been established. Today, in Nigeria, there is more private ownership of tertiary institutions than there are those belonging to governments at the federal as well as the states levels.

Many of these private tertiary institutions however, are established without due process. They exist and operate without legal authorization. These institutions are made to spring up in different locations in Nigeria. In Kogi State for instance, the Central Polytechnic, Moon Light Polytechnic, Alhikma University, and the School of Health Technology among others exist and operate illegally. Similarly, in Benue State that is a neighboring state to Kogi, several of such unauthorized institutions as the Immaculate Heart College of Education, Bethel Polytechnic, Aliede College of Education, Lobi Polytechnic and North-Central University are seen to litter everywhere. In fact, Nairaland Forum (2011) noted that the number of such fake universities
operating in the country has risen from 44 to 51 and that they are located in states such as Nassarawa, Benue, Enugu, Abia, Ekiti, Anambra, Kogi, Imo, Plateau, Kaduna, Kwara, Akwa Ibom, and Ilorin. There is hardly any state in Nigeria that is exempted from this nauseating practice, not even Abuja that is the Federal capital city of Nigeria.

The establishments of some of these institutions are illegal because no permission is sought from the government or the bodies that are responsible for the establishment or registration of such private higher institutions in the country. The National Policy on Education according to Tsebam (2010) makes reference to minimum standards in connection with the establishment of primary schools and universities by non-governmental organizations. These standards are disregarded in open deviance and candidates who seek admissions to these institutions are exploited because of their ignorance.

The proprietors of these institutions are mostly university graduates that probably stayed unemployed for some years. As a way of meeting their need for employment and to also generate income, they resort to establishing these schools with little or no start-up capital. Some of these institutions operate under trees or in uncompleted residential buildings. One can therefore, imagine that no serious academic programs will take place under this kind of settings. Their efforts would have been commendable if the said institutions were not to be a mockery of the entire education system. It is profit motivated with no little intention for quality training in view of the following features that characterize their operations.

**Characteristics of Illegal Higher Institutions of Learning in Kogi State, Nigeria**

- Ownership is private and unauthorized
- Grossly in lack of infrastructural amenities
- Uses residential buildings within the community and are rented. Some of them co-habit structures that belong to public primary schools.
- Admissions are not through the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB). JAMB is the body that is saddled with the responsibility of screening candidates seeking admissions to higher institutions of learning in Nigeria through entrance examinations.
- Employs few teachers and these teachers are made to teach more than one subject, their areas of specialization notwithstanding.
- Teachers are mostly part timers who have their other official engagements and so there is the problem of commitment or divided loyalty.
- Students’ population is explosive because standard demanded for admission by accredited institutions are grossly lowered or even ignored. Since it is profit oriented, the more the number of students’ enrolment, the greater the revenue that accrue to the proprietors.
- The management of such institutions is made up of the few members that are the proprietors and may not have the management competence. There may be the problem of putting a round peg in a square hole.
- Fees paid by students are exorbitant.
- Students’ exploitation is rampant as teachers charge their students exorbitantly for lecture materials or textbooks.
- There is the claim of affiliation to existing and accredited universities, polytechnics and colleges of education. This claim is shady, false and not verifiable. They usually claim affiliation to distant and remote institutions where their students or other curious persons will not be able to quickly investigate.

**Implications**

The continuous existence and operations of these illegal tertiary institutions without any regulation by government will have implications on the following:

- Quality Education
- Self Reliance
- National growth and development

These points are discussed below in greater details.

**Quality Education**

Illegal tertiary institutions as they are made to operate in Nigeria do not have anything good in terms of quality education to offer to their students. The loud cry in Nigeria about her educational system is the drastic fall in its quality as exemplified by the performance of her economy propelled or driven by those already graduated. If federal, states and privately owned legally established tertiary institutions are far yet from achieving set standards for desired quality, the illegally operated institutions that are mere caricatures of higher education would not have any qualitative education to offer these innocent but zealous students.

According to the Federal Ministry of Education Roadmap (2009), quality assurance is the product of

- Infrastructure
- Teacher quality (retention and motivation)
- Curriculum relevance (and review)
- Learner support services

These products are elusive in these established illegal institutions. Most of them grossly lack some basic infrastructural amenities such as school buildings, hostel accommodations, sports and games equipment as well as equipped laboratories and school libraries that are cardinal to effective operations. Speaking about private institutions generally, Ekundayo (2008)
noted that the goals that universities are known for (teaching, research, and community services) have been submerged and eroded. Real academic programs are bastardized because there is no effective monitoring, supervision and control. These institutions in the words of Tsebam (2010) are not ready for accreditation. There is no way that products of these illegally established institutions have a strong impact to drive the engine of development and social reforms required of the nation’s educational system. This can only happen when quality graduates are produced in sufficient numbers (Eke, 2010).

In addition, most teachers serving in these schools are part-timers, hired largely from primary and secondary schools and they have no cognate experience. Egwe in Ekundayo (2008) noted that over thirty percent (30%) of academic staff of private universities are “ad-hoc”. The situation is even worse for these unauthorized institutions. They patronize unemployed graduates very cheaply and not in sufficient number because they want to save cost. They few that are hired from tertiary institutions around their places of operations are either friends to the proprietors or those known to be financially greedy and are most times prepared to trade their integrity for finance or money. Since staffers are inadequate, the few teachers that are engaged are made to teach more than one subjects without any serious consideration to their specialties. In addition many are half-baked with little professional competence.

Students that are admitted to these schools are mostly those that failed to meet the admission requirements to some of the accredited schools. Admissions are not mostly based on academic performance but on the ability of the candidate to be able to pay the required cost (Tsebam, 2010). The tuition that students attending the private institutions pay according to Jiduwa (2010) are way more exorbitant than what is paid by their counterparts in public schools. These unauthorized schools are worst in terms of students’ exploitations. But these students seem not to have options having sought admissions in vain to the accredited institutions. To the hungry, anything bitter tastes sweet. These illegal institutions seem to be the only way out of admission problems for these students that are ignorant of the long term implications of making this choice.

In some of these schools, teachers do not show commitments to works because of divided loyalties. Teachers are a strong factor to consider in learning. For instance, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) rightly noted that “no education system may rise above the quality of its teachers.” Most of the teachers teaching in private institutions (and especially those working with illegal institutions) according to Jiduwa (2010) do not have the prerequisite degree, PhD that qualifies them to teach at the university. The school managers hardly monitor, control and supervise academic programs effectively. This is because of the fear of losing their staff or students or both since their goal is mostly the economic benefits accruable to the institution rather than the training of these students. The students themselves are not serious with academic works, they trade this for immoral acts and examination malpractice because they are not checked and they are not also disciplined if they err.

It is not really very clear if their claim of affiliation to an accredited higher institution is actually true. This is because, a visit to their sites reveal nothing on the ground particularly in the area of infrastructures that could earn them rights of affiliation except if they are granted in proxy (without the visit of the mother institution to the campus of the institution seeking affiliation). With all these inadequacies, quality education cannot be assured.

Self- Reliance

Education is known to be a potent instrument for fighting poverty, ignorance and disease. The Nigerian educational system has however, received unending criticism because of its lack of entrepreneurship. The educational system produces more job-seekers than job-creators. Currently, there are more unemployed graduates in the country than can be imagined engaging in many criminal and social problems. The products or graduates of these illegal institutions of learning are far from being self-reliant. Most of these schools are not technically oriented and so lack the ability, resources and finance to train and develop skills of its students.

Some of their polytechnics are just so-called because they do not offer courses in engineering-mechanical, civil or electrical as well as building, survey or architecture. No technology oriented course is floated in any of these institutions because they are capital intensive. But the economy is already bursting at the seams with training of graduates that are job-seekers, waiting for government at the federal, states or local governments for jobs and this is what these illegal institutions are doing. In addition, even their graduates that read conventional courses are not academically well equipped to compete with other graduates from accredited schools that offered the same course that they offered. One of the goals of Nigeria education as Eke (2010) noted is to make her products productive and internationally marketable. The current preparation of Nigerian higher education graduates particularly graduates of illegal higher institutions will make this goal to be far from being achieved. If these institutions were to be entrepreneurial, their establishments would have been applauded and accepted because their products would have been self-reliant and useful.
**National Growth and Development**

The Nigerian economy is bellyache. Everything seems to pull down its rate of growth and development. Social, economic and political crimes conspire to impede the economy from experiencing steady growth and development. Corruption is now synonymous with leadership in Nigeria. Recently, and in addition to the above mentioned problems, is the activities of a religious sect called and known as the “Boko Haram” that have come to be more destructive to human lives and properties than the Niger Delta militants. This is not to talk of power outage experienced for months by Nigerians in a country that supplies electricity to some neighboring countries.

Operators of illegal tertiary institutions that are operating by all means below standard are producing graduates that will help to bleed, and comatose the nation’s economy further. Graduates of these institutions would be met with frustrations because their expectations for white-collar jobs would be dashed. And because they lack the skills and training to be self-reliant, they are likely to engage in or invent criminal acts with unhealthy results. Some of these idle youths are recruited by some politicians as thugs, hired assassins, armed robbers and drug peddlers. These jobs do not contribute positively to the nation’s economy but rather scare away foreign investors as well as discouraging the domestic ones. The youths of today are the leaders of tomorrow. Have the elders of this great nation ever thought of what becomes of the future of this country after they have expired? If education brings about national growth and development, what becomes of this country tomorrow when its youths are provided the type of education that has no substance, education that is devoid of vitality?

**CONCLUSION**

Private participation in education in Nigeria is a welcome development in view of the desire of these private proprietors to sustain quality and supplement the carrying capacities of existing government institutions. Some of these private institutions do not however, seek approval from government and so operate without her authorization. These illegal institutions known for poor and inadequate infrastructural facilities, poor monitoring and supervision of instructions as well as other academic programs, exorbitant fees and other forms of students’ exploitations that do not call for healthy academic programs. These along with several others put the students of these institutions at a disadvantage position comparable to their counterparts from accredited public and private institutions. The economy of the nation will be worsened with unemployment, social and political crimes and live in general will be unbearable and frustrating for many dwellers.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The continuous existence of illegal higher institutions in Nigeria will have a long term effect on the nation’s economy and its overall development. To allow their continuous existence is like a time bomb that when it explodes will cause serious devastations to the nation and its citizenry. Operators of these illegal higher institutions are fraudsters and when these students get to know later on graduation that they were being deceived because no employer of labor recognizes the worth of their certificates and that they lacked skill to be self-reliant, the society will drink the cup of their anger and fury. To minimize these tendencies, the following suggestions are put forward:

- Government through its higher education regulatory bodies (National Universities Commission, (NUC), the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) should come out clearly to stop these unauthorized higher institutions from existing. Their existence is an aberration because of their non-compliance to rules and regulations governing establishment of higher institutions of learning in this country. In addition, they operate far below standard and their operation is not clandestine. Government is aware of their existence because they advertise and market their institutions using available media-Radio and televisions. In addition, Nairaland Forum () chronicled names of these illegal institutions and the states where they are located. Continuous silence of these regulatory agencies will spell great doom to the youths of this country who expectedly are the future leaders.
- Government through the higher education regulatory bodies and National Orientation Agency should mount serious awareness campaigns to dissuade candidates who are ignorantly applying to such higher institutions for training. The media, seminars and use of bill boards could be used as means for disseminating this information.
- These institutions could be blacklisted should they insist to continue operation defiantly. The general public should be informed about the non-recognizable certificates that such institutions award.
- Existing approved tertiary institutions by the federal, states and private proprietors be expanded to be able to meet with the increasing demands of applicants for admissions. Some existing colleges of education and polytechnics could be made to offer degrees in some specialized fields to reduce the current high pressure on universities for admissions. If the government really knows that education of her citizenry is pivotal to national growth and development, and that leaving her innocent youths exploited and deceived by shy-luck
educationists, then no amount is too big to be committed to the expansion of existing institutions, establishment of new ones and the control of quality.

**LIMITATIONS OF STUDY**
This study was not experimental. It was based on library literature and practical observation. Some information provided about the characteristics of these illegal tertiary institutions may not be common to all. But these do not necessarily mean that they are not aberrations since their existence are unauthorized.

**REFERENCES**


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