Repositioning Tertiary Education in a Changing and Challenging World: Nigeria Perspective

John Amaoge WORDU. PhD.
Department of Educational Management
Faculty of Education
Rivers State University
Nkpolu Oroworukwo
Port Harcourt
john.wordu2@ust.edu.ng 08037512872

Abstract

Tertiary education is the third level of education that is primarily aimed to instil the appropriate skills and experiences that will help in building the manpower needed in society. The influx of digital technology has not only changed the landscape of teaching and learning but has provided vistas of opportunities and merged challenges to the managers of tertiary education. The study discusses repositioning tertiary education in a changing and challenging world, the Nigeria perspective. The study enumerated the trending changes in tertiary education like artificial intelligence, Google Classroom, and Google Form among other learning management systems used in tertiary education. Challenges in tertiary education in Nigeria were enumerated and some of them are paucity of funds, incessant strikes, and brain drain among others. The study suggests that for tertiary education in Nigeria to be relevant and competitive, managers of education should integrate digital technology into the pedagogical content among others.

Keywords: Tertiary Education, Changing, Challenging Education,

Introduction

Education is widely acknowledged as pivotal to the development of society. It is a veritable instrument that emancipates individuals from the shackles of poverty and liberates and nurtures individuals to discover themselves live productive lifestyles and contribute to personal development and society. Tertiary education consists of all post-secondary education where certificates are obtained for their academic performance. It includes public and private universities, inter-universities like Colleges of Education, Schools of Health, Polytechnics and other higher education of learning acquired after the post-basic education. Tertiary education is where leaders are honed, skills and relevant educational experience are instilled in students and prepare them for successful and fulfilling lifestyles. It is acknowledged that tertiary education is vital to the development of needed manpower in society. This is succinctly captured in the National Policy on Education (2014), wherein it states that the goal of tertiary education is to contribute to 'national development through high-level manpower training'. There, the onus is on tertiary education to generate knowledge, preserve it, and disseminate it for the betterment of individuals and society.

It is imperative to note that to achieve these laudable goals is through effective teaching, learning, research, and development. It is necessary to state that tertiary education in Nigeria is witnessing a challenging period as a result of the increasing number of people seeking admission in tertiary education, the brain drain, students' unrest, indecent dressing, poor infrastructures, quality and services, cultism, examination malpractice and all that undermine the integrate of educational system.

It is interesting to note that the advanced economy has integrated modern digital technologies into their pedagogical contents, teaching methodology, curriculum development, and implementation in solving educational challenges and the benefits are enormous. It appears that the Nigeria is yet to fully appreciate and integrate digital tools in their educational system and the process denies the students the benefits of digital and technological skills. It will be a disservice to teach 21st-century students with only conventional teaching methods and obsolete facilities in a changing world. The continuous proliferation of digital tools and artificial intelligence has called for a paradigm shift in the management of tertiary education in Nigeria. Against this backdrop, the paper discusses the imperative of repositioning tertiary education in a changing and challenging world in Nigeria.

Concept of Tertiary Education

Tertiary education is formal education of the third level after the completion of post-secondary education. It consists of private and public universities, and inter-universities that provide post-secondary education either full-time, part-time or distance learning. It includes specialized universities like the University of Agriculture, Science and Technology. Also, post-secondary institutions like colleges of education, polytechnics and other institutions that provides formal post-secondary education where degrees, diplomas and certificates are awarded. (Amoo, 2014: Alemu, 2018). Tertiary education is empowered to provide quality education, skills and knowledge that will inculcate to the learners those positive values and virtues that are needed for the development of individuals and society. (Wordu, 2023). There is no denying that tertiary education organizes and trains learners in various educational activities that instil creativity, high-level thinking skills, and problem-solving skills that help in the trajectory of the world of work. It is within the ambit of tertiary education to produce knowledge, preserve and disseminate through scholarship and research. It becomes imperative to examine the modern trends in tertiary education that have revolutionized the education system.

Changes in Tertiary Educational Systems

The modern trend or change in the educational system in the 21st century is the proliferation of exponential digital technology that permeates every facet of society. The upturn of digital technology is profoundly changing society and tertiary education is no exception. The growth and integration of technology have not only changed the pedagogical content, applied research, management, institutional governance, and instructional materials but also changed the methodology of teaching and learning. (Anyaogu, 2015). The advent of technology has caused the managers of education to evaluate the traditional methods of teaching and learning. The use of only traditional methods of teaching in the 21st century is

not only a disservice to the nation but will be denying the students modern digital skills like critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and technological and communication skills among others.

It is enlightening to note that the advances of digital technology have made learning activity-based and students' centered unlike the traditional system of teaching that is teacher-centered. In the modern system, the teacher is seen as a facilitator of learning hitherto as the custodian of knowledge who dishes out the contents to students. In the modern system of teaching and learning the students are expected to be actively involved in the learning process rather than in rote learning and memorialization of facts. There is no gain in saying that technology is driving the world and every educational administrator must integrate technology if it must remain relevant and contribute to the development of society. It is imperative to explain some of the recent trends that have shaped tertiary education.

Artificial intelligence is the most modern trend in tertiary education that has influenced and revolutionized teaching, learning, and research in tertiary institutions. It has provided a vista of opportunities to enhance teacher performance, motivate students, and increase productivity. Artificial intelligence, AI is evolving rapidly in the field of technology and it involves the development of machines with human intelligence that can perform tasks that hitherto were performed by humans, especially problem-solving, recognizing patterns, and answering questions. (Owan, Abang, Idika, Etta & Bassey, 2023). AI-powered software can provide assistance with online learning, and personalized teaching, motivate students, and be very useful in repetitive tasks and students' companions when teachers are engaged in other activities. (Bupo & Akpomi, 2023: Nwile, & Edo, 2023).

Artificial intelligence if integrated into the educational system could be of enormous benefits to the students and teachers. According to Glory and Gambari (2021), artificial intelligence has provided new ways of teaching, learning, and assessment of students thus providing access to information and improving the efficiency of educational activities and productivity. AI can be used as a medium of communication between the students and the teacher, as a means of getting feedback and monitoring their performance. (Gautam, 2020). Other technologically induced learning platforms are video conferences, e-learning, mobile learning, virtual reality, blended learning, chatbots, and others. It is interesting to note that technology keeps evolving and the list is not exhaustive. With technology, distance education has come to stay in tertiary educational institutions and it is enhancing efficiency in teaching and learning. Distance education is a learning process powered by technology whereby teachers and students are learning from separate environments. It is necessary to enumerate and explain other learning management platforms that have driven a change in the methodology of teaching and learning.

Google Classroom is a learning process introduced by Google Apps for Education in 2014 where students and teachers can connect and share learning materials. It is a learning management system that can be used to provide teaching materials, create and organize assignments, communicate and provide feedback efficiently and enhance the attainment of educational goals. (Sukmawali, & Nensia, 2019). The major advantage of Google Classroom is that it is accessible and learning can take place wherever and whenever, at the comfort of the learner.

Google Forms: The upswings of technology have given rise to another Learning Management System that is making a wave in tertiary education. It is used by teachers to elicit information from students concerning learning behaviour in a particular course. Google Forms helps teachers to design students' tasks and develop quizzes, surveys, and tests and can be used in watching students' progress. (Jazil, Firdaus, Manggiasil, Chayani & Ampel, 2019). It can be used for multiple-choice questions and even used to evaluate the teachers based on students questions.

Socrative: This is another online platform that is changing the landscape of teaching and learning that if well harnessed will not only provide effective communication but will be used in measuring the progression of learning outcomes. According to Edwards (2023), Socrative is an online platform designed to enhance teacher-student digital communication. It can be used in formative assessment quizzes, multiple-choice questions, true/false tests and collection and analysis of students' data in real-time. The benefits of socrative is that it enhances digital communication skills, and critical thinking and enriches teaching and learning.

EdPuzzle: It is another instrument that allows teachers and students to communicate by sending and receiving video, audio and texts. The teacher can edit videos, insert questions and share with the students and allow them to answer the questions. In so doing, it will inspire the students to learn and explore other areas that will help them acquire knowledge. (Kachi, Joe & Anil 2022). Like other technology-induced learning, Edpuzzle through the use of video helps the students to improve their analytical, communication and technological skills. It is enlightening to stress that the role of social networking in tertiary education cannot be overemphasized. It is evolving daily and cannot be extensively exhausted in this paper. It is instructive to mention some of the benefits: knowledge sharing, customizing learning, professional development, increased student engagement, and boosting communication and cooperation and instil in the students tech-driven learning experiences. (Williams, 2023). The onus is on the managers of tertiary education to integrate technology to reposition tertiary education for not only global relevance but also to contribute to nation-building.

Challenges in Tertiary Education

Tertiary education as the citadels of learning has its plethora of problems inhibiting it from achieving the desired goals. Some of these problems are inherent in the system and some are problems created by the managers of tertiary education. Some of these problems are globalization, the increasing cost of education, the demand and proliferation of digital technology, how to retain the best brain, making research sustainable and students' expectations among others.

Globalization: The popular axiom that the world is a global village is necessitated as a result of the interconnectivity of the socio-political and economic activities. Globalization is the improved world connectivity and the compression of the world through the influence of information communication technology with the combination of political, economic and social transformation (Khondker, 2021). With the proliferation of information and the knowledge-driven economy tertiary education becomes not only an indicator for the measurement of globalization but also an ingredient for international competitiveness.

Nigerian tertiary education whose responsibilities are primarily the generation of knowledge, preservation and dissemination of knowledge is challenged to be at the bar with international best practices and to remain relevant globally. Thus, tertiary education is ranked based on certain indicators and positioned based on their performance. According to Nwankwu (2023), only two Nigerian universities were ranked among the best one thousand universities in the world. It is edifying to note that the ranking of the university bestows certain privileges on the graduates. The onus is on the managers of tertiary education in Nigeria to step up their games and ensure that Nigerian universities are rated high in international ranking.

Increase Cost of Education: Tertiary education is globally recognized as pivotal to individual intellectualism and societal transformation. Hence nations and individuals mobilize resources towards having a sustainable educational system. The rising cost of tertiary education in Nigeria's educational system has not only affected the number of student's enrollment, and quality but has also affected the societal values and ethics expected to transform individuals in society. (Azubuike & Nwosu, 2017). The economic downturn in the Nigerian economy has also resulted in a decline in revenue generation by federal and state-owned universities. The paucity of funds has anticipated consequences namely dilapidated infrastructures, poor educational plant and resources, and loss of staff (brain drain) among others.

Brain drain: It is the movement of professionals from one country to another for a greener pasture and better reward system. Brain drain is associated with the exodus of manpower usually from a developing economy to a developed economy for better rewards of services (Akporehe, 2022). Various reason has been adjudged as the reason why Nigerian professionals are moving to a developed economy for greener pastures. The brain drain in the educational sector will have negative effects on educational institutions namely, dearth of manpower in institutions, poor quality output and a high rate of student-teacher ratio among others. Some of the reasons are insecurity, poor reward system, lack of basic infrastructures and amenities and economic downturn which has influenced the learning outcome namely poor quality of educational resources and eventually poor learning outcome. In a bid to improve the quality of education and learning outcomes led to the proliferation of private universities. The proliferation of private universities in Nigeria has merged challenges namely excessive tuition fees beyond the reach of average Nigerians, inadequate learning facilities and the challenge of recruiting qualified personnel among others.

Inadequate Funding: Another challenge facing the Nigerian educational system is the paucity of funds allocated to the educational system. The paucity of funds has precipitated a series of problems namely inadequate educational resources, ineffective teaching, research and services. These have led to strife in educational intuitions, performance, growth and development of society. Wordu, Amadi and Wodi (2023) opined that inadequate funding has led to a dearth of basic educational infrastructure and a catalyst undermining the attainment of educational goals. Unfortunately, a look at the budgetary allocation to education is a far cry from the UNESCO-recommended 26% of the annual budget.

Sustainable Research: Tertiary education especially university education is saddled with the responsibility of conducting research for the development of individuals and society. Research is the core business of tertiary education and helps to inculcate the proper values

orientation that helps in the survival of individuals and society. (Monday & Mallo, 2021). Research does not only help in expanding the frontier of knowledge but it is an indicator of university ranking. Therefore, for the development of tertiary education, better performance and solving the challenges of society tertiary education must be adequately funded to enable it to perform the core roles of teaching, research and community services. Unfortunately, tertiary education in Nigeria is poorly funded, inadequate research grant and corruption has contributed to poor research in tertiary institutions.

Proliferation of Digital Technology: The continuous proliferation of digital tools has been a source of concern for managers of the educational system in Nigeria. The groundswell of digital technology has changed the landscape of educational services and the advanced economy has integrated into their educational system and the benefits are enormous. (Wordu, 2020). Managers of education in Nigeria are faced with the challenges of integrating digital tools fully into their education system. Dada, Atobauka and Ogunode (2022), opined that inadequate funding has caused an insufficient supply of digital facilities, materials and equipment. These in no small measure have hindered access and affordable education, effective teaching, learning and attainment of educational goals.

Incomptent Administrators: Another challenge the educational system in Nigeria is saddled with is the weak administrators in tertiary institutions. It is not in doubt that tertiary education is established to achieve given goals and the task of achieving these lies with the proficiency of administrators to harness resources for the attainment of predetermined goals. Unfortunately, the appointment of managers of tertiary institutions is not based on competence but on some parochial considerations that do not enhance productivity. The editorial board of the Punch newspaper of 16th April 2021 writing on the Vice Chancellor appointment crises in universities opined that the appointment of vice-chancellor is not based on academic and administrative acumen but on primal sentiments like crones and political afflation. The arrogation of judiciary and quasi-judiciary powers on the visitor to appoint a vice-chancellor has not only rubbed off the autonomy of the Governing Council but has bred incompetency, and corruption. These have undermined academic intellectualism, and research and destroyed the essence of a university.

Incessant Strike Action: This is another inhibiting factor that threatens the educational system in Nigeria. Hardly any academic year passes without industrial unrest as a result of the disagreement between the universities' union and students' agitation for better educational facilities. Either the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian of Universities, (ASUU) agitating for the implementation of the memorandum of understanding or non-academic demanding enhanced allowance and salaries. The result of unfriendly relationships results in a temporary shutdown of universities, disruption of academic activities and threat to the stability of institutions and overall performance of the students and staff (Wordu, 2023; Monday& Mallo, 2021). In cognizance of these factors inhibiting tertiary education in Nigeria it becomes necessary to proffer ways of repositioning tertiary education in Nigeria.

Repositioning Tertiary Education in Nigeria
The importance of tertiary education as an essential element to the development of individuals and the growth of society is never in doubt. It, therefore, is incumbent on the

administrators of tertiary education to identify the challenges inhibiting tertiary education and provide plausible solutions based on empirical evidence. Repositioning tertiary education ensures that the quality of education is improved and in line with the latest global development. Education that will make students global citizens and contribute to the development and growth of society. For students to be relevant in a competitive economy the educational system must be students-centered, take care of the needs and interests of students, and such education must be inclusiveness. Inclusive education in this context entails education that will not only take cognizance of the cognitive domain, and affective domain but more importantly psycho-motive domain. This is the kind of functional education that involves the heart, head, and hands in the socioeconomic, technological and scientific development of society. (Asiyai and Okoro, 2019).

Repositioning tertiary education entails not only functional education but education that has global relevance and can contribute to the development of the needed manpower. Such education should expose the learners to the necessary skills, attitudes and experiences that encourage lifelong learning. This brings to the fore the integration of digital technology into the pedagogical content. The use of digital tools for educational services will enhance the student's learning skills and prepare the students for the future where technology will play a significant role. The repositioning of tertiary education in the process of teaching and learning through the integration of digital tools will improve the classroom atmosphere, arouse students' interest and create a flexible and customized learning process. (Helen, Javaid, Qadri, & Suman. 2022).

The use of digital technology in teaching and learning will help students acquire 21st-century skills like communication skills, problem-solving skills, creative thinking and other skills to enhance collaboration in scholarship and research. Education that will meet the changing and challenging world must create a supportive learning environment that will encourage personalized learning and allow students to explore new ideas and learn at their own pace. It is incontrovertible that such education can be achieved with the integration of digital tools into pedagogical content. The curriculum must emphasis more on entrepreneurship and de-emphasis on rote learning. It becomes imperative that the managers of the educational system must integrate digital tools to remain relevant and globally competitive.

Conclusion

Tertiary education is the third level of education saddled with the responsibility of providing the needed manpower of society. The groundswell of digital technology and globalization has enhanced communication and led to a plethora of challenges and a vista of opportunities for the educational system. The developed economy has adopted digital tools as a means of teaching and learning, such as the use of artificial intelligence and other learning management systems that enhance effective teaching and learning. Fortunately, Nigeria's tertiary education has yet to fully integrate digital tools into the learning process disinvesting the students the benefits of digital learning. Some of the challenges that inhibit tertiary education in Nigeria are paucity jof funds, poor infrastructures, brain drain and poor administrators among others. It becomes imperative that tertiary education in Nigeria to

remain relevant and competitive globally has to integrate digital technology into pedagogical content.

Suggestions

Based on the change in the education globally and challenges inhibiting tertiary education in Nigeria the following suggestions are preferred.

1. The federal government should provide a legal framework that will compel all tiers of government to provide not less than 20% of their budgets to education. The manager of tertiary education should explore ways of increasing their internal generated revenue like venturing into businesses, consultancy services and partnerships with private sectors on the exchange of research products.
2. The management of tertiary education should fully integrate digital technology and other learning management systems into teaching and learning. Also, all lecturers should be reskilled in the use of digital tools for effective and increased productivity.
3. The government at all levels should stop paying lip service to education and provide adequate finance to the educational sector to enable the management of the educational system to procure the necessary facilities that will enhance a student-centred learning environment.
4. There is also the need to provide adequate instructional resources that will aid effective teaching and learning.

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