Transglobal Influences and Nigerian Education: The Americanization of Nigerian Universities

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Introduction

In the first instance, I am surprised that the theme of conference associates *educational objectives* with a *policy*. The main attainment mechanism of a policy is a *goal*, not an objective. If we are to deal with objectives, then our main focus should be on individual *learning ecology* in the classrooms, focusing on subjects and specific behavioral performance indicators—the structural domain of *educational objectives*.

In order therefore to show my rebellion to the theme of the conference, I decided to focus on the links between a *policy* and a *goal of education*, rather than *educational objective*. In this process, I wish to provide a historical account of the development of the National Policy on Education and link it to what I call "curricular globalization". I wish to argue that the problem of implementation of policy goals in Nigeria had to do with the antecedent Americanization of the National Policy on Education—and in particular, the higher education segment. Further, in all the focus areas given for the sub-themes, higher and further education are conspicuously absent. I hope to plug this gap.

Education and Curricular Globalization

It is impossible to discuss the impact of globalization on higher education without referring to the internationalization of higher education. These two terms are often mistakenly used interchangeably. In this paper, globalization is presented as a phenomenon which is having an impact on higher education and internationalization is interpreted as one of the ways in which higher education is responding to the opportunities and challenges of globalization. Internationalization includes a broad range of elements such as curriculum, teaching/learning, research, institutional agreements, student/faculty mobility, development cooperation and many more. I intend to argue that the Nigerian higher education policy is a product of American globalization efforts, but the outcome of such educational policy has not internalized the values of internationalization of educational opportunities provided by globalization.

According to the CVCP (Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals, UK)(2000), globalization and recent developments in the international delivery of higher education have generated a number of new terms including 'borderless', 'transnational', 'transborder' and 'crossborder' education. Borderless education refers to the blurring of conceptual, disciplinary and geographic borders traditionally inherent to higher education. Yet the transglobal education stream had been a feature of development education since before most African countries became independent

when US economic interests started seeking out new markets for US products – both political and manufactured.

Globalization has impacted upon the nature of the agencies that 'school' children, young people and adults. Thus

> The question we are facing now is, to what extent is the educational endeavor affected by processes of globalization that are threatening the autonomy of national educational systems and the sovereignty of the nation-state as the ultimate ruler in democratic societies? At the same time, how is globalization changing the fundamental conditions of an educational system premised on fitting into a community, a community characterized by proximity and familiarity? (Burbules and Torres 2000)

Further, according to Sing (2002), the debate about globalization and a market approach to higher education is gradually being taken up by developing countries and countries in transition. They are particularly exposed to becoming unregulated markets for higher education exporters because of insufficient government capacity to regulate due to political and governance instability. It is this lack of capacity that exposed Nigerian education to the marketing strategies of philanthropic aid agencies from the United States effectively selling American higher education to Nigeria.

Gold Standard or GL? – Geopolitics and Nigerian Education

The greatest challenge faced by the Nigerian university in the years after independence from Britain was whether to retain its British legacy — the *gold standard* of Lord Ashby of Brandon (Ashby 1965 p. 82) — or open itself to other influences — as is the case with universities all over the world — and gradually evolve a distinct character of its own.

The desire to retain the British framework predominated quite simply because the Nigerian labor market — civil service, private sector and the industries — has not developed a system of assessing prospective employees except through their education and examination outcomes. And since the entire employment superstructure is based on British patterns, retaining British educational framework had the comfortable currency of predictability. An almost paternally condescending relationship between Nigeria and Britain also helps to retain Nigeria within the British ambit for a considerable period after independence.

Gradually, however, a crack began to appear in the relationship between Nigeria and Britain in the 1970s over geopolitical issues and this had the effect of orienting Nigeria gradually away from British influences, for as Gambari (1989) argued,

> Nigeria shares with Britain the use of English as the official mode of communication, but the two countries rarely speak the same language on political issues. In spite of close historical, economic, trade, cultural, institutional, and other ties between independent Nigeria and the former colonial power, serious political discord has seldom been far from the surface (Gambari 1989 p. 139).

This serious political discord (between Nigeria and Britain) appeared almost immediately after independence when, in 1962, Nigeria abrogated a defense agreement with Britain which was part of the independence package. But despite this move, Nigeria remained dependent on Britain for military supplies until 1967 when the Nigerian Civil War broke out (Ate 1987). The British policy towards the war —

neutrality — deeply disappointed Nigerian leaders "and had a chilling effect on Nigeria-British relations" (Eke 1990 p. 133). This chill continued until 1973 when attempts were made by the two governments to normalize relationships on somewhat warmer levels. But the change in government in 1974 in Britain set in another chill when in that year the British government reduced its general aid package to Nigeria based partly on Nigeria's unexpected windfall in oil revenue following the rise of oil prices after the Yom Kippur War of October 1973 (see *The changing emphasis in British aid policies: More help for the poorest*. London: HMSO, 1975; and Hewitt and Sutton, 1980). This, of course, affected any British aid to Nigerian universities. Coupled with subsequent frosty relationships as a result of increasingly differing political standpoints regarding global issues such as South Africa, Angola, Palestine Liberation Organization, independence in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Namibia, competition between the British North Sea Oil and Nigeria's oil, (see Galloway 1987 for a detailed analysis of this development), the impact of British academic system on Nigerian universities went steadily into decline.

On the other hand, relationships between Nigeria and the United States, since the 1970s have been considerably warmer than with Britain (see, for instance, Montgomery 1961, United States 1980). The relationship between Nigeria and America was contextualized by Professor Jibril Aminu, a one time Minister of Education in Nigeria who noted that,

> Nigeria, in spite of its clear policy of non-alignment, has demonstrated in the last few years, its genuine desire for strong links with the United States, especially after 1977 when the U.S. policy in Southern Africa showed a somewhat favourable shift. There will also be need to show genuine appreciation, not only for the uninterrupted supply of oil, but for the more profound political development of Nigeria largely and freely adopting, in its first post-military era, a constitution modelled largely on the U.S. constitution. (Aminu 1986 p. 270).

Thus the disenchantment with Britain in Nigeria led to a scramble for alternative educational structures immediately after independence. The United States government aid policies, together with major US. philanthropic foundations proved catalytic in the quest for what seemed to be such an alternative framework for Nigerian education. This was realized through well developed programs of institution building and linkages between Nigerian universities and various American institutions. But perhaps the most significant US. impact was the training Nigerians received from the US. as compared to the United Kingdom.

What made the US. institutions quite attractive to the Nigerian students at the time (early 1950s to mid 1970s — the formative period of Nigerian university development) were the less restrictive admission procedures of US. institutions, coupled with a far more diverse curricular offering. Nigerian students were used to strict and centralized restricted access to university education with limited curricular choices characteristic of both the Nigerian and British educational systems. As a result, more Nigerian students tended to study in the US. than in Britain. For instance, in 1961 there were only 552 Nigerian students in the United States, while there were 1,124 in the United Kingdom. By 1964 the US. share had gone up to 2,945 while the number of Nigerian students in UK. was only 1,382 in the same year (UNESCO, 1966). Certainly, figures available seemed to indicate a growing American influence on choices of places to study among Nigerian students, and this may have a bearing

on the reform process that took place in Nigerian education from mid 1960s to the 1980s. Table 1 indicates a sample of the trend in the mid 1970s.

Table 1

Nigerian Students in American and British Universities, 1975-89

Year	U.S.A.	U.K.
1975	11440	2762
1976	11870	3690
1977	13510	4312
1978	16220	4192
1979	16360	3875
1980	N/A	4136
1981	15651	4306
1982	N/A	N/A
1983	N/A	3999
1984	15703	2868
1985	11770	2704
1986	10324	N/A
1987	8340	N/A
1988	5337	1169
1989	4040	N/A

(Source: *UNESCO Statistical Year Books 1976-1991*)

This trend in American preference by Nigerian students prompted the editors of *West Africa* Magazine (London) to comment, as late as 1980,

> That Britain is in second place to the United States could be attributed to the stagnating British technology, [and] dwindling influence in world affairs (West Africa, February 11, 1980 p. 276).

Eventually those who received early training in the US. either by personal sponsorship or through aid agency process especially immediately after the Second World War returned to Nigeria in the early 1950s and 1960s. These *returnees* soon occupied positions of power and authority and created context situations around which the continued relevance of the British educational legacy in Nigeria that neither emphasized science, technology or agriculture, nor was it developmentally oriented, was continuously challenged.

The impact of such returnees, both explicit and implicit had been nothing less than spectacular in many developing countries, and perhaps no region in the world vividly illustrates the impact of these American returnees on the adoption of American educational traditions than South-East Asia. For instance, in Thailand, the transformation of the educational system at all levels was initiated by American trained returnees from Minnesota, Oregon, and SUNY-Buffalo (Fry 1984). And although the Japanese educational system was a quilted mosaic of influences from Germany, France, and Britain, nevertheless the American influence was more sustaining (see Nakayama, 1989). The Philippines, a former American colony, has retained its definite American educational heritage (Gonzales, 1985). Even Malaysia, a showcase of British educational tradition in the South-East Asian sea of reform, had at one stage contemplated the *relevance* of American higher education to the country

(Ahmat, 1985). And dramatically, in Indonesia a group of government officials and policy makers became dubbed *The Berkeley Mafia* on account of the fact that in 1968 virtually the entire cabinet of the Indonesian government was dominated by American trained individuals, most of them alumni of University of California, Berkeley (Ransom 1970).

In Nigeria, Coleman (1958) had also argued that Nigerians trained in the US. during the second world war have been leading figures in postwar nationalism. And upon their return to Nigeria, they

> became crusaders for American practical ("horizontal") education, as contrasted to the British literary ("vertical") tradition. Their agitation in behalf of American education...was one of the principal reasons for the post war migration of hundreds of Nigerians to America. Their propagation of the American educational ideal and their positive nationalism contributed to the antipathy of both British and British educated Nigerians toward American education and American-educated Nigerians (Coleman 1958 p.243).

The influence of the Nigerian returnees, while quite explicit in political affairs (the first President of Nigeria, Dr. Nmandi Azikwe was an alumni of Lincoln University) was rather subtle in educational matters, but nonetheless, effective.

American Aid Agencies and Nigerian Educational Development

But while the British *gold standard* was entrenched as an essential value in the Nigerian university, there were dissenting voices as far back as 1955 advocating for an alternative, decidedly American, framework for higher education at least for Nigeria. As Philip Coombs (1964) noted,

> Nigeria, like several other new African nations, has turned to the United States for help. Even more than money they want imaginative ideas and access to talent. While valuing highly the considerable good that came to them — and is still coming to them — from British education, they want to fashion a more relevant curriculum and more efficient and effective teaching methods (including very unconventional ones if necessary) which will serve far more students, better and sooner (p. 109).

The new advocacy was aimed at harnessing American experiences in *higher* education for African situations, for as Ashby (1966 p. 263) observed "a period of study in America frequently nurtures a dissatisfaction with the British system." Early advocates, at least in giving some consideration to American educational ideas to Nigeria, included Ojike (1944), Okeke (1955), Ukpaby (1956) and Okongwu (1964). This was to have far reaching consequences in Nigeria, for as van den Berghe (1973 p. 64) noted,

> The international orientation of Nigerian scholars is strikingly evident in the fact that in a number of academic issues such as reforms in the curriculum or in the structure of department, the place where a person received his higher education is often a much better predictor of alignments than nationality, ethnicity or any other factor...Thus we frequently see an alignment between Britons and British trained Nigerians versus Americans and American-trained Nigerians. Since [the University of Ibadan] was modelled after British universities, the first group tends to be conservative, while the latter tends to be reformist.

The American approach to education — lack of centralized bureaucratic control, universal access to mass higher education (provided one can pay for it), relevant and flexible curriculum, modularity which encourages mobility — had certain appeals to a

nation in a hurry to throw off the yokes of imposed colonialism. Further, in describing African approaches to higher education, Howe (1964 p. 172) had noted that

> whereas the preference of those African academics who had not been exposed to more than the British system in Africa or elsewhere was for no basic change, those who had studied under both American and British systems — including those in Africa — favored change.

Thus although American tendencies appearing in the early American educated Nigerians has shown preference for American education for Nigeria, it was of course expected that the British colonial government would treat such development with extreme caution. A typical reaction was given by de Kiewiet (1959 p. 140) who warned against "a brash and unwanted intrusiveness on the part of American education" in making inroads in Africa by cautioning that

> The American educational system is the costliest in the world. We are told that it is also the most wasteful...Not all the technical aid, loans and investments that are realistically in sight can do more than correct a proportion of the grim facts of poverty. A doctrinaire offer of even the very best and most superior achievements and discoveries of American education would be no more than a mirage unless there is a balance with trade and taxes, industry and investment, profit and progress (p. 135).

Again admittedly not all Nigerian students in the 1950s and 1960s studied at the "proper" American universities, thus giving further leeway to a belief that American education was inferior to British. For instance, the earliest African students in America were confronted with the double standard of segregation, and

> the American-educated African leaders who emerged during the struggles for independence attended [these] segregated colleges. Dr. Nmandi Azikwe, former President of the Republic of Nigeria, was one of the first, and he was followed by many fellow-Ibos. There was a greater wealth among the Yorubas of Western Nigeria, which enabled Yoruba students to journey to the more prestigious institutions in England. Being also more involved with the colonial government at Lagos in the West, they received more encouragement and financial assistance from the British (Henderson 1967 p. 49).

Consequently the admission pattern of Nigerian students in the American universities indicated that from 1928 to 1958, about 56% of the 171 located students attended historically black colleges, 26% went to "third rate teachers colleges and similar institutions, and 18% studied at Ivy League schools" (Henderson 1979 p. 50). It is the products of these systems collectively that eventually molded the destiny of Nigerian nation as a whole.

The end of the Second World War made it clear that colonialism has also ended. The new international agenda was shifted to curbing the tide of Soviet communism, especially in African countries with the United States at the forefront of the attack with the major assistance of the big three foundations: Carnegie Corporation, Rockefeller Foundation and Ford Foundation. As Berman (1979 p. 146) argued,

> the foundations accomplished this primarily by funding programs linking the educational systems of the new African nations to the values, *modus operandi*, and institutions of the United States.

Closely connected with avowed non-political and technocratic involvement in African education by the foundations was the more explicit objective of increasing the United

States economic expansion, continued access to raw materials abroad and control of markets for American exports. “These themes mark the prologue to the African programs of the Carnegie Corporation, the Ford and Rockefeller foundations since 1945” (Berman 1979 p. 149). This integrated economic model of development had, in fact made appearance since 1951 as “globalization”, but became vogue only after the demise of the Soviet Union in 1990s and the emergence of the United State as the only superpower on the planet.

To all intents and purposes, therefore, a new colonial path was being carved out in African countries even as the old one was dying. In Nigeria, for instance, the process of bonding the country to British structural framework started with the United Africa Company which was a purely commercial venture later taken over by the British government and provided a convenient vehicle for colonization. It would seem the new American strategy would follow different patterns, but achieve the same goals: loyalty to the interests of the United States, for as Berman (1979 p. 151) further analyzed,

> it should come as no surprise that the foundations whose boards of trustees and administrative ranks were dominated by men sharing this common ideology, sought to create circumstances in the developing world that would ensure change that was predictable, manageable, and consonant with the perceived *economic and strategic interests of the United States* (emphasis added).

While the foundations representatives themselves have denied these motives (see “Responses to Edward H. Berman” in *Harvard Educational Review* Volume 49 Number 2 1979 p. 180) nevertheless the mere presence of the facilities made available by the foundations — training in the U.S., establishment of projects, setting up linkages between Nigerian and American universities — all have contributed to make the elements of American education distinct features on the Nigerian educational landscape in the two decades after Nigerian political independence. And as Gruhn and Anthony (1980 p. 13) noted,

> the dominant type of assistance was the rural development project funded by the U.S. government carried out by a land grant institution, providing U.S. technical expertise and opportunities for study in the United States.

Other motives, besides purely philanthropic, had been consistently attributed to the activities of the American aid agencies in African education. For instance, Berman (1977) analyzes that

> Carnegie Corporation’s African programs...were designed to ensure that Africans were, at the very least, not overtly antagonistic to the United States and western concepts of democracy...This should come as no surprise. It would be unreasonable to expect an American institution to do anything antithetical to its perceived best interests (p. 81).

Indeed this very motive seemed to have been acknowledged by some of the foundations themselves. For instance, during his tour of Nigeria in getting the idea of the study survey of Nigerian higher education accepted, Alan Pifer addressed the Ibadan Philosophical Society on Sunday November 16, 1958 where he acknowledged,

> Obviously the United States has a strategic interest in the African continent...a continent which occupies a fifth of the earth’s surface cannot be without interest to us and of course to

> the whole Western world. This does not mean that we can and should necessarily expect new African states to throw in their lot with the West. They may well prefer a neutralist position. But we do want their friendship. *An unfriendly Africa would be a direct threat to our security*. It is only since World War II that this has begun to be appreciated in America, but the recognition of it is now quite widespread (Pifer 1958 p. 9) (emphasis added).

This interpretation was not restricted to the activities of the Carnegie Corporation alone. Long after the Nigerian universities had become independent institutions, the Rockefeller Foundation also became involved with higher education in Nigeria and allocated $9 million to the University of Ibadan between 1963 to 1972. As Berman (1979 p. 159) concludes about this,

> the concentration of Rockefeller money in the University of Ibadan....meant, in the words of a prominent Foundation official, that 'our dollars will...be able to exert an extraordinary leverage.'

The Emergence of a National Policy on Education

Still in search for a more effective solution to the issue of relevance of the Nigerian education in a post-independence era, in 1964 Professor Aliu Babatunde Fafunwa (New York University, Graduate Class of 1955) who was later to become a central icon in Nigerian educational planning and subsequently a Federal Minister of Education (1990) conducted a survey in

> an attempt to "sound out" the opinions of 2000 parents randomly sampled over a wide geographical and representative area of the country on the primary and secondary education systems...Ninety-eight percent of all the parents were dissatisfied with the "present system of primary education", while opinion was equally divided on the same question relating to secondary education (Fafunwa 1989 p. 43).

It is quite interesting that "…eighty percent of the parents sampled were from East, West and Lagos, while twenty percent were from the North." (ibid). With a clear lack of uniformity in what constitutes education values in the "North", it was clear right from the beginning of the creating a new Nigerian policy on Education that the "North" is already marginalized. Thus out of the 2,000 respondents who informed the direction of Nigerian educational policy, about only 300 were from the region with the largest number of people.

As a result of this survey, in that a same year a proposal was made during one of the meetings of the national advisory committee on education, the Joint Consultative Committee for a *National Curriculum Conference* principally to look at the issue of relevance and future directions of Nigerian education. It took a whole year (to 1965) for the proposal to be accepted. The Nigerian civil crisis which began in 1966 halted any further planning for the conference, and it was not until September 1969 that the conference was finally held in Lagos. The Conference lasted from 8-12 September and was sponsored by a government agency, the Nigerian Education Research Council (NERC), now Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERD), with additional funding from The Ford Foundation. The main aim of the conference was to "review the old and identify new *national* goals for education in Nigeria at all levels and provide guidelines on what the system should be doing." (Balogun 1970 p. 5).

These views were also echoed by the then Federal Commissioner of Education during his opening address at the 1969 National Curriculum Conference at which he underscored government's views about education in Nigeria which was:

> No doubt that the educational system we inherited was a good one. Good, that is, for the country and society for which it was planned; good for England and English society. But it was not good for us, because it neglected to take into consideration our cultural and social background; because it has tended to produce an educated class of pen-pushers and because it failed to lay the foundations of economic freedom by providing the manual skills and expertise necessary for successful industrial and agricultural development (*in* Adaralegbe 1969 *Opening Address*).

The 1969 National Conference on Curriculum in Nigeria was the first of three conferences to deal with the objectives of education, the content of the curriculum, and the methods required for implementing the curriculum. During the conference, it was felt that the grammar school orientation of the secondary schooling systems was unfavorable to a vast majority of students who had neither the abilities nor the inclination for pursuing a purely academic career.

Based on the recommendations of the national conference on curriculum, the Federal Ministry of Education created a draft national policy on education and the nation was introduced to it by the then Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon during a speech at Barewa College on April 26, 1972.

The National Council on Education — one of the highest consultative educational bodies in Nigeria — deliberated on the draft national policy in December 1972. This further led to a seminar on the proposals which was held at the Institute of International Affairs, Lagos from June 4-8, 1973. The seminar submitted its report to the Federal Ministry of Education on June 26, 1973. This report was deliberated at various state and federal levels, and the end product was a government White Paper, *National Policy on Education* first published in March 1977. This was the first official framework for Nigerian education since independence.

As the National Policy on Education document stated in summarizing the new educational structure:

> The school system will be on the 6-3-3-4 plan. The system will be flexible enough to accommodate both formal and non-formal education and will allow leaving and re-entry at certain points in the system...The first six years will be for general basic education followed by three years of general education with pre-vocational subjects like woodwork, metal work, shorthand and typewriting, book-keeping and technical drawing so that the students who wish to leave the system at this stage will be employable. The next three years will be for general education leading to some marketable skills apart from training in the science and humanities so that the students graduating at this stage will be employable. Every student will be made to learn a skill (Nigeria 1981 p. 47).

The features of American educational policy appropriated in the National Policy on Education at this stage were *general studies* and *credit system*. While the general studies program came into *system-wide* effect in various universities from 1978, the *credit system* was introduced on a *system-wide* basis only in 1988. This was because although an arrangement existed where the general studies program could co-exist within the framework of the old degree structure, the credit system required a total co-

ordination for mass implementation in all the Nigerian universities. As stated in the National Policy on Education,

> A credit system which is transferable among universities and the institutions of higher learning on a reciprocal basis will be initiated. This is to enable a student who may be compelled to change his residence before completing his course to finish it in another institution (Nigeria 1981 p. 47) The universities and other institutions of higher learning will also be required to reconsider the practice whereby examination performances in a limited number of papers determines the grading of graduates and to explore ways of introducing an element of continuous evaluation (Nigeria 1981 p. 27).

The credit system came to the Nigerian universities accompanied by all the accessories necessary to its comprehension, which included the semester structure for the school year, grade point average, and continuous assessment. Of these only the last item was a familiar term to most Nigerian universities. However, definite government backing was given to it as a result of the recommendations of the Study Committee on University Curricula in 1984. In responding to the Committee's recommendation for a basic core in the curriculum of each academic discipline, the Government White Paper noted that

> ...it should be observed that there is in fact nothing like basic core curriculum. The answer to the proposals for core curricula as proposed by the Study Group is the introduction of the unit course system which will introduce some uniform approach to curriculum development in the country and make the course content of the subject being taught in the Universities and the designation of the courses comparable. In any case, under the provision of Decree No. 16 of 1985 and the Accreditation System to follow therefrom, minimal standards can be set and monitored by the NUC in all disciplines (Nigeria 1987 p. 9).

From Michigan to Nsukka—with Confusion

In Nigeria, the first manifestation of the new Americanism in higher education was indeed earlier with the establishment of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in the Eastern Region of Nigeria patterned on the American land grant philosophy with the Michigan State University as the model.

On May 5, 1954 the Eastern regional government in Nigeria sponsored a mission led by Dr. Nmandi Azikwe who was then the Premier of the Region to seek the cooperation of Europe and America in the training and recruitment of technicians, and provide training for Nigerians in vocational higher education. This was necessitated by the inability of the University College, Ibadan to admit as many students as were qualified due to restrictive admission policies. *The basic purpose of the mission was to attract investors to accelerate the economic development of the Eastern region*. In this we see early signs of what I call "attracting globalization" directly into the region. One significant result of the mission was a recommendation that the Eastern region should set up a full autonomous university which would emphasize not only the cultural values of the nation, but also vocational inspirations.

The Eastern Regional government accepted this key recommendation of the mission and on May 18, 1955 the University of Nigeria law was passed by the Eastern Nigeria House of Assembly, and later it received Royal Assent (Ijoma 1986 p. 4). The university was to be funded by the Eastern Nigeria Marketing Board. In 1958 technical assistance in respect to the new University was sought from Inter-Universities Council, the International Cooperation Administration (which later

became the United States Agency for International Development), the latter contracting the Michigan State University into the process. As a result of these efforts, the University of Nigeria Nsukka was established, and opened on October 17, 1960 — just a few weeks after Nigerian political independence from Britain. It started with as closely American undergraduate degree structure as possible — complete with courses split up into credits, a general studies curriculum and in a sharp departure from the British degree patterns, did not create separate "honours" or "general" degrees for the students. Courses were offered in as many disciplines as possible and students make up their degree requirements by selecting those courses they want up a maximum number of 129 credit units before graduation, depending on the final degree.

From Elite (British) to Mass (American) Education in Nigeria

Thus the *National Policy on Education* that was created eventually from events started at Conference was even more explicit about its orientation with regards to university education. It prescribed the adoption of a *credit unit* system of structuring university curricula for Nigerian universities and *general education* for the first two years—a process already started in 1960 at Nsukka. At that stage (1977) these were recommendations, although gradually some universities started to implement these as internal policy decisions. Further, some universities had already started experimenting with these concepts in the 1960s, even before the National Policy on Education made it a recommended practice.

A common argument for this departure, which helped to understand the readiness to accept the change, was that the British established the educational systems in Nigeria to enable them train enough Nigerians to help them administer the country. Now that the British are gone, these legacies must be tuned to the genuine development of the country. Thus the American aid agencies, while not recommending a specific educational pattern to be followed, created the context situations around which US. educational frameworks were seen as more viable to development than sustaining the British legacy. This political move also ensured Nigerian sensitivity to US. economic and political policies and philosophies.

In this way, the American aid agencies also helped create a comprehensive Senior High School in Aiyetoro, Western region based completely on American high school structure. A strong teacher education project in Northern Nigeria sponsored by the USAID and the Ford Foundation coordinated by Ohio State University and University of Wisconsin (leading to the establishment of what is now Federal College of Education, Kano) ensured a federal coverage of American educational activities in the entire country. Consequently by the end of the first decade of Nigerian independence, the country was receptive enough to reform its entire educational structure from elite to mass education.

Thus in the case of Nigeria outside impetus for reforms in the universities came because of political beliefs that the university education should be made more relevant to contemporary social needs — a vision that will fit university graduates for jobs in a developing society. It is this linkage between relevance, job markets and development that serves as a direct antecedent to the reform of the university curricula in Nigerian universities.

The mixture of returnees and American educational aid efforts, which must be seen as outside intervention agents, further sensitized the Nigerian universities and made them amenable to structural changes in their curricula, especially from 1965-1980. General education made the first appearance at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1964 and spread slowly to other first generation universities, particularly Lagos (Agiri 1987) and Ife (Akinrinade 1989) where it became a focus for providing *breadth* to the undergraduate degree in African studies. A stringent effort was made to ensure that such *breadth* requirements were not merely copies of general education curricula at Harvard, Columbia, Michigan or wherever. The University of Lagos, for instance, developed a very comprehensive general education program with exclusive focus on African studies. This provided a stimulus for similar development of such programs in other Nigerian universities.

In some universities, faculties organized themselves into *Schools*, departing from the traditional *faculty* structure. Yet other universities converted their single sessional year of three terms to a two term *semester* system each of 15 weeks duration.

But perhaps the most striking transformation of the university curricular structure was in the introduction of the *course* unit system of instruction evaluated in terms of credits with its associated accessories (especially grade point, cumulative grade point, and grade point average). Individual units of various universities started experimenting with this new structure in the mid 1960s, requiring, as usual, only their academic senate to approve them. The practice soon spread to other universities, and a mosaic pattern of adoption and usage of the course unit system practice emerged. At the same time, it became quite common to observe both the British and American academic curricular structural traditions in many Nigerian universities for about two decades after independence from Britain; for while the American model had its attractions, the British model offered a more acceptable degree of certitude through familiarity, especially when it comes to looking for jobs in a British style labor market economy. Students also came to be subjected to the different traditions in their studies, especially in faculties that operated different structures in their programs and yet required a student to offer programs in both.

The course *contents* of most of the programs were enriched to reflect the reforms. Further, the programs were fragmented to provide diversity of choices especially under the course unit system. All these reforms were possible because although Nigeria had a National Universities Commission (modeled on the British Universities Grants Commission), this Commission existed mainly for *funding* purposes, at least in the 1960s through to early 1980s. Thus since the university programs were not under central control of the Commission, the changes were not very noticeable, and perhaps not surprisingly, their management and outcomes little studied. Further, they do not seem to have produced any adverse effects among students. If anything, the novel nature of the reforms made them a source of competition among the faculties to see which would attract the brightest students.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the present character of Nigerian universities derives significantly from the efforts of the American aid agencies, particularly the Carnegie Corporation. At the same time there is little evidence to show that the American aid agencies insisted on a specific structural curricular pattern to be followed. If anything,

the activities of the aid agencies seemed to have diminished at the time the Nigerian university was slowly undergoing a reform (from 1975 to 1985). True enough the agencies did emphasize certain disciplines at the expense of others. For instance, in analyzing the strategies adopted by the American Foundations, Berman (1979 p. 156) argued that they

> emphasized the development and strengthening of social-science departments, particularly in the related field of human resource development. This was accomplished by placing in social science departments a Foundation representative or carefully selected American or British academic charged with guiding and directing the department during its formative years, and by choosing African nationals who showed professional promise for advanced graduate training in a limited number of elite American institutions. These social scientists, indigenous as well as expatriate, often divided their academic responsibilities between a social science department and a Foundation supported research institutes linked to the department.

In this way, the Foundation was continuously fed information about social behaviors of African populations and provided efficient strategies for understanding the behaviors of indigenous peoples. This is significant in that marketing forces are easily marshaled to peddle either commodities or political ideology. Thus, a strong view emerged that the over-riding motive behind the aid agency involvement went beyond philanthropic and humanitarian intentions; it was also ideological. Arguing in a similar vein, Enarson (1965 p. 144) also believed that

> Much foreign aid is not designed to promote the development process. Money and propaganda and arms go for the support of short-term objectives that are deemed to be in the U.S. national interest. For the most part this has nothing to do with the development process.

Further, curbing the communist expansion in Africa became a very strong motive behind aid agency efforts which could be accomplished, as some of the Foundations apparently believed, by

> "appropriate activities supported by a private American Foundation which could contribute to African confidence in the United States and the free world" (Don K. Price *in* Berman 1979 p. 158).

It would seem, however, that the possible ideological overtones of American aid agencies in Nigerian higher education has never constituted a barrier to acceptance of either American aid or ideas. For instance, there was no organized resistance to the increasing diversity of the Nigerian university undergraduate curriculum in the mid 1970s when the reforms started on an institutional basis. American funding and expertise were clearly welcomed in the establishment of various experimental schools (e.g. Aiyetoro Comprehensive High School) curricular reforms (e.g. the Nigerian Secondary School Science Project) and a whole university (the University of Nigeria, Nsukka). Further, the Ashby Report, seen as a classical strategy for university planning in post independence British Africa and considered a central icon of Nigerian educational development, was entirely initiated and sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Similarly, there was no organized protest regarding the system-wide implementation of the reform in 1988 in all Nigerian universities by the National Universities Commission, even by the academic thorn in Government's flesh, the powerfully vocal Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU). The point being made

therefore is that Nigerian universities accepted to implement the reforms well aware of their external primary source (United States) and their local intermediary source (the National Universities Commission), believing such change to be part of a greater and better global economic and development agenda.

Although American aid funding was what shaped the present form of Nigerian higher education, right from the number of students trained in U.S. institutions, and the higher number of Nigerian academics trained in the U.S. compared to the United Kingdom, and finally to the complete adoption of the American university structural framework in Nigerian universities, the universities were free to choose and adopt those aspects of whatever system they feel had something to offer over the system they were using.

The American educational system prides itself on its diversity. But more than that, it is an ultimate reflection of what the American society feels are important learning issues. This social maxim extends from the elementary schools all the way to the university. Throughout the educational spectrum, every attempt is made to highlight important social issues and provide avenues through which their solutions could be sought, or their phenomena more effectively understood by students.

Nigerian education, on the other hand, is the product of a centralized bureaucratic process. Whether this is good or inimical to the development of education in a developing country is not the issue. The issue is whether such tightly structured system can sustain a philosophy with different depth of social input. The extent to which such centralized control can be operated within an educational setting with a radically different political origins must be questioned.

However, transplants often fail to work effectively, whether in politics, economics or education, simply because the interface between grafting and grafted institutions do not share the same meanings and purposes regarding the entire transplanting process. What is therefore important with regards to the Nigerian university system is whether the transplant has *worked*, what was *responsible* for its current status, and more significantly, whether it has proved *beneficial* to its receivers. The answers to these issues will determine the impact of American globalization on Nigerian education. And I believe the answers, over the last 20 years, are fairly obvious.

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