THE PARADOX OF QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISM IN THE MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF UNIVERSITIES FOR QUALITY UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA: THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES COMMISSION IN FOCUS

PAULLEY, F. GODGIFT

Introduction

The training and production of the right mix and quantity of high-level manpower from the educational system is considered a *sine qua non* for national development. These precisely are the goals of tertiary institutions for countries of the world for centuries as a means to define the genius of man not minding the kind of political leadership in a state.

This the universities do through the basic functions of teaching and imparting knowledge, seeking and discovering truth through researches and to disseminating their findings to all so that mankind generally may shed the shackles of ignorance and want. In other words, the graduates of tertiary institutions, as represented by the universities here are meant to play major roles in teaching, research and development, curriculum development, quality control, evaluation, management of both private and public enterprises, improved food supply, and health delivery, politics and governance, maintenance of law and order and other community services.

The point being made here according to Okorosaye-Orubite, Paulley and Abraham (2012:266) is that, the extent to which civilization can be sustained is dependent on the extent the intellectual momentum and vigor is being sustained by the universities. Nigeria as an emerging economy is desirous of having graduates as products of her universities endowed with the relevant quality to drive a modern and vibrant economy in a highly competitive global setting more so with a *Vision 20:2020* in focus.

To drive home this Vision as it were, the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004:36) gave Nigerian universities the tasks of contributing to national development through high level relevant manpower training, development of intellect and inculcation of proper value orientation for the survival of the individual and society, developing the intellectual capacity of the individuals to understand and appreciate their environments, acquiring both physical and intellectual skills which would enable individuals develop to be self reliant and useful members of the community; promotion and encouragement of scholarship and community service; forging and cementing national unity; and to promote national and international understanding and interaction. Through this medium, it is hoped that the expectations of the Nigerian people and the government from the country's ivory towers in the production of highly-skilled entrepreneurial graduates, research outputs that will provide solutions to both national and global challenges and production of professional and technical services for both the local, national and the global communities will be met.

From the above, the university is more or less an industrial establishment for turning out most precious products-the accomplished individual. It is thus an agent for shaping not only the destiny of man but also of the state. This way, the world is made a better place to live in.

It is a community of scholars, which believes in the superiority of the mind over matter and insists that everything material should be subordinated to the intellect. The university is, therefore, a place where concepts hallowed by age and tradition are subjected to severe scrutiny and knowledge grows through dissent, not through compromise.

In order to enable the university carry out the above functions set out for it effectively for the development of the society concerned, it is required that the quality of its services must be assured. What then is quality assurance? Why is it necessary and how can this be assured in the Nigerian context? What is the paradox in this direction with reference to the National Universities Commission in the Nigerian context as an agency of the federal government saddled with the responsibility? These are the issues the paper will be contending with.

What is Quality Education and Quality Assurance?

Quality has to do with something special or that distinguishes a person or thing. It is an assurance that a product meets a given standard during the process of manufacturing so as to meet the customers' satisfaction. Ekundayo (2011:101) citing Harvey and Green (1993) identified the commonly used definitions of quality as exceptional or excellence, perfection or consistency, fitness for purpose, value for money, relevance and worthiness, standard, efficiency, among others.

Quality as applied to education according to Anikweze (2010:210-211) is an education that is relevant to the developmental needs of the recipients as individuals and to the society in which the individuals live and operate as active participants. Citing UNESCO (2000), Anikweze (2010:211) said quality education is locally relevant and culturally appropriate. It is informed by the past and relevant to the present, and prepares individuals for the future. Education teaches people to be better individuals, family members, community members and citizens. In other words, quality education should, therefore, yield outputs that are intellectually perspicacious, socially adaptable and miscible, vocationally skilled and competent, and morally sound.

Over the years, employers of labour and the general public have expressed concern over the quality of graduates from the Nigerian ivory towers. Even for further studies outside the country for which ordinarily, the graduates were to be admitted, due to the quality of outputs, these graduates are subjected to qualifying examinations. The state of university education in Nigeria can therefore be described as one of massive explosion in student enrolment and increasing number of prospective new entrants in the face of inadequate and obsolete infrastructure and equipment, inadequate academic staff, in numbers and quality, lack of relevance of academic programmes and generally low quality graduates. The Nigerian education system does not appeal to foreign students is no news as no Nigerian university is ranked among the best 500 in the world (Daly Sun Newspaper: October,2016). These are signs of vote of no confidence being passed on the country's education system.

[All these raise the fundamental question of quality assurance in the country's universities.

The Concept of Quality Assurance

Materu (2007:3) sees quality assurance, in relation to education, as a planned and systematic review process of an institution or program to determine whether or not acceptable standards of education, scholarship, and infrastructure are being met, maintained and enhanced. It is a proactive means of ensuring quality in an organization, here the university so that its products will conform to the expected standards. The essence is to ensure that expectations of the user of the manpower in relation to the quality of skills acquired by the product displayed is being met. It is aimed at among other things preventing quality challenges. A tertiary institution (university) is only as good as the quality of its teaching staff as they are the heart of the institution that produce its graduates, its research products, and its service to the institution, community and nation. The above shows the indispensable position of the teacher in the assurance of the quality of the graduates of the university system.

Quality in Nigerian university education is, however, a multidimensional concept that should embrace all its functions and activities; teaching and academic programmes, research and scholarship, staffing, students, buildings, facilities, equipment, services to the community and the academic environment (UNESCO, 1998).

Quality assurance in Nigerian universities, according to Okebukola (2004), is a continuous process of improvement in the quality of teaching and learning activities that will be achieved through employing mechanisms that are internal and external to the universities. The internal mechanism has to do with instruments put in place by the institutions to ensure quality, while the external mechanism which is the focus of this work has to do with the activities of a regulatory body, in this context the National Universities Commission (NUC), to maintain the required quality. In both ways it is aimed at assurance that the Minimum Academic Standards (MAS) are attained, maintained and enhanced.

The history of quality assurance in higher education in Africa goes back to the founding of the first universities in Africa (for example, Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone in 1827), all of which were affiliated to partner universities located in the colonizing countries (the United Kingdom, France, and Portugal). The University of Dakar, now Cheikh Anta Diop University in Senegal, was regarded as an integral part of the French higher education system as late as the 1960s. Authority over the quality of university education in those early days was a function of their governing boards and faculty. With affiliation, the institutions automatically became part of the British, French, Portuguese or other systems of quality assurance through their partner universities. These institutions were subjected to the same kinds of quality control as were British or other European universities, including external examiners and other aspects of these systems.

Why Quality Assurance in Nigerian University Education?

Labour market report on the prospect of Nigerian graduates by Oni and Dabalen (2000) shows that employers complained that graduates are poorly prepared for work. The report affirmed that

academic standards have fallen drastically over the past decade and that a university degree is no longer a guarantee of communication skills and technical competence. As a result of this, Nigerian graduates are viewed as half-baked and ill-equipped for the labour market. In fact, the quality of university education in Nigeria has reduced considerably. A study in this connection was carried out by the NUC in 2004 (NUC:2004) on the performances of graduate teachers in the country. The study revealed that graduates in education were found to be incompetent in the teaching of a large number of subjects. In addition, the study revealed that most of them lacked practical as well as computer skills, displayed poor classroom management and control skills, and were unable to communicate effectively. Equally, graduate teachers were found to exhibit difficulty in teaching a large number of topics in secondary school subjects such as English Language, Biology, Chemistry and Physics. It also went on to show that new graduate teachers lacked competences in the teaching of many topics in a variety of school subjects and in many skills such as improvisation, use of teaching aids, laboratory and classroom management. Many universities have deteriorated beyond producing half-baked graduates. They are today producing efforts that can only guarantee “mixed flower graduates”, as the hope of fully baked graduates now looks so remote.

While this is so in Nigerian context, every state in the world and its tertiary (university) education graduates are meant to compete in an environment shaped by their own local and national needs as well as international expectations and standards. With globalization, the impacts of international standards are increasing and public demand for transparency and accountability is on the rise. Educators and policymakers are, therefore, challenged to set appropriate standards of their own, which draw on and reflect on the unique history, needs, and expectations of their stakeholders. Furthermore, they are expected to put in place mechanisms to enforce standards and to monitor performance of their tertiary (university) education system with a view to taking appropriate and timely measures to adapt to new realities. The main factors according to Materu (2007:9-13), that drive the push to strengthen quality assurance in university education are the

- ✓ increased demand for tertiary (university) education and rising private contributions.
- ✓ rapid growth of tertiary enrollment in Nigeria without a matching increase in funding.
- ✓ demands for increased transparency and accountability on the part of contributors/recipients of university education in the country.
- ✓ need for reforms in tertiary (university) education to address new challenges.
- ✓ new methods of delivery challenge to traditional approaches to university education development.
- ✓ increasing competition and shorter knowledge cycles that require continuous improvement.
- ✓ increasing regional collaboration requiring harmonization of qualifications and awards; and
- ✓ the needs for quality higher education to improve retention of skilled human capital.

It is for this reason that various countries in the world have set for regulatory bodies to assure the quality of their tertiary (here universities) products. In India, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) ensures this for entire country. Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education is responsible for this assignment in the United Kingdom while the United States of America relies on Private Accreditation team for quality assurance in its higher institutions. In the case of Nigeria this is the responsibility of the National Universities Commission (NUC).

The National Universities Commission (NUC) and Quality Assurance in Nigerian University Education

The National Universities Commission (NUC) in Nigeria is an agency of the Federal Government set up in 1962 and located in the Cabinet Office, Lagos to oversee the development of universities in Nigeria. This body has a statutory mandate to ensure quality university education in the country through the setting of minimum academic standard in all Nigerian universities programmes. Minimum Academic Standard (MAS) is defined by Nwana (2008:1) as “the least level of performance expected of those being taught, as dictated by competent authorities in the discipline”. Standards are prescribed set of realistic conditions that should be satisfied for a certain level of output to be attained. The benchmark specifications are well set out in the MAS documents and NUC embark on accreditation exercise to ensure complete compliance by individual universities.

Broadly speaking according to Okojie (2011:104-106), the NUC as a way of ensuring the orderly development of university education in Nigeria performs the following functions namely

- ✓ to advise the president, governors of the states and private proprietors, through the minister, on the creation and location of new universities and other degree-awarding institutions in Nigeria as and when considered necessary, and in accordance with the commission’s guidelines;
- ✓ to prepare, after consultation with all the state governments, the universities, the National Manpower Board and such other bodies as it considers appropriate, periodic master plans for the balanced and co-ordinated development of all universities in Nigeria and such plans shall include;
- ✓ the general programmes to be pursued by the universities in order to ensure that they are fully adequate to meet national needs and objectives;
- ✓ to lay down minimum standards for all universities in the Federal Republic of Nigeria and to accredit their degrees and other academic awards;
- ✓ ensure that quality is maintained within the academic programmes of the Nigerian university system;

- ✓ to be the regulatory agency responsible for the work related to the proper conduct of the affairs of universities;
- ✓ to make such other investigations relating to higher education as the Commission may consider necessary in the national interest;
- ✓ to make such other recommendations to the Federal Government and State governments as well as to the universities relating to universities and other degree awarding institutions as the Commission may consider to be in the national interest;
- ✓ to inquire into and advise the Federal Government on the financial needs, both recurrent and capital, of university education in Nigeria and, in particular, to investigate and study the financial needs of university research and to ensure that adequate provision is made for this in the universities;
- ✓ to estimate and receive annual/or quarterly block grants from Federal government and allocate them to universities in accordance with such formula as may be laid down by the Federal Executive Council;
- ✓ to take into account, in advising the Federal and State Governments on university finances, such grants as may be made to the universities by state governments, private proprietors and by persons and institutions in and outside Nigeria;
- ✓ to collate, analyse and publish information relating to university education in Nigeria and from other sources where such information is relevant to the discharge of its functions;
- ✓ to undertake periodic reviews of the terms and conditions of service of personnel engaged in the universities and to make recommendation thereon to the Federal Government where appropriate;
- ✓ to recommend to the visitor of a university that a visitation be made to such university as and when it considers it necessary;
- ✓ to act as the agency for channeling all external aid to the universities in Nigeria bearing in mind the country's foreign policy and security;
- ✓ to recommend the establishment of new faculties or postgraduate studies in existing universities in the country;
- ✓ to carry out such other activities as are conducive to the discharge of its functions.

But specifically with reference to quality assurance in Nigeria universities, NUC through the instrumentality of Decree No 1 of 1974 (NUC:2002) has the mandate to do the following:

- ✓ Assessment of institutions and/or programs
- ✓ Approval of new academic programs/courses

- ✓ Advises the government on the approval of new higher education institutions
- ✓ Sets minimum academic standards
- ✓ Advises government re-visitation
- ✓ rank institutions
- ✓ Annual performance monitoring
- ✓ External examiners monitoring
- ✓ Approval of foreign institutions
- ✓ Recognition of degrees and equivalence
- ✓ Standardization of academic designations and titles
- ✓ Monitoring of part-time staff levels among others

NUC Quality Assurance Processes in Nigerian University Education

In carrying out the above mandate, the NUC involves itself in the following processes

- ✓ peer reviews
- ✓ institutional self assessment
- ✓ site visit
- ✓ writing of reports; and
- ✓ accreditation of academic programmes among other processes.

With specific reference to accreditation of academic programmes in the Nigeria universities system, it is done according to NUC (2010) to

- ✓ ensure that at least the provisions of the Minimum Academic Standards (MAS) documents are attained, maintained and enhanced;
- ✓ assure employers of labour that Nigeria graduates have competences in their area of specialization; and
- ✓ certify to the international community that Nigerian universities are of high standard and their graduates are adequately equipped for employment and for further studies.

Stages of Accreditation

Accreditation according to the NUC (Amendment) Decree No 49 of 22nd December, 1988 means

a system for recognizing educational institutions and programme offered in these institutions for a level of importance, integrity and quality which entitles them to the confidence of the educational community, the public they serve and employers of labour.

There are three major aspects of accreditation exercises in which NUC is engaged in to assure quality of products of the universities in the country. These are

- ✓ pre-accreditation
- ✓ accreditation; and
- ✓ post-accreditation visits

Pre-accreditation visit is primarily undertaken for resource verification which accounts for the readiness of any intended programme to be accredited. It is like mock accreditation to trial test the programme for use and for final presentation for full blown accreditation after two years. Resource verification is often carried out by assigned regulatory agencies.

Accreditation visit is a situation in which professionals in academics are drawn from various higher institutions and professional bodies to serve as peer review panelists and are expected to carry thorough scrutiny of claims made by departments about the appropriate running of academic programmes in their institutions. The approved Minimum academic Standards (MAS) are used as criteria for measuring quality compliance.

Post Accreditation visit is a follow up monitoring visit, often by regulatory agency staff to ensure that the claims made during peer-review accreditation visit were not dismantled or discarded thereafter. All these mechanisms are strictly applied to ensure quality in the tertiary education sub sector.

Criteria Used by NUC in Accreditation to Ensure Quality Assurance in Nigerian Universities

The NUC Manual of Accreditation Procedures as quoted by Lassa (1992:85-86) provided the following criteria among others for accrediting degree programmes in Nigeria. They include

- ✓ philosophy and objectives of the programme in terms of clarity and attainability.
- ✓ curriculum in terms of adequacy and appropriateness for the level of students in the particular field.
- ✓ teaching staff quantity and quality with respect to adequacy in numbers, competence and the standard of instruction. Besides the level of academic and professional training, consideration is also given to cognate teaching experience, the diversity of their background, teaching load, working conditions, participation in professional organizations, etc.
- ✓ students admission, retention and graduation. Here the policies governing admission, retention, withdrawals (attrition rate), discipline and graduation are clearly stated in the students' handbook. The accreditation panel ensures that the policies and practices are in consonance with the established Minimum Academic Standards (MAS).
- ✓ standards of degree examination- the rules and regulations governing degree examinations and awards, the methods of assessment and the grading system. For each course, a minimum number of credits must be earned.
- ✓ financial support adequacy for departmental programmes. Indeed, the adequacy of funding given to a programme to be accredited serves not only as an index of stability for the programme but more importantly as a predictor of quality. It has to be stated here that of all the criteria listed here, this appears to be the criterion upon which all other factors are

revolving around as funding is the lubricants that oils the wheel of any educational system in the assurance of quality anywhere anytime in the world.

- ✓ physical facilities- their availability in adequate numbers, their functionality provisions.
- ✓ administration of department- here evidence are sought for sound administrative policies, relationship with staff, effective leadership, and the operation of the facilities for staff and students.
- ✓ mission and purpose
- ✓ content of academic programmes
- ✓ staff–quality, research, teaching, service
- ✓ students – recruitment, resources, learning
- ✓ library and information resources
- ✓ physical and technological resources
- ✓ finance
- ✓ employer rating.

For each of these criteria, the NUC Memo (2006) gave the following maximum score percentage score

• Staffing	32%
• Academic Content	23%
• Physical Facilities	25%
• Library	12%
• Funding	05%
• Employer Rating	03%
Total	100%

Source: NUC: 2007

Usually, the NUC as stated above makes use of ad-hoc accreditation teams drawn from experts and academics in the universities, ministries, professional organizations, industries and other walks of life. The team carries out a rigorous evaluation of any programme to be accredited in any university using the above criteria as instruments for assessment of the standard questionnaires and observation guidelines produced by the NUC. The task of the team is to confirm the agreement or otherwise between what obtains in the university visited and the established Minimum Standards for the programme under consideration. The exercise usually ends with a brief dialogue on the findings between the team and the university officials. It would, however, be improper for any team member to divulge any recommendations with respect to accreditation.

The accreditation team submits its report to the NUC which, based on the findings, may decide to accord the programme any of the following status in the affected universities.

Full Accreditation Status

Using these criteria to earn full accreditation status, universities programmes for evaluation must have a total score of 70% and above in addition to scoring at least 70% in each of the four core areas of staffing, academic content, physical facilities, and library. Full accreditation status lasts for six academic years, subject to a mid-term appraisal every three years. Full accreditation suggests the attainment of a satisfactory quality.

Interim Accreditation Status

An interim or conditional accreditation status is given when a programme scores from 60% to 69%. This presupposes that the programme has some minor deficiencies that could be rectified in less than two academic years.

Denied Accreditation

If a programme, on the other hand has less than 60% score, it is *denied accreditation*. This means that, the programme has serious shortcomings that can jeopardize the quality of graduates. The implication of this is that programmes that are denied accreditation have lost credibility and are assumed to be suspended and so cannot admit students. The university could apply for a re-visitation when the identified deficiencies have been made up.

Apart from the accreditation exercises, the reports of the occasional visitation panels to universities according to Lassa (1992:85) yield evidences of quality control for university education in Nigeria.

While these are put in place to assure quality in the products of the universities externally by the NUC, Olatunbosun (2007:340) is of the view that internal mechanisms should be put in place to complement the effort of the external body. This unit should be set up by the university management to monitor and evaluate academic programmes especially the teaching learning process. Essentially the unit should be responsible for the

- ✓ supervision of curriculum design, content and implementation.
- ✓ supervision of instruction.
- ✓ monitoring of students' progression and achievement
- ✓ periodic assessment of human and material resources available to each programme.
- ✓ liaising with the external quality assurance agency (i.e. the NUC) and other professional bodies in order to be abreast of the latest information.
- ✓ track–tracing of graduates for feedback information from employers.
- ✓ organizing workshops and seminars for academics.
- ✓ monitoring input, process and output of the system.

The unit should be responsible to the senate of the university and should be made to work hand in hand with the Academic Planning Division and Curriculum Committee of the university to evaluate academic programmes to be in line with international standards and make

recommendations where applicable or changes/innovations in curriculum design, content and organization.

The Challenges, Paradox and the Way Forward

While the concern for quality assurance in Nigerian university education is most desirable as it is the country's hope for national development, the university system in the country is been plagued with a lot of problems that make it difficult for Nigerian universities to compete favourably in the global economy. Some of these challenges are

Challenge of Adequate Funding

A cursory look at the parameters for accreditation of programmes in the universities in Nigeria by the NUC are revolving around the issue of funding. For instance, quality staffing (32%), quality academic content (23%), quality physical facilities (25%) library facilities (12%) that will meet the needs of globalised community, funding (05%) and favourable employer rating (03%) resulting in a hundred percent status are all the products of adequate funding which must come majorly from the proprietor of the universities, in this context the government, since the public universities with particular reference to Nigerian society, as provided in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004:36) as part of the tertiary education in the country, are not economic establishments to generate revenue but are given the tasks of contributing to national development through

- ✓ high level relevant manpower training;
- ✓ development of intellect and inculcation of proper value orientation for the survival of the individual and society;
- ✓ developing the intellectual capacity of the individuals to understand and appreciate their environments;
- ✓ acquiring both physical and intellectual skills which would enable individuals develop to be self reliant and useful members of the community;
- ✓ promotion and encouragement of scholarship and community service;
- ✓ forging and cementing national unity; and
- ✓ promoting national and international understanding and interaction.

These broad goals are to be pursued through among others

- ✓ teaching;
- ✓ research and development;
- ✓ virile staff development programmes;
- ✓ generation and dissemination of knowledge;
- ✓ access to training funds such as those provided by the Industrial Training Funds (ITF), Education Trust Funds (ETF) (to enable them carry out their mandate);

- ✓ maintenance of minimum educational standards through appropriate agencies;
- ✓ inter-institutional co-operation.

From the above, the university is more or less an industrial establishment for turning out most precious products-the accomplished individual. It is thus an agent for shaping not only the destiny of man but also of the state. It is a community of scholars, which believes in the superiority of the mind over matter and insists that everything material should be subordinated to the intellect. The university is, therefore, a place where concepts hallowed by age and tradition are subjected to severe scrutiny and knowledge grows through dissent, not through compromise.

For the universities to fulfill this mandate they ought to be funded adequately. Sadly, in Nigeria over the years, commitment to adequate funding of the sector has been a major issue which in a way has eroded the much needed autonomy of the universities. Accordingly, the universities in the country which had hitherto competed favorably with similar institutions all of the world have nose dive to a very pitiable situation due to poor funding. The implication of the above is reflected in the report of a global higher education ranking organization called The Times Higher Education (THE) in the ranking of the best universities in the world in terms of teaching, research, citations of scholarly publications, industry income and international outlook among other parameters, as critical responsibilities of universities globally, according to the Daily Sun Newspaper (October, 2016:15) in its 2016/2017 report placed the premier university in the country being the University of Ibadan at the 600th position out of 1000 universities sampled for the exercise.

While this is the result for Nigeria, some smaller and less endowed African countries have consistently been on the global elite universities' list. For instance, South Africa weighed in three of its universities namely University of Cape Town, Stellenbosch University and University of KwaZulu Natal were in this report ranked ahead of the University of Ibadan in the 148th, 401st and 501st positions respectively. Egypt, Kenya, Ghana and Uganda have at least one of their universities listed in the report. While this report is highly regrettable, the country cannot afford to compromise the standard of university education which is what the NUC accreditation exercise is all about to ensure that the universities in the country meet minimum standards that are consistent with the universal goals of tertiary education globally. Universities are so called because those who pass through their portals show evidence of learning and character commensurate with that level of education.

Paulley (2009:239), had argued that how much of the state fund education gets annually is usually a function of the vision and political will of the leadership of a given state. A political leadership that has placed high premium on the surrender value of education, particularly tertiary education, will allocate the much education deserves for it to execute its assigned role for the development of the society concerned. For instance, even among developing countries as observed above, the funding of education is taken a lot more serious in countries whose leadership has placed a high premium on education. This is what, as reported by

National Freedom (January, 2005:4), and Kpolovie and Obilor (2013: 283), we find in Morocco where the government spends 26.1% on education; Cote D' Ivoire it is 30%; Uganda spends 27%; Botswana 19%; South Africa 25.8%; Swaziland and Mexico 24.6 and 24.3 respectively; Tunisia and Lesotho each spend 17% of their funds on education; Burkina Faso 16.8%; Togo 23.2%; Kenya 22.5%. Guinea spends 25.6% on education; Malaysia 26.7% and South Korea 22.4%.

These, according to Kpolovie and Obilor (2013:283-284), are the findings of the annual budgetary allocations to education of 20 World Bank sampled countries in 2012. Ghana according to *Tell Magazine* (November 3, 2008:33), has been spending within the radius of 28% to 40% of its annual budget on education over the years. Ironically, Nigerians are sent to Malaysia, while others go to Ghana on their own, fellow third world countries, for training in technologically based courses in recent times due to these countries' genuine commitment in terms of funding to education, which is missing in the Nigerian situation. This partially explains the frequent strike actions embarked upon by various operators of the education sector in the country such as the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), among others, to bring to the front burner the rot in the system due to underfunding of the sector. For the business of accreditation to make sense the issue of funding by the proprietor of the public universities must be taken seriously so as to make the country's universities take their place in the league of elite universities in the world. It is in fact the main reason for most crises in the university system in the country with the academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in the Nigeria over the years.

For instance, problems and constraints imposed by external environment, which are determined by the various policies of the government on the university system. For instance, the historical background of the Nigerian universities makes them absolutely dependent on government for their financial requirements. This precarious financial situation facing the universities has placed a serious limitation in their quality assurance drive for the expectation of the end users of the university products for which the accreditation exercises are carried out.

This is because the expanding financial burden of operating the university to ensure quality assurance is becoming increasingly difficult due to dwindling finances to the university particularly the publicly owned ones whose proprietorship resides with the same government responsible for these accreditation visits. In other words, quality can not be sustained in the face of under funding the universities are experiencing in the recent time. This point becomes very vivid when the percentage of funds allocation to the entire education sector in the country of which the universities are a part over the years is shown.

For instance, on what constitutes a well funded education, the UNESCO's prescription to developing countries that at least 26% of a country's total budgetary allocation should be allocated to education becomes relevant. This directive in principle, according to Newswatch (1999:24), has the blessings of the Nigerian Government as both the Vision 2010 Committee's Report of the Abacha's government as well as the Etsu Nupe Panel set up by the Federal Government of Nigeria recommended same percentage to education in the country's annual

budgetary provisions to enable education play its national development role in the country. The implementation of the above recommendation to make education play its role of stimulating national development is, therefore, one of the core challenges facing the country.

According to Paulley (2009:236), Kpololvie and Obilor (2013: 281), between 1960 and 2013, the Nigerian government budgetary allocation to the educational sector, contrary to the above recommendation, had ranged in the region of 0.88 percent to 17.59 percent of the entire budget as against the UNESCO suggested minimum 26 percent. It was 0.88 percent in 1973 being the lowest and 17.59 percent in 1997 which had been the highest so far at the national level. The situation in the states is not even better. In buttressing this assertion, *TellMagazine* (2008:32), writes that with the exception of Kano and Yobe States which allocated 18 and 26% of their entire budgets in 2008 respectively to education, all other states followed the pattern set for them by the Federal Government over the years. Ekiti State as one of the educationally advantaged states in the country, for instance, allocated only 9.7% of its 2008 budget to education. Bayelsa State as an oil rich state with its relatively high Federal allocation can afford to allocate a paltry 5.2% of its 2008 budget to education with its heavy education deficit reflected in the many lacks in the sector.

In 2009, the State education sector was allocated only 9.23% of the State budget, an improvement over the previous year one may say, but actual release to the sector that year was only 3.5% (*Bayelsa State of Nigeria Strategic Education Sector Plan: 2013-2022: Nov: 2012:37*), which reveals serious underfunding of the sector. Even at this, much of what came to the sector was spent on recurrent expenditure- salaries and overheads. It has been observed that over the years even the little fund allocated for projects in the sector is not released as at when due.

In the end, the education sector receives much less than what is appropriated for its capital expenditure, thereby making it difficult for education to perform its role of stimulating development in the state. Rivers State under Sir (Dr.) Peter Odili had in 2003, 2004 and 2005 according to the *InterimReportoftheStateImplementationCommitteeonEducation* (2008), reported that the state government allocated 4.6%, 2.6%, and 0.8% respectively of its state budget to education as against the UNESCO's prescription. This pattern has not changed for better; instead it is getting worse due to the value the political leadership of the various tiers of the government in the country has placed on education.

The above sorry state of funding of education by the few states listed above is a reflection of what goes on in most states of the federation even as we move gradually into the target year of 2015 (which is just a year ahead at the time of writing) as the year when the MDGs (one of which is Education For All-EFA) were supposed to be fulfilled. This pattern of funding education certainly cannot make the sector to be an engine room to stimulate national development in the country as it has done for other countries of the world that have genuine commitment to the education sector.

The tremendous negative influence of politics in the administration and management of universities, particularly in Nigeria as no top university administrator can deny the demands of the political leaders who in most cases are in charge of the finances even these demands are against his own principles as an administrator if he does not want to lose his position. It is common knowledge that politics can not be dissociated from education but attempt must be made to strike a balance between politics of education and the beneficial effects of university education on the socio-economic growth of the country through the assurance of quality of its products.

The increasing number of potential university students, the shortage of financial resources and the necessity for redefinition of the contents, distribution and method of delivery of academic programmes, it becomes imperative for the management of Nigerian universities to adopt management strategies that will ensure the sustainable development of the university system.

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Author’s Profile

Dr Fibainmine G.Paulley is a Senior Lecturer of History and Policy of Education in Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State. He has to his credit many scholarly articles published in

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reputable national and international journals. He has also edited, co-edited and co-authored some professional books. He currently serves as the Managing Editor of Niger *Delta Journal of Education*. Dr Paulley is an active member of Historians of Education Society of Nigeria (HOEDSON), an affiliate of International Standing Conference for the History of Education, Nigerian Institute of Management (NIM), and Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN). He is equally a registered and licensed teacher by the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN). His research interests include education and development, education and politics, teacher education and Ijo cultural anthropology. He can be contacted via email at paulleyfg@mail.ndu.edu.ng, paulley2016@gmail.com