

REVITALIZING THE TOWN-GOWN ALLIANCES IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES, SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Abstract

The town-gown alliance in Nigeria's academic space is mostly dysfunctional. The relationship between the academia and local communities can best be described as a sandcastle in a tsunami. The Education Ordinance designed for Lagos and Accra in 1882, which ignored the colonized people's aspirations to develop their local languages, failed to de-territorialize education. As a result, western education appears too foreign and insular to the raw-based local communities. This imposition of Eurocentric education engenders a dysfunctional ecosystem and promotes apathy, resulting in increased animosities between the town and the gown. This study aims to identify the factors responsible for such failures and provides solutions to address the town-gown incongruous biosystems. The approach used in this research involved observations, record-keeping, and focus group analyses to understand the challenges of a fractious relationship between the town and the gown. The study used both primary and secondary means from print materials and online publications to interrogate the crises of tertiary education in Nigeria. The research methodology used was mixed-methods qualitative research, which drew from observation, grounded theory, descriptive, narrative, interpretivism, and constructivism. The study aimed to understand the assumptions of the 'university idea' in Nigeria using the theoretical underpinnings of functionalism, new power, and the Fanonesque views on Eurocentric education. The research seeks to advance the transversal effect of education as part of a social system, both in its manifest and latent forms, and to also highlight its failures. The study identified the causes of the sector's reversal of fortune and came up with new recommendations that validate the importance of a symbiotic alliance between the town and the gown. Overall, this study offers a critical analysis of the dysfunctional and problematic nature of town-gown alliances in Nigeria and provides a solution-based approach to address the town-gown incongruous challenge. The research draws from a corpus of literature on the subject, making it a valuable addition to the town-gown scholarship in Nigeria.

Keywords: Town And Gown Alliances, Education Ordinance, Eurocentric Education, Dysfunctional Ecosystem, University Idea

1.INTRODUCTION

Different writers had wondered whether communities really need universities to survive (Aderogba, 2018). However, it has been established that siting of universities in local communities irretrievably attract knowledge dissemination and capacity building projects to such communities. Reading through an incisive piece in one of our national dailies, one could not help but to ponder on the depth of slump that education in this part of the world has suffered lately in terms of structure, conception, values and practice. To start with, it is incontrovertible to assert that education makes a society, and that communal collaboration is essential in tertiary education. Universities are complex organizations saddled with different activities that ensure economic relevance. They are employers of labour, create knowledge, produce human capital, transfer knowledge and drive innovation and capital investment (Drucker & Goldstein, 2007). Their commercialization abilities combined with regional economic and cultural engagement in local and regional spaces are incontestable. There is always a keen competition between regional and national settings for socioeconomic investments. Hence, the cultivation of local, cultural and creative spaces have become germane in the accumulation of municipal wealth. In such terrains, communities with universities are at an advantage as these knowledge-based institutions are naturally placed to synergize developmental agenda for their communities (Montgomery, 2005). Also, in developed climes, towns/cities promote lifestyle preferences that attract intellectuals.

In most of our institutions in Nigeria, performance management, talent management, reward management and strategic management are zilch. Quality of work life (QWL) which used to be prioritized has dwindled thus, driving away quality contents from reputable international scholars. The need to have a fair and equitable system for assessing and rewarding performance is fast becoming a thing of the past. Ditto for the ability to attract and retain critical talents. This is particularly so in our public universities (ASCON, 2019).

This is not helped by the tumultuous relationships between the universities and host communities which have weakened and nullified the university-driven approach to socioeconomic growth of the surrounding environment (Massey *et al*, 2014). Recent observations had shown that knowledge-based factories in this clime are beset with challenges such that the writer of a newspaper piece noted sadly, that:

We have lost the universe in the university. Our gowns are torn and sadly, we cannot afford new ones. (Ganiu Bamgbose, 2021)

Apart from highlighting the downsides of town-gown relationships in Nigeria by reviewing existing research, this study investigates the causes of insular culture as well as the seamless merger between universal standards and local practices in our ivory towers. However, there is a dearth of literature in this area, hence, this research has provided new insights into the subject of cultural syncretism. The research problem is both descriptive and relational. It aims at underscoring what the problems are and how the identified problems had impacted negatively on the lopsided alliances. The study aims to fill the yawning gap between appearance and reality in the lopsided alliances of these two components by making recommendations that will synergize the actual behaviour of professionals with the advocated behaviour. It is one thing to identify and condemn the lacuna. It is another thing to proffer practical solutions to the identified deficiencies, thus, adding to the knowledge base of the subject.

The need to address quality concerns in the university system had long formed a recurring theme in the

scholarly HEI literature in recent times. It is a known fact that Mcdonaldization and consequent devaluation of universities in our climate have contributed to the rapid descent of academic practice and professional conduct: The culture which undermines local culture and encourages a toxic work environment has become an incubus in our educational space.

Tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria have come a long way from the days of their initial establishment at the Yaba College of Technology and the University College, Ibadan. No one doubts the tremendous contributions they have made to national development especially in the provision of the human resources that are critical for the advancement of the country. However, available evidence indicates that they were better able to carry out their functions, at least from the point of view of the quality of their products, when their numbers were fewer. (Nimi D. Briggs, 2006)

Added to this chaos is the upsurge of hostilities between the town and the gown. It is disconsolate to note that in Nigeria, this dystopian state of epistemic dislocation has taken root in most university settlements, where the university is no longer seen as a place of light and knowledge, but rather as an oppressive tool and an incubator for insulated cultures.

The urge to survive has eaten up the creative ingenuity of scholars where research is seen in the light of promotion rather than problem solving; value-digesting rather than value-creating. Moonshot ideas no longer emanate nor nurtured in the citadels of learning, hence, the general apathy and increased hostilities from the folk populations. Coupled with this is the incessant rots of the cultural matrix of academia. At inception, the town had gravitated towards the gown. Alice Waters, recalling the portrait of a university environment, wrote:

I really appreciate the many neighborhoods of Berkeley. There is still the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker. And it has the University of California, which is the greatest gift, to my mind, to be close to it. It keeps the place alive. (Alice Waters, 2016)

Here, the substructure and the superstructure worked hand-in-hand to achieve socioeconomic, political and cultural fusion. However, experience has shown that the town-gown antagonism is not exclusively limited to Nigeria. The town-gown conflict of 1355 tagged the Oxford's Battle of St. Scholastica Day where a beer parlor brawl degenerated into a free-for-all fight between the townsfolk and the university community serves as a point of reference. The Ezra Street riot of 1995, the Aberdeen riot of 2005, and in recent times, the Fanshawe College St. Patrick's Day riot of 2013 (Mark Langer, 2014) are pointers to the fact that spontaneous conflicts do happen from time to time to test and stretch the town-gown bipedal nexus. At such times, the creative collaboration between the two units becomes fractured. The lalochezia, the contests and contestations that emanate therefrom throw up issues bordering on deficit of trust.

It has been established by many scholars that the town-gown communities need to work together to achieve national development. Gavazzi (2015) stressed the need for synergy between the two institutions, emphasizing that the university engages the society by inviting the society to engage with it. All scholars emphasize the need for both structures to work together and align priorities for overall progress. Ukala & Nwabueze (2014) stressed the ability of tertiary institutions to reshape young minds and equip them with skills and knowledge that make them relevant to the process of achieving equilibrium in their societies. While Chenowith (2007), Wole & Banjo (2013) and Robert-Okah & Nyenwe (2013) dwelt mainly on the economic drive engendered by the town-gown relationships, Lazzeroni & Piccaluga (2015), Rodrigues (2011) and Bakwai (2013) emphasized the overall impact of a good relationship both locally and globally. The first colonial document on education designed for Lagos and Accra fashioned the educational spaces in these climes after the British model ((Ndubuisi, 2018). Expectedly, the insularity and puritanical condescension of the missionaries/colonial masters were introduced along with the educational culture

which further deepened the gap between local folks and the new culture. Such disconnect has in most cases become generational, and has affected the research plan such that static positions were maintained on issues bordering on the subject. Hence, insularity and insufficient information on the subject limits the abilities of the researcher to suggest other robust recommendations. In all, the consensus was that cordial relationship between the town and the gown enhances knowledge, promotes economy, maximizes resources and attracts development (Ogola-Emma, Akpobomere & Amini-Philips, 2021).

2. METHOD

Despite limitations associated with being an insider and the potential for bias, the research aims to provide new insights into the subject of cultural syncretism and the town-gown relationship in Nigeria, which has received little attention in existing literature. The paper used secondary data sourced from print materials and online publication (Google and ResearchGate) to interrogate the crises of tertiary education in Nigeria with particular emphasis on the breakdown of relationship between the town and the gown. A mixed method of qualitative research which draws from observation, grounded theory, descriptive, narrative, interpretivism and constructivism, (i.e. building knowledge from understanding the viewpoints of individuals and viewing such knowledge as constructed for overall meaning) is employed to describe the research problem and reflect on a sizeable HEI literature especially, those that dwell on town-gown relationship with regional knowledge impacts (Varga, 2002) and expenditure impacts of universities (Kelly et al, 2006). The study seeks to understand the assumptions of the 'university idea' in Nigeria, using the theoretical underpinnings of functionalism, (Herbert Spencer) new power and the Fanonesque views on Eurocentric education (Franz Fanon) to advance the transversal effect of education as part of a social system both in its manifest and latent forms, and to also underline its failures. The reversal of fortune that happened to the sector and the causes were mentioned. Despite limitations associated with being an insider and the potential for bias, the research aims to provide new insights into the subject of cultural syncretism and the town-gown relationship in Nigeria, which has received little attention in existing literature.

3. FINDINGS

Our study has been able to show that HEIs and the public should effectively connect to drive the socio-economic and the education sector positively. It is a given that such connections provide a meeting point for researchers and marketers, and also enriches the populace intellectually by changing mindsets. In furtherance of our investigation, the study additionally shows that universities in this climate were very vibrant and productive locally and in the global space, and that this position was incrementally reversed as a result of incongruous relationships between the town and the gown. The complacency, the violence, distressed economy, moral turpitude, lack of honesty of purpose, and more, had contributed to the dystopian situation that is now being experienced.

Our investigation also reveals that structural malfunctioning of basic principles and policies had accounted for major failures and incoherence in the management and administration of HEIs.

In order to stop the downward trend, there has to be a strong rapprochement between the town and the gown. This is the starting point.

4. DISCUSSION

The successes achieved in the early history of education and the monumental self-stabbing that followed almost immediately were as a result of mismanagement, maladministration and maladjusted structures. Inchoate policies and shoe-horned principles imported and foisted on a system with unique peculiarities, lack of patience and resilience to follow policies through to their logical conclusions, and a gaping lacuna between policy formulation and policy implementation have stunted the sector. Effete policies, riddled

with political inclinations and lack of sincere willingness to effectively execute them confined them to the doldrums. The National Policy of Education which should be reviewed from time to time to reflect present-age realities has remained static. The failure at HEIs level therefore, becomes a culmination of failures from the primary and secondary levels, and a fractional portrayal of system failure. The epidermalization of inferiority and the attendant racialization of education along the Fanonesque line though not prevalent in this part of the world (Frantz Fanon, 1952) metastasized to create distinct gaps in contemporary space between the education for the gentry and that for the children of the poor. Policies are formed to encourage privatization of education from primary to tertiary levels, validating lines between the moneybags and the precariat. Education in Nigeria is no longer the prerogatives of the State but that of Shylock private owners and politicians. The frustrations of a non-workable system, the pent-up anger occasioned by failure to achieve the desired station in life, the imperfections that kept the lower rung away from the big picture, the aberrant flaunting of wealth in a struggling society, the daring shenanigans of politicians before the pauperized masses, the angst, the demystification of HEIs and their inability to proffer solutions to pressing societal problems, the rising waves of unchecked violence and impunity, the aggregate of these and more could only lead to explosions in the system; one of the ways to express explosions and multiple discontent is through the town-gown conflicts.

Through the theories of functionalism and new power, we have been able to compare and contrast obverse submissions, which has made it possible to critically examine the principles and practice of education on the one hand, and HE on the other hand. It was evident that the functional unity of the social system is compromised by the ineffective operation of the education sector.

Violent attacks on the academia have claimed lives of staff, students, scholars, campus security personnel and other individuals. Killings, kidnappings, disappearances and other forms of violence which in the past were not experienced in HEIs are becoming rampant. Such acts perpetrated by various actors mostly from outside HEIs undermine university sanctity, deracinate academic freedom and thwart the universal perception of academia as a free space.

In Africa, the filiopietistic aura of HE spaces have been violated many times through violent interference from host communities. On November 10, 2021, a lecture theatre in the University of Buea, Cameroon, was bombed, and a number of students were severely injured. This came as a result of the onslaught between Anglophone separatists and the government of Cameroon. While in some of these attacks the intention was *“to control or silence higher education institutions and personnel”* in recent times, they portray spillovers of incidents of insecurity in town (Freedom to think, 2017). In Nigeria, incidents of arrest and disappearance were rampant during the regimes of the military junta, i.e. the mid-80's and 90's. This has transmogrified to anarchy unleashed by armed bandits and terrorist groups. Groups like *Boko Haram*, *ISWAP*, and others have turned the university space to theatres of war. The University of Maiduguri have been especially targeted by Islamist fundamentalists, leading to series of bloodbaths:

There were three attacks in May (2017). In the first, on 13 May, three suicide bombers attacked the university, killing themselves and one security guard, on the day of admissions exam, with 4,000 students expected to attend. In a similar incident on 18 May, three unidentified suicide bombers attacked the same university killing themselves and injuring three others after attempting to enter a female student hostel. Two days later, another unidentified individual tried to bomb a hall of residence, but detonated his explosives outside the campus when challenged. On 25 June, a group of individuals stormed the campus, killing a guard and injuring three others...On 6 July, two attackers attempted to bomb a dormitory at the university but were fired by security guards which

killed one of them, while the other detonated his explosive device, killing himself
(‘Global Crisis’ of violence against higher education-University World News)

In recent times, more victims have been killed, maimed and abducted, while academic activities have remained largely stultified in many universities in the northern region. The university space which used to be spared from extrinsic security breaches have been overrun. At the peak of the Ife-Modakeke crisis in 1999, the campus of Obafemi Awolowo University was somewhat respected as a free zone by all warring factions, and war refugees were freely housed in the facility. This situation is what has become compromised today through seasons of incursions from the town. The town, an erstwhile validation space and a bastion of support for the gown has become a gateway for incursions and a propellant for the effacement of values of HEIs. The gown has ruptured across cleavages due to such intrusions, and it has reciprocated by compromising standard and churning out black-market options for the consumption of the communities. Ultimately, the dialectics that emanated from the town-gown alliances in recent times has ensured seemingly unending conflicts and insouciant syndrome.

4.1. The University Idea

The flagship of all universities is the ‘*universal cultures and practices*’ that resonate excellence and sublimate superior reasoning over mediocrity. The universe in the word ‘university’ is a generic connotation of a pervasive gold standard, measured across all universities in accordance with acceptable ethics and norms. The university is conceived as a lighthouse where value-chains are forged, unforged and re-forged for the advancement of humanity. Global competitiveness and local relevance are fundamentals of standard universities where the focus is to generate knowledge, apply knowledge and disseminate knowledge through teaching, research and community service. The providers of such standardized ethos and practices, the bearers of the standard torch of knowledge, the notion that a university is a citadel of cumulative breakthroughs and a crucible of moonshot ideas and cerebral providers is defeated today by myopic conceptions actively peddled by mediocre pretenders and rawgabbits parading as academics. The university is being gradually overtaken by the macro-society with its underwhelming values and ethos. What used to constitute ‘the university idea’ stands confounded today in the contemporary mind as elevated intellectualism is becoming weathered down by provincial values. Largely, the academic value-chain has snapped; rather, a pedestrian and disingenuous version is being presented as authentic intellectualism. In the absence of passionate individuals and conducive policies designed to promote educational advancement, and in a nation where pretenders have toppled good reasoning, it is fast becoming a pipedream to sustain, propagate and promote cerebral erudition comparable to those acquired in ‘civilized’ universe and communities of scholars. While a teeming number of individuals are not bereft of ideas, they however find it difficult to expand and develop within a restrictive and denigrating condition provided by policy makers. No updated materials, no infrastructures, no awareness, no autonomy, no celebration. Academic heights are only achievable through extrinsic affiliations and chicaneries. Motivation is zilch. In such a situation, the university idea is defeated. What you have is a simulacrum, a cosmetic ersatz and a monumental farce where putative intellectualism becomes part of the problems rather than the solution.

The quality of a universal value being appropriate for all situations and the concept of indigeneity in a university system had been interrogated by scholars across-board. In recent times, indigenes of host towns had agitated, sometimes violently, for unilateral installation of their sons and daughters as Vice-Chancellors without recourse to merit and due process. It has been observed that such a move would be reductive and would confine universal institutions to local entities, as appointments would be based on tribal and ethnic sentiments. (Adesina Wahab, 2022). Thus, the notion of the university being:

...the choicest productions of nature and art all together (where) there are the best markets, and the best workmen Ogunraku, 2020).

becomes compromised. The University had evolved from the archetypal Ivory Towers of Plato and Aristotle to modern structures which constantly respond to global capitalism and consumerist culture, having been brought into conversation with complex environments. Political affiliations rather than competence had consistently been used to appoint members of Governing Councils. This accounted for the dearth of reasonable appreciation of the challenges confronting the ivory towers by the government-appointed external members of council who lack the knowledge of what it entails to run the universities. Therefore, universal structures sited in universities should preserve the universal values they are noted for rather than showcasing ethnic sentiments.

In an effort to ascertain the takeover of the public universities, host populations have in recent times taken to violent protests, accompanying such protests with masquerades, fetish accoutrements, ritual angst and terrorism complex to drive home their demands. In Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, the host community besieged the campus to demand for the installation of their son as Vice-Chancellor. The people held staff and students of the university hostage for days with masquerades and fetish invasions. (Qosim Suleiman and Olasunkanmi Akinlotan, 2022) Also, the recent selection of Professor Wahab Egbewole, a non-indigene, as the 11th Vice-Chancellor of University of Ilorin caused negative reactions from the Ilorin Emirate Youth Development Association (IEYDA) who expressed disappointment over the fact that the new Vice-Chancellor that was picked was not from Igbomina extraction or even from Kwara State but rather from across the border in Osun State despite the interest of six other contestants from the emirate. It is no longer a thing of shame to advocate publicly for installation of indigenes to head the Ivory Towers over the primal consideration of merit.

The disappearance of foreign students from our universities speaks volumes about the corrosive travails the knowledge factories are experiencing. Our universe has become desiccated over time, and we have remained increasingly isolated from the universal culture, bereft of global competitiveness and local relevance.

Land-grabbing saga between the town and the gown also constituted another source of crises. On February 22, 2020, violence erupted at the University of Jos over land. The town went to battle again for the umpteenth time over an expanse of land bordering the Naragata community. (Isaac Shobayo, 2020). The same thing played out at College of Education, Ilesa, where illegal miners and land grabbers encroached on the College's vast land, especially as the school has no perimeter fencing (Vanguard News, November 13, 2021). In this school, it has been alleged that only indigenes were made Provosts in recent times. In crises cases, the folk refuseniks were egged on by their Professor-fans and scholars who surreptitiously collaborated with them to gain advantage of the incendiary situations. In such instance and in so many other instances like during union-management conflicts, high-culture, standards and best practice are thrown out of the windows for petty syncretism as sacrifices, offerings, idols and other ritual homunculi litter major junctions and crossroads as appeasements to native gods. At such moments, the citadels of intellectual ideas are reduced to shrines and groves. Hence, the university idea becomes a mismatch of folk practice and western philosophies.

4.2. Functionalism

The interrelationship of parts within a system is the nodal concept of functionalism. Functionalism is the belief that every component part of society unites to serve a purpose and that the resulting connexions are geared towards achieving functional unity, i.e. all cultural and social phenomena are saddled with indispensable functions in an ecosystem. Such functions which may be manifest (recognized and intended)

or latent (not recognized nor intended) make contributions to the maintenance of a unified social structure (Radcliff-Brown). Hence, processes that do not contribute to the maintenance or the development of a system and that undermine stability, integration and effectiveness of the system is dysfunctional (Talcott Parsons). The functional perspective therefore, sees society as a complex nexus whose parts work together for balance. Each social structure has dedicated social functions for the overall operation of society as society is equated to an organism made up of different parts that work together; cohesive, share common norms and a definitive culture (Robert K. Merton). Functionalism thus, addresses society as a whole in terms of the function of its constituents, e.g. norms, traditions and institutions. These '*organs*' work together to ensure a unified whole (Herbert Spencer). However, we note that the Murphy's Law margin is always applicable to complex structures like the society and its components. Structural Functionalism is a sociological theory that explains why society functions the way it functions, and the relationships between the various social components that make up the society. The components which include government, law, education, religion, and others shape and give structures to our lives. Where functional unity is compromised, we say there is a dysfunction. The structural-functionalist views where division of labour and predefined gender roles between sexes is viewed as gender inequality and suppression of women within the family structure may be regarded as examples of such dysfunction in a male-female construction.

In Africa, this type of dysfunction is more pronounced and engrained in a macho cultural context. The patriarchal society boldly proclaims a man's world while ruthlessly suppressing '*the other sex*.' Socialization in this context, becomes a tortuous process and a deliberate attempt to force acceptance down the throats of oppositions. Having said this, we note that there is a natural tendency in society towards equilibrium whereby, even when crises abound in the social configuration, the social structure usually finds a way to balance out and returns society to equilibrium (Bain A., 1876)

The incongruent and disharmonious relationships between the town and the gown in modern Nigeria is as a result of such dysfunction. Warped perceptions of the benefits and expected goals of education have contributed majorly to the bellicose and uncompromising town-gown postures. The perception that acquiring education ensures meal tickets and open doors to automatic employment in bureaucracy has played a major role. Such opportunities used to exist. Consumerism used to hold sway with the acquisition of university education. But with the economic downturn, the need to use education for productive and entrepreneurial purposes has become imperative. That aspect of education as a means to an end is more emphatic in recent times. The orientation is to view education as an agent of propulsion towards self-reliance and economic sustenance. The focus is to transit from a consumer and bureaupath society to a subsistence society (Olusanya & Ideh, 2017).

In this vein, the 360 degree's veering and the consequent change in perceptions as regards the acquisition of higher education has left the town disillusioned, as youth unemployment reaches monumental heights. This is a major cause of functional disunity in HE systems.

4.3. New Power Theory and Marxist views on Education

Tertiary education is a vessel for manpower development. It trains interns for the work force and other societal engagements. Its functions include incisive contribution to national development, inculcating proper values and the development of intellectual capacity of the individual to enhance self-reliance and individual cognitive capabilities and awareness. It also promotes national unity. In essence, functional tertiary education exists for the common good (Okeke & Osuala, 2016).

Functionalism emphasizes the positive aspects of education like socialization, skill acquisition, the values of achievement, competition and equal opportunity, role allocation (i.e. allocation of people to appropriate

jobs according to competencies through examinations and qualification, and commensurate reward, (Davis & Moore), manpower development, transmission of shared beliefs and values, as well as universalistic standard and importance of human capital to drive modern economy (Duncan & Blau). In recent times, the town-gown ties that used to exist in HEIs in Nigeria and the belief that education automatically creates social solidarity (Emile Durkheim) has been put to question. Rather, the Marxian view of education as a tool for perpetuation of the ruling class ideology had consistently gained grounds in the psyche of the ordinary people. Education (western education), is being continually conceived as the enemy in pedestrian definition; this ideology is at the base of the *Boko Haram* terrorist group in Nigeria. The prestige factor and the centripetal aura that education used to have amongst the folk populace is continually losing its glitz courtesy of decades of sociopolitical and economic failures. Critics posit that a noxious belief that education is fair and rewards the best is misleading to say the least. Rather, they believe that education ignores social inequalities that restrict attainment, teaches values and norms that are unquestionably bourgeoisie and also teaches skills and knowledge that are irrelevant to the world of work. This leaning is popularly held by Marxian apologists and the New Power theorists who are beginning to see collapsible borders between the old order and the new order; between managerialism and its living wage consciousness and the peer-driven values of social relevance and emotion which dwell on the need to act through the way we operate and, not just through education and research. More importantly, people perceive universities to be acting in their self-interest rather than in societal interest. The waves of strike in our HEIs in recent times and the overriding perception of striking workers as self-centered refuseniks is an example. The '*digital natives*,' (Jonathan Grant), the young people coming into the universities with unique set of values, the new generation of students and the folk populace of host communities are beginning to experience angst about universities in public discourse, seeing them as being remote from real life experience, believing more in social purposes that universities have apart from their educational mission. The strait-jacketed, constricted, old power values consisting of rigid exclusivity, confidentiality and professionalism give way to open source collaboration, crowd wisdom, radical transparency and do-it-yourself '*maker culture*,' as social responsibility becomes a core and equal part of the academic mission. This is different from the noisy '*Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)*' eleemosynary approach where donations are made to communities on a *quid pro quo* basis, since it is understood as:

Doing good for the good of (your) business (Porter & Kramer, 2007).

In all, it is evident that the functionality and effectiveness of HEIs in achieving the lofty ideals foisted on it by necessity has been compromised in higher educational spaces in Nigeria. A bonding trust between the town and the gown where complementarity and symbiotic relationships are prioritized have become a rarity in Nigeria, as various factors have come together to undermine these values over time. It is essential to restore the confidence by isolating and excising the negativities if we wish to restore effective functionality of HEIs in Nigeria. We need to rediscover our prelapsarian strength, recover lost grounds and chart new designs to enhance the functionality of our educational institutions through effective and effective enforcement of new and forward-looking policies.

4.4. Fanonesque views on Education

The anti-violence violence posture of Frantz Fanon and the emancipatory spirit to liberate the black man from endemic colonial/post-colonial indignities was at the base of his treatise on education. Viewed through the prism of Eurocentric pedagogy, education/western education is studied as an extension of colonization and a direct attempt to epidermalize inferiority (Frantz Fanon, 1957) Education in this respect is nothing but the imposition of a European consciousness on a people, with insipid intention to erase histories and replace these with new and falsified outlook. It is a means of internalizing oppression and making the Eurocentric agenda a physical, mental and spiritual fight. In essence therefore, education is a

continuance of racial domination, presenting subjugation as natural order. It is a derisive version of the original which purports to sweep the carpet from under our feet by internalizing racial oppression through systemic teaching of a racist curriculum:

...a superstructure that seeks to impose European consciousness onto other people's consciousness. (Asante 2012: 38)

Moreover, in the present state, racism is perpetuated through other infrastructures of education like trade agreements, structural adjustments programmes, debt schemes and other economic traps that confine the neo-colonies to self-abnegation and underdevelopment. Displacement, effacement and falsification of histories were freely used to pervert and re-colonize the black man. Education becomes a tool to silence and change factual processes. Examples abound in Egyptology where pictorial/written evidences were changed, lactified or cast in Hellenic mold (Cheikh Anta Diop, 1984). Controversies on the actual colors and races of Pharaohs have recurred in studies over time. This is pedagogical terrorism.

Across secondary schools in Nigeria, a policy was recently mooted to cancel history as a subject from the curriculum. People were left to believe that the emancipatory toga and the eye-opening histories of African heroes and glorious past might have gored the egos of some invisible pro-white monarchs seated behind the curtains to pull the strings. What else might have prompted such atrocious policy when at tertiary level, history remains a discipline, waiting to be gradually stifled and stultified. The confused and confusing curricula in schools remain the nadir in our educational histories.

Ineffective policies and ensconement of square pegs in round holes have ensured functional disunity, which had resulted in incessant expressions of bilious relationships between the town and the gown. It is evident that the feelings among some folk people is to the effect that acquiring education should no longer be a do-or-die venture as without education, most people still get by in the economy. To cap it all, certificated education no longer guarantees desired status in the economy. The systemic devaluation of western education has therefore become an albatross in our educational history and in a community where wealth is celebrated, not minding the source. Epidermal education is a colonial heritage that has false airs at its base. The pedestrian perception of education as a matador against poverty and an avenue to good life has been destroyed, and our curriculum has remained at subliminal level. It has therefore become necessary to review and rework the curriculum to reflect sociocultural nuances and emphasize sociopolitical relevance. It is also expedient to balance the ingrained '*colonial mentality*' of our educators with emancipatory and salutary awareness that promotes independent thinking and groundbreaking research in our pedagogy. Releasing stilted energies and imaginations of our indigenous scholars and promoting scholarly wisdom in or outside the walls of the universities would do a great service to scholarship and epistemic revolution.

4.5. Importance of Tertiary Education in Nigeria

Education is naturally conditioned to ensure a transition from a consumer mode to a producer mode of learning with emphasis on construction of knowledge and negotiation of meaning. In recent times, education has been totally construed not just as '*the means*' but '*a means to an end*'. It is an eclectic value-driven mold that makes its beneficiaries fully realize their potentials without necessarily limiting themselves to their areas of study. In this instance, a graduate of Chemistry does not necessarily become a Chemistry teacher, or anything that has to do with Chemistry, but becomes successful in whatever endeavor they might find themselves, using the all-round skills, strategies and finesse bestowed on them by education. Though the goals of education differ from clime to clime, education by no means, is a global constant, a global right and a global need. Education, which is the process of passing down knowledge whether in formal or informal modes, is a means for personal development and freedom, and a process

necessary for the survival of the human universe. Learning and socialization remain the signposts of education. The proclivity for human settlements is to attract tertiary education projects by ensuring suitable and hospitable sites for such projects. Situations abound where such projects were rebuffed, antagonized, vilified, and vandalized. This however, does not mean that education, or tertiary education, is no longer desirable in our societies. Rather, it means that contestations and disharmonious developments were caused by extrinsic factors which continually diminish the sacrosanct beliefs and values held by the populace about tertiary education. In the tertiary education hemisphere in Nigeria, certificates alone no longer suffice as skills are becoming important too. Hence, while acquiring certificates is a proclamation that you can add value, acquisition of requisite skills actually ensure that you add value. The economy is value-driven, hence the need goes beyond mere certification to on-the-ground value-adding. And in this mode, there is a need to go beyond secondary school education as this level of education is bereft of depth that encompasses skills needed on the career path. Tertiary education, i.e. universities, polytechnics, monotechnics, colleges of education and other specialized institutions teach interns skills, and operationalize them for the career world. Apart from equipping people with deeper knowledge on their fields and certifying them, thus, giving them greater advantage in the market, tertiary education also gives the individual a sense of self-worth and self-esteem. The prestige factor which confers authority on beneficiaries of tertiary education is what has been assailed by the persistent conflicts between the town and the gown.

4.6. Improved Town-Gown Connexion: Features

Connecting researchers to the marketplace and transmuting ideas to market validation is the hallmark of cordial town-gown relationships. A lopsided relationship between the two institutions brings about zero proprietary sentiments and insularity. To allow incompatibility between them is to defeat the primary purpose of education, and the overall national development (Aderogba, 2018). Land-grabbing episodes of gazetted university lands or insularity by the academia do great disservice to knowledge, national development, and the future of a nation.

4.7. Maximum Capital and Financial Resources

A university town is a pond of human capital and financial wealth. It is a magnet that attracts development by engaging and retaining world-class talents who shall drive socioeconomic development and worldwide partnerships. Such development is usually rapid and cosmopolitan as the local economy is boosted by producers and inventors, and the market which is driven by consumer needs becomes larger and relevant. A vibrant economy opens up a hitherto obscure settlement to global space, opening doors for sociocultural development.

4.8. Elevating the level of learning and life

Since the primary intent of a university is to create, transfer and teach knowledge, a university town is made popular by this task. The town earns itself clout and preeminence as a result of the nobility and developmental abilities of the knowledge-creating venture. The literacy level created by the proselytization of learning and knowledge elevates levels of awareness and impact on the quality of reasoning of the folk populace. It is a given that tertiary institutions make host communities better in social, economic and political outlooks by giving them new direction and modern orientation (Emma-Ogola, Akpobomere, Amini-Philips & Abraham, 2020).

4.9. Studentification

Studentification is understood as the impact of high concentration of students on host communities, specifically, the changes imposed on HEIs cities and surrounding communities on local culture and the

economy (Darren Smith, 2002). It is a process by which the positive and negative effects of the massive student population in host communities are studied not only in terms of proxemics and demographics but also in terms of physical, economic, social and cultural perspectives. Noticeably, studentification brings economic opportunities as it transforms communities to business zones through commercialization, providing ready markets for the populace. Suburb densification by student populace is always readily felt in geography and economy, sometimes, in negative terms:

Undergraduates have moved into areas of Britain's big cities, ripping the heart out of communities and leaving devastation... As student numbers have grown, so parts of Leeds, Birmingham, Nottingham and Newcastle have been taken over by a transitory population of young people who aren't interested in tending the gardens or cutting the hedges. Moreover, they keep odd hours, throw late-night parties and spend much of their time elsewhere... Some streets resemble slums...(The Independent 2004, page 11).

Ghettoization and HMOs (houses of multiple occupancy) continually promote '*street-blight*' and unkempt environments in student-concentrated areas in the UK. In Newcastle and other HEI towns, communal cohesion has been on decline while awards like '*Neighbour-to-neighbour campaign*' (Nottingham University) and '*Best Neighbour on campus*' award (Newcastle University) were introduced to promote communal cohesion caused by the negative influence of youth cultures. The Nigerian university space is not alien to such negative youth elan. Though noise- nuisance, less commitment to maintaining quality of local environment, pressure on municipal facilities, and in some instances, cultic violence, remain persistent threats of high densification of students in HEI areas, it is evident that student population in HEI communities had contributed to the '*opening-up*' processes of many local communities in Nigeria, and have contributed to regional and national development.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The diminishing proprietary spirits and reciprocating rapprochements between the town and the gown, and the creation of insular exclaves have been a source of concerns since bilious relationships had continually affected creativity, security, socioeconomic and other forms of development. The growth of intellectualism is affected both within and outside the community, hence the need to devise means to ensure peaceful co-existence at all times. In this vein, it has become expedient to recommend practices that would consolidate alliances and ensure the achievement of set targets in line with the vision and mission of the institutions, and for social relevance.

5.1. Repositioning Tertiary Education

In the 21st Century, it is no longer tenable for public universities to rely solely on government subvention. This has become grossly inadequate to drive the numerous projects and responsibilities of universities (Ogunode, 2018). The much-touted university autonomy and academic freedom would continue to form the bedrock of a good culture of scholarship in every civilized world. Our universities should be run through grants, corporate social alliances, alumni, *aficionados*, and partnerships, while efforts should be made to enshrine some level of financial freedom. Universities should broaden their IGR bases and canvass for a financial platform that is less controlled and less monastic, towards becoming financially independent, to seamlessly run their programmes and fulfill their mandates of academic governance, business governance and corporate governance (Bakare, 2021).

5.2. Decolonizing the mind

To achieve maximum benefits of tertiary education in society, it is important to decolonize the mind by constantly reviewing the curriculum. The relevance of education is maintained in the present disposition

with the right blend of foreign and regional contents. HEIs should remain socially relevant, not by stubbornly applying alien thoughts to native problems, but by balancing the algorithms through applications of western thoughts and native intelligence. The local population should be able to reason along and identify with the intent and purposes of HEIs, and see them as products of joint efforts and collective investments. Preconceived epistemology is appreciated when it is conveyed in local colours for a game-changing experience.

5.3. Industrial Disputes

Our educational process should be service-reflective. A situation where students pay and end up spending more years in the institutions courtesy of incessant strikes by their lecturers is inexcusable. No doubt, our structures are defective and in need of many interventions. However, even at that, it is necessary to brainstorm with a view to finding alternative means to incessant strikes by the unions, and for damage control. The unions may have legitimate discontent, and they usually do; but pulling down the structure to mend the leakages is certainly not the solution (Bakare, 2021). Culpability on this matter is shared and cuts across, hence the need for shared intervention. Reduction of industrial disputes would put an end to epileptic academic calendar and consequently, forge better understanding in town-gown relationships.

5.4. Political Barnstorming

In recent times, HEIs have adopted the use of satellite campuses to meet the educational aspirations of constituencies in regions. Political considerations take precedence in citing such campuses to ensure that educational yearnings and aspirations of many local communities are met. This is a good move as rural districts gain instant socioeconomic advancement as a result of such moves. However, in most instances, this move could only be interpreted as political barnstorming rather than honest intentions to advance education in these districts. Campuses were proliferated without the necessary support to make them viable arms. The interest had been to make political claims rather than to genuinely assuage the educational backwardness of local constituencies. While this action is able to proselytize knowledge by ensuring that tertiary education and political dividends touch as many splinter communities as possible, it remains, by all intent and purpose, the outcome of political campaigns. With proper empowerment, such steps could work wonders and eliminate the deficits of trust between the town and the gown.

5.5. Sense of Ownership

Education in any community is a joint investment. Shared interests and joint attachment to tertiary institutions go beyond the prestige factor to the realization of actual benefits. If communities could offer hectares of land *gratis* or at give-away prices to government for the establishment of HEIs in their communities, it is awful, preposterous and disconcerting for such communities to turn against such investments which they ‘jointly’ own. The proprietary feeling is assailed and the conjugal bond is cut, courtesy of general distrust, changed values and economic downturn. For us to reclaim the bond of a jointly-owned venture, dissonance on both sides should be addressed as a matter of urgency

5.6. Bonding Programmes

At this juncture, good minded people should be concerned with the possible irredentism of the tertiary education sector and the dampening relationship between the town and the gown. We believe that in order to reclaim the vibrancy that used to exist between the two parties, bonding programmes should be initiated or revamped to stem the hibernation. HEIs should be encouraged to increase the numbers of neighbour-to-neighbour programmes as it is done in some western universities. Scholars should be encouraged to work with local experts in an attempt to transform the public sectors like agriculture, while universities should improve on their grantsmanship drive to support startups of local job projects. Positive

services like throwing open libraries and computer facilities on campuses and floating joint committees with the host communities would multiply goodwill and reduce friction between the two bedmates. Availing the folk populace with the opportunity of lifelong education at no cost and organizing admission training for Secondary School leavers would enhance the relationship and leave the populace with an elevated mindset. The present practice where teachers in the universities are used to supervise nationwide elections could only further create a lacuna between the university and its public, especially when such elections go awry. It is our belief that politics, being a shambolic affair in this part of the world, should be left to politicians and that intellectuals should avoid the risk of being lured into what appears as face-saving exploits by politicians to validate excrescence and monstrous practice.

6. CONCLUSION

We have been able to show that a good town-gown relationship is necessary for the stability of the tertiary education sector. We noted that there is a disconnect between the town and the gown as a result of a number of reasons, and that academic interest *vis-à-vis* social interest have become non-aligned.

In conclusion, our study has highlighted the importance of a harmonious town-gown relationship for the success and stability of the tertiary education sector. Our findings revealed that there is currently a significant lacuna between the academia and the local communities, leading to non-alignment of academic interests and social interests. We also found that universities are yet to fully embrace new power values and have failed to effectively operate through research. This functional disunity and the resulting deficit of trust between the town and gown have created incongruent relationships that have led to a number of challenges. Based on our findings, we recommend several steps that can be taken to improve the situation and foster a stronger town-gown relationship. These steps include the implementation of fair and equitable performance management systems, the development of strategies to attract and retain critical talents, and the cultivation of local, cultural, and creative spaces that promote socioeconomic growth in the surrounding communities. It is our hope that our study will contribute to the ongoing efforts towards strengthening the town-gown relationship in Nigeria and beyond.

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