

Political Influence and the Proliferation of Tertiary Institutions: Implications for Quality and Sustainable Tertiary Education Development

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This paper examines the implications of establishing tertiary institutions based on political considerations, constituency demands, and personal prestige. **Method:** The study argues that such motivations often lead to the proliferation of poorly planned institutions characterized by inadequate funding, insufficient infrastructure, and declining academic standards. **Results:** The paper further highlights how politically motivated establishment of institutions contributes to duplication of academic programmes, inefficient allocation of resources, and weak institutional governance. It concludes that tertiary institutions should be established based on strategic educational planning, manpower needs, and sustainable funding mechanisms. **Novelty:** The study recommends stronger regulatory frameworks, evidence-based educational planning, and adherence to national higher education policies to ensure the sustainable development of tertiary education systems.

INTRODUCTION

Tertiary education is widely recognized as a fundamental driver of national development, innovation, and socio-economic transformation. Universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education serve as centers for knowledge creation, human capital development, and professional training. Tertiary institutions play an important role in different aspects of the economy through teaching, research and community service which can be aim at wealth creation, technological advancement and social transformation. As a result, a large number of nations around the planet have broadened their higher education systems to deal with the increasing necessity for qualified human capital and a knowledge-driven development. While tertiary education plays a crucial role, the proliferation of higher institutions needs to be rigorously planned, sufficiently resourced, and aligned with explicit national development goals. New tertiary institutions should, of course, be established according to demographic, human resource, equity, economic and financial and infrastructural considerations. When these issues are appropriately dealt with, the growth of higher education can help stimulate national and educational development.

For instance, in Nigeria and other developing countries, the establishment of tertiary institutions is often in line with political expediency, rather than need. Political leaders might promote the establishment of institutions to be rewarded politically, respond to constituency requests, or minimize potential damage to their legacy. In these instances, institutions may be created with limited feasibility studies, minimal funding

or the human resources infrastructure to grow a research and teaching/learning environment that meets international standards. Politically driven proliferation of tertiary institutions invariably brings numerous problems. Given these concerns, it is important to critically examine the reasons behind the establishment of tertiary institutions and the implications of politically motivated expansion of higher education systems. This paper therefore explores why tertiary institutions should not be established primarily for political reasons, constituency demands, or personal recognition. It also highlights the potential consequences of such practices for the sustainability and quality of tertiary education.

Concept of Tertiary Education

Tertiary Education is the type of education that a person undergoes after the basic secondary education. It could be in a University, Polytechnic or college of education. Tertiary education is post-secondary and this is where students specialize in the core area of their pursuit which could be sciences, arts and vocational [1]. Tertiary education is to prepare the individual for the world of work with a study of the proper theories and relevant hands-on experience. The curriculum of tertiary institutions is developed to ensure that students can meet the challenges of the workplace and also ensure that all the relevant materials necessary for this are available for effective training and experience [2]. Tertiary education or higher education is a set that constitutes the university, which is a subset of higher education. However, in some contexts, higher education and university are used interchangeably. Also, Tertiary education is defined by National policy on Education as the education given after Post Basic Education in institutions such as Universities and Inter-University Centres such as the Nigeria French Language Village, Nigeria Arabic Language Village, National Institute of Nigerian Languages, institutions such as Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs), and Colleges of Education, Monotechnics, Polytechnics, and other specialized institutions such as Colleges of Agriculture, Schools of Health and Technology and the National Teachers' Institutes (NTI) [3].

Tertiary education is the third tiers of education that is designed for the production of skilled and professionals for the socio-economic and technology advancement. Modern higher education is defined as an organized tertiary learning and training activities and institutions that include conventional universities such as arts, humanities, and science faculties and more specialized university institutions in agriculture, engineering, science, and technology [4]. Tertiary education is the final stage of education that handles the production of manpower for the social, economic and technological development of a country. Tertiary education is an organized education that deals with intensive teaching, research and provision of community services. Tertiary education as a planned and organized educational system designed for the total development of man/woman and the total transformation of society through the utilization of teaching, research and provision of community service. Tertiary education can also be viewed as post-basic and secondary school education that embraces advanced

teaching, research and community service [5]. Tertiary education according to Ogunode refers to the level of education that students pursue after completing secondary school [6]. It takes place in institutions such as universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, and other specialized institutions that provide advanced knowledge and professional training. At this point of time in education, no longer about literacy or basic learning, and more about building understanding, specialties, and critical thought that leads individuals into professional and leadership roles in society. Not only does tertiary education play a huge role in personal development, it is also key to the general development of nations. It opens pathways for people to learn new things, grow skill sets, and develop capacities for enriching quality of life.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted a systematic literature review approach to examine political influence in the proliferation of tertiary institutions and its implications for quality and sustainable tertiary education development. The review model enabled the researcher to synthesize existing scholarly works, policy documents, and empirical studies relevant to the topic.

The data for the study were obtained from secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, books, conference papers, government reports, and publications from international organizations on higher education development. Academic databases including Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science and ERIC were used to retrieve relevant literature. Some of the keywords and phrases used in searching for materials include: Higher Education influence of politics, proliferation of tertiary institutions, higher level institutions quality assurance of Universities, sustainable tertiary education, and higher education development in Nigeria and other countries.

Selection of the literature was guided by certain inclusion criteria, such as relevance to the study topic, publication in reputable academic venues, and publication within mainly the last 20 years (older foundational works were permitted). Scholarly materials that pertained remotely to the topic at hand were excluded.

The selected literature was analyzed using a thematic content analysis technique. Because of the emerging patterns relevant to tertiary education development, the (1998 - 2019) thematic synthesis of the studies identified from the review, regrouped and individually investigated around political motivations to set up tertiary institutions, proliferation of the institutions, consequences on quality assurance, and for sustainable development of tertiary education.

Conceptual synthesis and narrative discussion of the findings of the review facilitated presentation of emerging trends, gaps in the literature and implications for policy and practice in higher education development. This model of review offers a wide perspective that details some of the political motivations behind the numerical expansion of tertiary institutions, as well as links this expansion to quality and sustainability in higher education systems.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result and Discussion on Reasons or Factors that should motivate the Establishment of Tertiary Institutions

The following are critical reasons why tertiary institutions should be established globally.

Human Capital Development

One of the primary reasons for establishing tertiary institutions is to develop human capital. Human capital refers to the knowledge, skills, and competencies individuals acquire through education and training. At tertiary level, advanced level of education prepares students with the specialized knowledge necessary for careers in areas like medicine, engineering, education, law, agriculture, and information technology. The graduates receive through professional training and academic knowledge, the necessary skills as capable manpower for national development. Countries which invest more in tertiary education generally have greater productivity and economic growth for a better educated and innovative labour (Alemika, undated).

Production of Skilled and Professional Workforce

Modern economies require highly skilled professionals to manage different sectors. Tertiary institutions train professionals such as doctors, engineers, teachers, accountants, architects, scientists, and administrators. Skilled and professional workforce is crucial for any country's economic growth and development. The establishment of tertiary institutions plays a vital role in producing such a workforce. This is because these institutions provide specialized education and training in various fields, preparing students for the job market. With a skilled and professional workforce, industries can thrive, resulting in economic stability and progress. Hence, the production of such a workforce should be a motivating factor for the establishment of tertiary institutions. These institutions not only contribute to the development of a skilled and professional workforce but also promote innovation and research, leading to advancements in various industries. Additionally, the establishment of tertiary institutions can also encourage students to pursue higher education, leading to an increase in the number of skilled and educated individuals in the workforce. Without tertiary institutions, societies would face shortages of competent professionals needed to run critical sectors like healthcare, education, infrastructure, governance, and business. Abu concluded that the establishment of tertiary institutions ensures a continuous supply of trained manpower necessary for the functioning and development of societies [7].

Advancement of Research and Innovation

Another critical reason for establishing tertiary institutions is to promote research and innovation. Universities and other higher institutions serve as centers for scientific inquiry where scholars investigate societal problems and develop solutions. Recent advancements in research and innovation have demonstrated the need for the establishment of more tertiary institutions. As technology rapidly advances, new fields of study and research emerge, creating a demand for specialized education and expertise. This is evident in several industries like healthcare, engineering, computer science, etc, where rapid development and growth always require new skilled workforce. The setting up of tertiary institutions also serves as a springboard for more research and creativity.

It also brings students and faculty together in a learning environment that serves as a center for collaboration and ideological discussion." In this model, new technologies, theories and ideas for solving complex problems can evolve. The global landscape is also becoming more competitive, with countries investing heavily in research and innovation to stay ahead. The establishment of tertiary institutions can also contribute to a country's economic growth and competitiveness in the global market. The presence of tertiary institutions can also address the issue of brain drain, where talented individuals leave their home country for better educational opportunities. By providing quality tertiary education, countries can retain their talented individuals and also attract international students, who bring in diverse perspectives and ideas. Research conducted in tertiary institutions has led to major global breakthroughs in medicine, technology, agriculture, and environmental sustainability). For instance, innovations such as vaccines, renewable energy technologies, and digital systems often originate from university research laboratories. This research according to Adetunji, and Ogunleye contributes to economic development and improves the quality of life [8].

Promotion of National and Global Development

Tertiary institutions contribute significantly to national development by producing educated citizens who can participate effectively in economic, political, and social activities. Graduates contribute to policymaking, governance, entrepreneurship, and industrial development. At the global level, higher education institutions foster international collaboration through academic exchange programs, joint research projects, and knowledge sharing. Such collaborations help address global challenges such as climate change, public health crises, and poverty. NOUN (2012) asserted that the role of higher education as an important catalyst for national development has long been established. Education is a change agent and a very potent weapon against ignorance, superstition and poverty. Education is the modern means by which new skills, attitude, knowledge, values and information may be effectively acquired, and these are the main ingredients for social and economic development worldwide. From the functionalist perspective, education, particularly higher education, is a great level of society which provides individuals with opportunities to forge ahead providing society with the skilled human power needed for national, economic, social and political development. King in NOUN had compared educational development with the three stages of technological development. The first stage of educational development is for limited people. The second stage extends the benefits of education further to the core of the population who may find employment in the nation's civil service or in the commerce or industry.

Preservation and Transmission of Knowledge

Tertiary institutions play a critical role in preserving and transmitting knowledge from one generation to another. Keeping and transmitting knowledge is one of the most important motivations, and it motivates the establishment of higher education institutions. Tertiary institutions preserve knowledge and research by providing a platform for academic interrogation and education. Diversity within economy of higher education institutions are also a centers of a knowledge transfer from professionals to the students and grow/ created a new professional generation for a needs of individual and even play a significant role to the community development. Through cultivating an

environment of critical thought and debate, higher education plays an ongoing role in the conservation and dissemination of knowledge. Through teaching, research, and publication, they preserve and articulate historical, cultural, scientific, and technological knowledge. The libraries, the academic journals, the research archives of universities – all these are safeguards against the dispersal of valuable knowledge in intergalactic space. Cultural preservation assists societies in their work to have the cultural and tradition persevere while promoting intellectual growth.

Promotion of Critical Thinking and Intellectual Development

Higher education encourages analytical thinking, creativity, and intellectual independence. Students in tertiary institutions are exposed to diverse ideas, research methods, and debates that help them develop the ability to analyze complex issues and make informed decisions. The promotion of critical thinking and intellectual development have long been recognized as crucial factors in the establishment of tertiary institutions. These institutions serve as ideal environments for cultivating and honing critical thinking skills, as well as fostering the growth of intellectual curiosity and creativity. By providing a stimulating and challenging academic environment, tertiary institutions empower students to think critically, question assumptions, and develop their own unique perspectives. This not only benefits the individual, but also contributes to the advancement of knowledge and society as a whole. Additionally, the establishment of tertiary institutions also serves as a driving force for economic growth and social progress, allowing individuals to pursue higher education and acquire the skills needed for successful careers. This intellectual development is essential for leadership, innovation, and responsible citizenship. Coman, and Bonciu, and Ogunode, and Ayeni, concluded that Societies with strong tertiary education systems tend to have more informed and engaged citizens [9][10].

Reduction of Poverty and Improvement of Living Standards

Education at the tertiary level increases individuals' employment opportunities and earning potential. Poverty and Improvement of Living Standards are two key factors that drive the need for tertiary institutions. The establishment of such institutions can greatly contribute to addressing these issues, as they provide access to education and opportunities for individuals to improve their skills and knowledge. By reducing poverty and improving living standards through education, tertiary institutions can play a crucial role in creating a more equal and prosperous society. The establishment of tertiary institutions can lead to economic growth and development as educated individuals are better equipped to contribute to the workforce and drive innovation. Graduates of tertiary institutions often secure better-paying jobs or create businesses that generate employment for others. Tertiary education contributes to poverty reduction and improves the overall standard of living. Assie-Lumumba, and Ogunode, Tsevenda, and Atim opined that Countries with higher levels of educational attainment generally experience better economic outcomes and improved social welfare [11] [12].

Promotion of Social Mobility and Equality

The establishment of tertiary institutions is crucial for promoting social mobility and equality. By providing individuals with access to higher education, these institutions can help bridge the gap between social classes and provide equal opportunities for all.

Tertiary institutions play a vital role in promoting economic growth and development by equipping individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills to thrive in their careers. Furthermore, the establishment of such institutions can lead to a more educated and informed society, leading to a more inclusive and equitable society. Tertiary institutions provide opportunities for individuals from different socio-economic backgrounds to improve their life prospects. Access to higher education allows people from disadvantaged communities to acquire skills and qualifications that enable them to compete in the labor market. By offering scholarships, grants, and inclusive admission policies, tertiary institutions promote social mobility and reduce inequality within societies [4].

Development of Leadership and Governance Capacity

The establishment of tertiary institutions is often motivated by various reasons and factors, such as the development of leadership and governance capacity. These two aspects play a crucial role in the success and growth of any educational institution. By developing strong leadership and governance practices, tertiary institutions can ensure efficient and effective management, leading to a conducive learning environment for students. A key purpose of developing tertiary institutions is to develop leaders for the future who aspire and enlist others to achieve something beneficial. Focusing on developing capacity to lead through these institutions would lead to leadership graduates with knowledge in a niche area, but also demonstrated leadership. This, in turn, can benefit the society by producing skilled and responsible leaders who can steer the country ahead and act as an agent of change. Related, to the development of sound governance practices, is the establishment of tertiary institutions. Governance is essential to ensure continuous and uninterrupted functioning and growth of quality higher educational institutions. It includes strategy selection, objectives, and goals as well as policies and procedures to achieve those objectives and goals. Having strong governance enables tertiary institutions to manage resources, uphold academic standards, and create a culture of transparency and accountability. Global evidence suggests leadership and governance capacity development at tertiary institutions can also entice funding and resource investment. Strong Institutional Leadership and Good Governance – The most proactive donors and granting agencies typically favor institutions that elaborate strong-headed leadership, as a reflection of their pledge to manage and use resources responsibly. Tertiary institutions form the pool where many of the leaders in government, business and civil society get their training. Ogunode affirmed that Universities help shape future leaders by providing education in fields such as public administration, political science, economics, and management. Through leadership training, civic education, and policy research, tertiary institutions help develop individuals capable of managing public institutions and contributing to effective governance.

Promotion of Cultural Exchange and Global Understanding

Promoting cultural exchange and global understanding are vital factors that should motivate the establishment of tertiary institutions. This will allow these institutions to promote cultural exchanges, which lead to diversity, inclusion and acceptance as students from different backgrounds will be able to share unique thoughts

and learn from each other. This not only fosters intercultural understanding, but also creates more well-rounded global citizens who are more prepared to live in an increasingly interconnected world. Tertiary institutions are established in one country but can have partnerships across the globe. This can result in progress in research and creativity, which can have an effect on international challenges like climate change, poverty, and healthcare. As globalization bears faster than ever seeing the need for a globalized workforce, tertiary institutions are an essential foundation in developing students to effectively function in the international scene. Through cultural competency training and study abroad programs, these schools can help students develop skills needed to successfully work across cultures and in diverse teams. Tertiary institutions bring together students and scholars from different cultural, ethnic, and national backgrounds. This according to Ogunode diversity promotes cultural exchange and mutual understanding among people from different parts of the world. International education programs, conferences, and collaborations foster global cooperation and strengthen peaceful relations among nations.

Implications of politically motivated expansion of Tertiary education systems.

The establishment of tertiary institutions such as universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education should be guided by educational needs, national development priorities, and adequate planning. However, in some countries, especially developing nations, tertiary institutions are sometimes established for political purposes, constituency satisfaction, or personal recognition. Such motives can negatively affect the quality and sustainability of higher education institutions. The following explains in detail why tertiary institutions should not be established for these reasons.

Establishment Based on Political Reasons

Political considerations often influence the creation of tertiary institutions when political leaders seek to gain popularity or political support. In such cases, institutions may be established without proper feasibility studies, adequate funding, or necessary infrastructure [13]. When tertiary institutions are established primarily for political reasons, several challenges may arise. First, the institutions may lack adequate physical facilities such as classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and hostels. Second, there may be insufficient academic staff to support teaching and research activities. Third, political leaders may prioritize quick establishment over long-term sustainability, resulting in poorly managed institutions. Politically motivated institutions may become tools for political patronage rather than centers for academic excellence. When institutions of higher learning are being established for campaign purposes, then, there is a problem. This undermines the credibility and reputation of the higher education system [14]. For tertiary institutions to function effectively, their establishment must be based on strategic national educational planning rather than short-term political interests.

Establishment to Fulfil Constituency Demands

Another problematic reason for establishing tertiary institutions is to satisfy the demands of a political constituency or local community. Political representatives sometimes lobby for the creation of institutions in their constituencies to demonstrate that they have attracted development projects to their areas. While community development is important, establishing tertiary institutions solely to fulfil constituency

demands can lead to an oversupply of institutions without adequate resources. Ojo concluded that the big question is that these institutions are not being established on the need basis but more as political patronage [15]. Like the ASUU President observed, they are being established as lawmakers' constituency projects. Federal Character Principles are jettisoned in citing these institutions, while funding and sustainability are least considered. Many such institutions may struggle with insufficient funding, inadequate infrastructure, and limited academic programs. When institutions are established without considering national manpower needs or educational demand, they may produce graduates in fields that are already saturated in the labor market. This can contribute to unemployment among graduates [16]. Proper planning requires assessing population needs, economic priorities, and available resources before establishing a new institution. Without such planning, institutions created to satisfy constituency demands may become ineffective and financially unsustainable [17]. Political interference on tertiary institutions administration in Nigeria has led to proliferation of Nigerian tertiary institutions. Political influence on tertiary institutions management is responsible for establishment of tertiary institutions as constituency projects [18].

Establishment to Earn Personal Name or Recognition

In some cases, political leaders or influential individuals advocate for the establishment of tertiary institutions to enhance their personal reputation or legacy [13]. They may want an institution named after them or wish to be remembered as the person who established a university in a particular area. When personal recognition becomes the primary motivation, the focus may shift away from academic quality and sustainability. Institutions established under such circumstances may be rushed into existence without adequate planning, funding, or long-term development strategies [5]. Personal-interest-driven institutions may experience weak governance structures because decisions are often influenced by individuals seeking prestige rather than educational experts. This can affect academic standards, administrative efficiency, and institutional growth. Tertiary institutions should be established to serve national educational objectives and societal needs, not to promote individual fame or legacy [19].

Risk of Poor Funding and Resource Allocation

Institutions established for political or personal reasons often face serious funding challenges. Governments may create many institutions without increasing education budgets proportionally. This means low funds dispersed among a large number of institutions, degrading facilities, research, and teaching [20]. This can result in insufficient laboratories, obsolete infrastructure, congestion-packed classrooms, and awful personnel welfare. A lack of faculty may eventually cause such institutions to have difficulty satisfying the criteria set by regulatory and accreditation bodies [21]. Expansion motivated by political interests can result in the education system becoming more unfocused. This can lead to inequitable resource allocation, with some regions or initiatives receiving more focus and funding than others. Consequently, the quality and efficiency of the education system may decline, and so may the success and employability of its graduates. A politics fundamentally creates insecurity in the educational sector. When policies and regulations began reeling, frequent uprooting of funding and resource allocation will disrupt the natural process of resource management within academic

institutions. This can ultimately lead to a lack of consistency and efficiency in the education system, hindering its ability to provide quality education to students.

Decline in Academic Quality and Standards

When tertiary institutions are established without proper planning and resources, academic quality may decline. Poor infrastructure, insufficient teaching staff, and limited research funding can negatively affect the learning environment [22]. Students in such institutions may not receive the quality education required to compete globally. This can damage the reputation of the country's higher education system and reduce the employability of graduates. The expansion of tertiary education systems has had a negative impact on the quality and standards of academic institutions, largely due to political motivations [7]. The establishment of institutions that are based on wrong motivation has resulted in a decline in academic rigor and has affected the overall integrity of the education system. As universities and colleges become more focused on increasing enrollment and pleasing politicians, the emphasis on maintaining high standards and promoting academic excellence has been diminished. This decline in academic quality has far-reaching implications, including a decrease in critical thinking skills and a lack of preparation for the workforce [20] [22][23]. The push for expansion has also led to a decrease in funding for research and development, further hindering the pursuit of knowledge and innovation. As a result, Musa noted that the unfortunate consequences of politically motivated expansion of tertiary education systems have had a detrimental effect on the overall academic landscape.

Duplication of Programmes and Institutional Inefficiency

Political or constituency-driven establishment of institutions can result in duplication of academic programs within the same region. For example, several nearby institutions may offer the same programs without having adequate resources to maintain high standards. This duplication leads to inefficient use of resources that could have been used to strengthen existing institutions. Instead of expanding institutions without careful planning, governments should focus on improving the capacity and quality of existing ones [24]. The expansion of tertiary education systems, particularly in politically motivated contexts according to Ayobolu [25]; Badmus [26] and Adesina [27], has led to potential consequences such as duplication of programmes and institutional inefficiency. This study aims to explore the implications of such expansion by analyzing the phenomenon of duplication of programmes and its impact on institutional efficiency. Goshwe and Bidemi concluded that politically motivated expansion often leads to duplication of programmes in order to appease different interest groups or to enhance the political image of leaders [28] [29][30][31][32]. This actions according to Ogunode and Musa has resulted in institutional inefficiency, as resources are spread thin and academic quality may be compromised [18][33][34][35]. Additionally, duplication of programmes can also lead to confusion among students and employers, as well as inequity in educational opportunities [36][37][38].

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: The establishment of tertiary institutions is essential for promoting knowledge creation, human capital development, and national progress. The

motivations behind establishing such institutions must be carefully considered to ensure that they contribute meaningfully to educational development and societal advancement. When tertiary institutions are created primarily for political reasons, to satisfy constituency demands, or to enhance personal recognition, the result is often the proliferation of poorly planned institutions with limited resources and weak academic standards. **Implication:** Institutions like that often faces frequently challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient funding, shortage of qualified staff, and duplication of academic programmes. These challenges not only undermine the quality of education but also place additional financial burdens on governments and weaken the overall higher education system. **Limitation:** To ensure sustainable development in the tertiary education sector, the establishment of new institutions should be guided by national education policies, manpower requirements, and comprehensive feasibility studies. **Future Research:** Governments and regulatory bodies must prioritize quality, adequate funding, and long-term planning rather than political interests or personal ambitions. By adopting a strategic and evidence-based approach to higher education expansion, countries can strengthen their tertiary education systems and ensure that these institutions effectively contribute to national development.

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