

**Academic Excellence and Higher Education in Nigeria—
Towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals in Higher
Education**

By

Haruna, P. B.

Department of Architecture

Federal University of Technology, Minna. Niger State

Presented at

**National Conference on Urban and Regional Planning in the
Context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**

DEPARTMENT OF URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING

SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGY

FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, MINNA

On 15th—17th November, 2006

Abstract

Economic and social developments (which are among the cardinal objectives of the Millennium Development Goals, MDGs) are increasingly driven by the advancement and application of knowledge. Thus knowledge has become the most important factor for economic development in the 21st century. Yet the potential of higher education systems in developing countries to fulfill this responsibility is frequently thwarted by long-standing problems of finance, efficiency, equity, and governance resulting in poor quality knowledge and subsequently poor economy. While developed economies are benefiting from this, many developing countries have neither articulated a development strategy linking knowledge to economic growth nor built up their capacity to do so. Nigeria is one of these. If Nigeria must have a chance of participating in the emerging global knowledge economy, therefore, good quality higher education must be provided. In this light, Academic Excellence in higher education must be pursued with all seriousness. Hence, the paper focuses on academic excellence in higher education with particular emphasis on Nigerian; and discusses some basic standards necessary for institutions to attain such excellence.

KEY WORDS: - Academic Excellence; Economy; Higher Education; Millennium Development Goal.

1.0 Introduction

From a global perspective, economic and social developments (which are among the cardinal objectives of the Millennium Development Goals, MDGs) are increasingly driven by the advancement and application of knowledge (Saint et al 2006). That is to say Knowledge has become the most important factor for economic development especially in the 21st century. Through its capacity to augment productivity, knowledge increasingly constitutes the foundation of a country's economy. Therefore, education in general and higher education in particular, are fundamental to the construction of a knowledge economy and society in all nations. This is most evident in advanced economies, according to Saint et al (2006), where investments in the knowledge base of a country (e.g., higher education—which in turn influences research and development, computer software, etc) almost equal or even exceed investments in physical equipment. Developing economies (of which Nigeria is one), are not yet reaping their benefits because the capacity to generate and harness knowledge in the pursuit of sustainable development and improved living standards is not yet in place.

The role of higher education in the development of Nigeria, therefore, cannot be over-emphasized. Higher education, according to Dike (2006) in advanced and well-organized societies is the center of social activities and the environment provides good settings for research, teaching and learning. In 1993, Clark Kerr, an internationally recognized higher education expert from the United States, (Saint et al 2006), stated that "For the first time, a really international world of learning, highly competitive, is emerging. If you want

to get into that orbit, you have to do so on merit. You cannot rely on politics or anything else. You have to give a good deal of autonomy to institutions for them to be dynamic and to move fast in international competition. You have to develop entrepreneurial leadership to go along with institutional autonomy.” If Nigeria must have a chance of participating in the emerging global knowledge economy, therefore, good quality higher education must be provided. This is the primary concern of academic excellence in an institution of higher education—which is a community dedicated to the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge, to the study and clarification of values, and to the advancement of the society it serves.

The paper focuses on academic excellence in higher education with particular reference to Nigeria. It defines Academic Excellence, the need, and discusses some basic standards necessary for institutions to attain academic excellence.

1.1 Definition of Academic Excellence

Academic Excellence (Doug, 2003.) is creating and sustaining an atmosphere where scholars scrutinize reality with the methods proper to each academic discipline, in order to contribute to the treasury of human knowledge, and a place where all of its members work towards a higher synthesis of knowledge dedicated to the search for truth and brought about in a dialogue between reality and reason. It is creating and sustaining an academic climate in which students can develop the skills and motivation necessary for a lifelong habit of intellectual curiosity and critical application for the well-being of the human community. According to Freed et al (1997.), it is an organizational culture that utilizes scientific outcomes, measurement, systematic management techniques, and collaboration to achieve the mission of the institution.

1.2 Suggested standards for academic excellence in higher education

Higher education is changing, and many institutions are in a state of important transition.. These standards emphasize functions rather than specific structures. They constitute a long overdue movement to bring Nigerian higher education into concert with current higher education practice around the world.

1.2.1: Mission, Goals, and Objectives for academic excellence

The institution's mission clearly defines its purpose within the context of higher education (Corneskey et al, 1991) and explains whom the institution serves and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals and objectives, consistent with the aspirations and expectations of higher education, clearly specify how the institution will fulfill its mission. The mission, goals, and objectives are developed and recognized by the institution with its members and its governing body and are utilized to develop and shape its programmes and practices and to evaluate its effectiveness.

1.2.2: Leadership and Governance for academic excellence

Responsive university systems around the world have been moving towards more business-like forms of management and governance (Clark 2001 in Saint et al, 2006). In the process, accountability, quality assurance and performance monitoring have become more important, and management innovation has become a permanent quest.

In Nigeria, capacities for managing the university system and individual institutions have struggled to keep pace with the increasingly large and complex federal university system. Professional management techniques and training generally have not been applied. Management information systems vary widely in their use and their development is limited. Strategic planning is in its infancy. Institutional communications with internal and external audiences are weakly developed. Moreover, management innovation does not seem to be a conscious pursuit.

The institution's system of governance clearly defines the roles of institutional constituencies in policy development and decision-making. The governance structure includes an active governing body with sufficient autonomy to assure institutional integrity and to fulfill its responsibilities of policy and resource development, consistent with the mission of the institution.

The higher education's principal oversight body in Nigeria (the National Universities Commission-NUC) however, currently constitutes a barrier to the autonomy-induced responsiveness that government policy seeks to foster. The NUC is staffed almost entirely by longtime public servants. Most of its 600 staff has received no professional training in the management of higher education or in technical aspects associated

with the NUC's mandates, such as quality assurance, policy analysis, or expenditure effectiveness according to a 2003 status report on higher education in Nigeria (Saint et al 2006). It further stated that many staff appears to operate in relative isolation from international higher education and consequently possess a rather limited understanding of how a modern university system should function. Moreover, the NUC remains the only government parastatal body without a governing board to set policy and direction, and to hold its staff accountable for their performance. Unsurprisingly, it seems strongly disposed to maintain the status quo of its mechanistic and labor intensive monitoring of federal university statistics and expenditures for compliance with its longstanding guidelines. One result is that little attention is given to institutional operations in terms of graduate and research output. For example, annual budget reviews are detached from university management performance, from the quality of academic outputs and research contributions, and from the government's own budget review of the overall education sector. In its current form, the NUC seems unlikely to provide national leadership in developing a vision for the future of the system, or to play a useful role in anticipating and analyzing important issues of higher education policy.

The primary goal of governance is to enable an educational entity to realize fully its stated mission and goals and to achieve these in the most effective and efficient manner that benefits the institution and its students. Institutional governance provides the means through which authority and responsibility are assigned, delegated, and shared in a climate of mutual support.

1.2.3: Planning and Resource Allocation for Academic Excellence

An institution conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based on its mission and uses the results of its assessment activities for institutional renewal. Implementation and subsequent evaluation of the success of the strategic plan and resource allocation (Cornesky opcit.) support the development and change necessary to improve and to maintain institutional quality. The entire planning process, including implementation and assessment, helps an institution to manage efficiently, maintain fiscal control, improve services and processes, and allocate resources effectively (i.e., assign the right resource to a particular project, ensure full utilization of the resource, and prioritize projects to eliminate conflicts on the use of resources).

Historically in Nigeria, university funding has been distributed in broadly equitable ways across both institutions and disciplines with little concern for their performance. The result has been to create a system of excessively homogeneous institutions. This approach, although perhaps justifiable in terms of fairness or useful in reducing competitive tensions and political appeals surrounding the allocation process, does not serve the country's longer term development interests. Without disciplinary capabilities approaching international standards in at least a few key professions necessary to underpin economic growth, it is difficult to see how Nigeria will be able to compete successfully in the global knowledge economy.

Education generally, and higher education in particular is capital intensive, and as these institutions develop to meet the global educational standard, its funding should increase. This is not the case in Nigeria as intakes into higher institution increase; the percentage of allocation of funds continues to decrease. This decrease is highlighted by Obasi (2005) to be from 12.96% in 1995 to 4.54% in 2004 as indicated in the table 1 below:-

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
12.96	12.32	11.59	10.27	11.12	8.36	7.00	6.10	4.75	4.54	11.0	12.0

Table 1: Federal Government Expenditure on Education as share of Total Federal Expenditure (%)

Further more the issue of funding for education becomes more pathetic when Nigeria's Gross National Product (GNP) allocation to education is compared with those of less affluent African nations that allocate greater percentage: Cote d' Ivore allocates 5% of its GNP to education, Kenya 6.5% and Nigeria 0.76%. More revealing is the 2006 ranking of African universities in which Nigerian universities, that were once highly rated, were behind universities in poorer countries.

1.2.4: Institutional Renewal for academic excellence

An effective institution is one in which growth, development, and change are the result of a thoughtful and rational process of self-examination and planning, where such a process is an inherent part of ongoing activities. For institutions to move fast in the international competition, you have to give a good deal of autonomy to institutions for them to be dynamic and responsive. A responsive institution is adaptive in its

orientation. It intentionally considers changing circumstances, identifies appropriate ways to adapt, and takes responsive actions.

In Nigeria, responsiveness in universities is assessed by El-khawas (2001 in Saint at al, 2006) in four categories— access, teaching/learning, financing, and management/governance. Responsiveness to the challenges of improving university access entails adaptive behavior by institutions to provide academic and other support to an increasingly diverse student body, and to develop retention strategies that lead to the completion of studies. It further implies efforts to upgrade labor productivity by creating opportunities for the nation’s workforce to obtain continuing professional education.

In response to strong social demand, the Federal Government has repeatedly taken steps to expand access. Among its more notable policy actions have been: (i) increasing the numbers of federal universities, (ii) expanding enrollments, (iii) introducing an admissions quota system to address regional and class imbalances, (iv) constructing new student residence halls, (v) launching a scholarship program for 50,000 needy students, (vi) approving the establishment of seven private universities, and (vii) announcing the establishment of a National Open University. The latter two actions are particularly significant. They signal steps towards the healthier diversification of a previously rather standardized system, and create vehicles for the eventual delivery of continuing professional education. The importance of these changes is supported by the fact that workforce development is viewed by many economists as a necessary step towards improved productivity in order to gain position in a highly competitive global economy (Saint at al, 2006).

1.2.5: Institutional Resources management for academic excellence

The effective use of human, financial, technical, physical facilities and other resources; both internal and external; is crucial to institutional performance. While for some institutions, a significant portion of available resources is generated and monitored at the system level, institutional management of resource acquisition and utilization significantly contributes to the effectiveness of planning, goals achievement, mission success, and institutional integrity. Institutional support resources including financial, facilities,

equipment and supplies, technology, research and instructional support and staffing, and other assets should be an integral and proportional part of all institutional planning, allocation, and assessment activities

In Nigeria management rigidities are found at the institutional level. Here, management is based in large part on the highly participatory system of senate and academic committees that characterized British universities at the time of Nigerian independence. Very little movement can be observed from this time-honored practice towards the leaner, more nimble and more corporate management model that has now become the norm in the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

It must also be recognized that efforts to improve higher institutions' management and governance have been confounded by a pervasive culture of corruption within Nigeria society. A long tradition of weak governance oversight and limited management accountability under a succession of military governments seems to have made corruption endemic to Nigeria at the end of the 20th century. This led the global corruption watchdog organization, Transparency International to rank Nigeria as the world's most corrupt nation in 2000 (Transparency International 2000 in Saint et al, 2006). Not surprisingly, this social malignancy has also extended to the federal universities. Reports of résumé falsification, plagiarism, cheating, examination malfeasance, sexual harassment, contract kickbacks, and the obligatory purchase by students of professorial lecture notes have regularly appeared in Nigerian newspapers in recent years. Clearly, progress towards more responsive university governance and more innovative university management will be difficult until the political will can be found to tackle such deep-seated social dysfunction.

The cost of running the federal university system comes almost entirely from the federal government. However, when government funding becomes insufficient to maintain institutional performance in teaching and research, universities elsewhere in the world have sought to supplement their public funding with locally generated income (fees, cost-recovery, business income, investment income, gifts, etc.). This is also true in Nigeria. Locally generated income has contributed a relatively constant share of around 15% of universities' recurrent budgets in recent years, varying among institutions from a low of 4% to a high of 37% (Hartnett 2000 in Saint, 2006).

The allocation of resources among programs, units, and individuals is an indicator of institutional priorities. Thus, the decision-making process for allocating resources should be an integral part of the institutional plan; and the plan itself should provide a method for thoroughly reviewing, analyzing and monitoring all institutional support.

1.2.6: Administration of higher education for academic excellence

The institution's administrative structure and services facilitate learning and research/scholarship, foster quality improvement, and support the institution's organization and governance. An institution, regardless of its organization and the competence of its individual members, cannot function successfully unless it is properly administered and staffed. The administration should be organized with clearly defined roles and responsibilities and should have a thorough understanding of institutional mission, goals and objectives.

Interventions in the higher education system in Nigeria, especially under a series of military governments, imposed distortions and constraints on the system's development. By 1980, Nigeria had established a well-regarded higher education system offering instruction at an international standard in a number of disciplinary areas (Saint et al 2006). The universities of Ibadan and Ahmadu Bello, for example, earned global recognition for their research in tropical health and agriculture, respectively. Under successive military governments during the 1980s and 1990s, however, this sparkling reputation steadily tarnished. Government interference in university affairs (e.g., the direct appointment of vice-chancellors and, in some cases, of military "sole administrators") steadily increased. As university autonomy was usurped by central government, incentives and rewards for research productivity, teaching excellence and associated innovation gradually disappeared. In consequence, research output dropped, educational quality declined, and management structures rigidified.

Administrators share responsibility for ensuring that institutional plans and activities are carried out and, therefore, should be qualified to provide effective leadership and efficient management consonant with the institution's goals, objectives, size, and complexity. Administrators should have the skills, time, assistance, technology, and information systems necessary to enable them to discharge their duties effectively.

1.2.7: Integrity and academic excellence

In the conduct of its programmes and activities involving the public and the constituencies it serves, the institution demonstrates adherence to ethical standards and its own stated policies, providing support to academic and intellectual freedom. Integrity is a central, indispensable and defining hallmark of effective higher education institutions. An institution demonstrates integrity through the manner in which it specifies its goals, selects and retains its faculty, admits students, establishes curricula, determines programs of research, pursues its fields of service, demonstrates sensitivity to equity and diversity issues, allocates its resources, serves the public interest, and provides for the success of its students. Political interference in the affairs of an educational institution may threaten its freedom and effectiveness.

In all its activities, whether internal or external, an institution should keep its promises, honour its contracts and commitments, and represent itself truthfully. The same adherence to ethical standards and conduct should extend equally to all members of the institution, whether they are part of the institution through distance learning programs, subsidiaries, or other arrangements. Institutions should adhere to such integrity in all institutional settings, venues, and activities.

Academic freedom, intellectual freedom and freedom of expression are central to the academic enterprise. These special privileges, characteristic of the academic environment, should be extended to all members of the institution's community (i.e. full-time faculty, visiting or part time faculty, staff, students instructed on the campus, and those students associated with the institution via distance learning programmes).

1.2.8: Institutional Assessment for academic excellence

The institution has developed and implemented an assessment plan and process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in: achieving its mission and goals; implementing planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal processes; using institutional resources efficiently; providing leadership and governance; providing administrative structures and services; demonstrating institutional integrity; and assuring that institutional processes and resources support appropriate learning and other outcomes for its students and graduates.

Academic excellence on Higher Education expects institutions to assess their overall effectiveness, with primary attention given to the assessment of student learning outcomes. Information obtained through the overall assessment should be used as a basis for assessing the institution's effectiveness in achieving its stated goals.

1.2.9: Student Admissions and academic excellence

The institution seeks to admit students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with its mission. The student is the primary beneficiary of an institution's educational mission, and the success of an institution or program is best measured by the success of its students during and after their enrollment in an institution's programmes. Every institution's admission practices should ensure that students have a reasonable opportunity for success in meeting their educational goals, including transfer, graduate, part-time, adult, and non-degree students, and all others matriculating at the institution.

Higher institutions in Nigeria therefore ought to be allowed to conduct their private admission exams and screen the new intake, may be, within a standard set by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board. For instance, in the United States (Dike, 2006), the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) for new entrants into the university are conducted at individual high schools during the final year (twelfth grade) of school and the universities are allowed to pick up students according to their scores. Any student that aspires to attend the top-ranking schools must have to struggle to have a high SAT score. Academic competition would enable the institutions to attract better quality teachers, improve the quality of university graduates and thus "rebuild a culture of scholarship" that has been neglected in the society.

The matter of quota-based admissions in Nigeria deserves further comment since it also bears directly on educational quality. Until the advent of the current government's university autonomy policies, admission to federal universities was regulated by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board. The Board reserved 30% of a university's admissions for residents of its immediate geographical or "catchment" area, and a further 20% for educationally disadvantaged students. Some 10% of university admissions were made at the Vice-Chancellor's discretion. Only 40% of students were admitted on the basis of the merits of their

academic performance. Evaluating these admissions policies, Adeyemi in (2001 in Saint, 2006) found significant differences in academic performance between students admitted on merit and those admitted on other criteria. He also discovered that the drop-out and repetition rate for the latter group was three times higher than for the merit-based group. Although Nigeria's quota-based admissions policy may have made university access somewhat more equitable, it did not necessarily broaden the possibilities for academic success among those admitted. As a result, although access has increased, university responsiveness to the varied needs and abilities of a more diverse student body produced by rising enrollments has been limited.

1.2.10: Student Support Services and academic excellence

The environment in which one lives has profound influence on his psyche and world view. This is corroborated by Obasi (2005) that when a man's environment is not conducive for living not to talk of learning, he is forced to react in accordance with the dictates of the negative stimuli. Environment thus, exerts a pervasive influence over our social system, individual experience and behaviour.

The institution should provide student support services reasonably necessary to enable each student to achieve the institution's goals for students. The support of students toward their educational goals usually requires a well-organized and appropriate programme of student services, complemented by good staff leadership and broad-based institutional commitment. Within the scope of the institutional mission, student services can reinforce and extend the college's influence beyond the classroom. These services promote the comprehensive development of the student, and they become an integral part of the educational process, helping to strengthen learning outcomes. Appropriate and comparable student services should support all student learning in the context of the institution's mission and chosen educational delivery system. Similarly, the institution should clearly convey to students their roles and responsibilities as partners in the educational process. The quality of campus life often contributes significantly to student learning; therefore, institutions, and particularly those with residential populations, should be attentive to a wide range of student life concerns and issues, including mental health and safety.

The living environment of the students in higher institutions in Nigeria has continued to degenerate in standard. This is demonstrated in a recent report of National Universities Commission (NUC) on students living environment which observed that as the living condition of the Nigerian students in higher institutions of learning degenerates, so then development and growth degenerate in academic performance, character and in morality (Obasi, 2005). Without taking care of the students needs violence and cultism on the campuses will continue. The society could tackle the vices by redefining Nigeria's value system and attending to the needs of the students; providing the student with enough recreational activities, attend to their medical and psychological needs, and provide adequate security on campuses, etc

1.2.11: Faculty responsibility and academic excellence

The institution's research and service programs are planned, developed, monitored, and supported by qualified professionals. Faculty are central to each institution's teaching and learning activities, and faculty bear primary responsibility for promoting, facilitating, assuring, and evaluating student learning. The faculty and other qualified professionals are responsible for devising and developing an institution's academic, professional, research, and service programs within the framework of its educational mission and goals.

Unfortunately, policy initiatives to enhance educational quality in Nigeria are hampered by a severe shortage of qualified academic staff within the higher education system. Institutional deterioration and salary erosion during the past decade have prompted substantial "brain drain" of academic staff and impeded new staff recruitment. Between 1988 and 1990, over 1000 lecturers left the federal university system (Saint etal, 2006), and this trend has continued. Using its staffing norms per academic discipline, the NUC in 2002, calculated a staffing shortfall of 51% within the system and estimated 30% of approved academic positions vacant. (Dike, 2006).

The institutions should also, reduce student/instructor ratio (control the number of students enrolled in particular class) to give the instructors/students opportunity to interact and know each other. This would afford the students the opportunity to appraise the effectiveness of the instructors at the end of every course; this process helps the instructors to improve their teaching method and classroom management technique. In

Nigeria, the slow growth in academic staff numbers during a period of rapid enrollment growth contributed to quality standards. For example, between 1987/88 and 1997/98, system enrollments surged by 12% annually while staffing grew at just 3% a year. During this decade, total academic staff (headcount) increased from 9,612 to 13,515, and total student enrollment (headcount) doubled from 130,731 to 267,730. The diverging growth rates of staff and student numbers generated a decline in staff/student ratios from 1:14 to 1:20. Staff/student ratios were particularly imbalanced within the federal universities at Owerri (1:35), Port Harcourt (1:28), Benin (1:27) and Kano (1:27) (Hartnett 2000 in saint etal, 2006). By 2000, system enrollments reportedly had reached 325,299, academic staff numbers totaled 13,760, and the overall staff/student ratio had fallen to 1:24 (NUC 2002b in Dike, 2006).

The method of teaching in the university should shift from the traditional (theory-based) to progressive and pragmatic education (in-built practical application). This is because in today's globally competitive knowledge economy, updating of curricula needs to be an almost permanent undertaking

1.2.12: Educational Offerings and academic excellence

The institution's educational offerings display academic content, rigor, and coherence that are appropriate to its higher education mission. The institution identifies student learning goals and objectives, including knowledge and skills, for its educational offerings. Curricular issues, generally falling within the responsibilities of the faculty, might address such elemental issues such as skill building and mastery of increasingly difficult subject matter along with general education and the learning skills expected in the specific field of study. Updating of curricula, therefore, needs to be an almost permanent undertaking In today's globally competitive knowledge economy.

Does Nigeria possess the necessary elements to develop a national innovation system? The facts are not encouraging. Available data indicate low levels of investment in research capacity and education, and help to explain why the country's non-oil economy has remained consistently sluggish during a decade of international economic expansion. On the research side, Nigeria's number of scientific publications for 1995 was 711 – significantly less than its output of 1,062 scientific publications in 1981 by a comparatively much

smaller university system (Saint, 2006). In contrast, scientific publications were 3,413 for South Africa, 14,883 for India, 310 for Indonesia, and 5,440 for Brazil. The country's low research output probably reflects the low priority accorded to research and development by government decision-makers. For example, Nigeria's federal university system spends only 1.3% of its budget on research (Dike, 2006).

In today's globally competitive knowledge economy, updating of curricula needs to be an almost permanent undertaking. This suggests the need for adaptive university responses Vis a Vis the labor market for public and private employment. The consequence of such is as evident in the reaction of public and private employers of university graduates, as well as the government itself, which consider the quality of Nigerian university graduates to be inadequate. A study of the labor market for graduates found that employers believe "university graduates are poorly trained and unproductive on the job ...and shortcomings are particularly severe in oral and written communication and in applied technical skills"(Saint et al, 2006).

In sum, Nigeria's federal university system is performing poorly in the area of teaching and learning (Dike, 2006). This is true not only in terms of the traditional quality standards for customary curricula employed in NUC accreditation exercises, but also in terms of labor market absorption and employer assessments of graduates. This provides a very weak base from which to launch responsive actions aimed at introducing the new curricula, reformed content, and different approaches to pedagogy required for competitive performance in the 21st century.

The present government however, has aggressively addressed these identified problems through a series of policy changes. For example, it has reconstituted all university councils to incorporate broader stakeholder representation, accorded greater autonomy to university councils and managers in the effort to promote institutional responsiveness, and adopted a formula-based block grant resource allocation procedure that facilitates strategic planning and rewards institutional performance. It has returned to university senates the power (previously held by the NUC) to determine curricula and to initiate or terminate courses. It has also established reference points for quality improvements and begun to develop academic benchmarks based on demonstrated student competencies. Government statements also promote the need for university service to and partnerships with the private sector.

1.2.13: General Education and academic excellence

The institution's curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy. General education incorporates essential knowledge, cognitive abilities, and an understanding of values and ethics, and it enhances students' intellectual growth. General education programs draw students into new areas of intellectual experience, expanding their cultural and global awareness and sensitivity, and preparing them to make enlightened judgments outside as well as within their academic specialty.

1.2.14: Related Educational Activities and academic excellence

Institutional programmes or activities that are characterized by particular content, focus, location, mode of delivery, or sponsorship meet appropriate standards. The integrity and credibility of an institution's educational program rest directly on its acceptance of responsibility for all activities conducted in its name or under its sponsorship. Consistent with their missions, many institutions offer programs and activities that are defined by their particular content, focus, location, mode of delivery, or sponsorship. These offerings could include basic skills, certificate programs, evaluated experiential learning, non-credit offerings, branch campuses/additional locations/other instructional sites, distance or distributed learning, and contractual relationships/affiliated providers, among others.

1.3: Conclusions

The vision of academic excellence is one that prioritizes academic distinction at a variety of levels with the goal of strengthening academic reputation nationally and internationally. This is the only sure way knowledge economy can be instituted in Nigeria as obtained world over. So if Nigeria must have a chance of participating in the emerging global knowledge economy, therefore, good quality higher education must be provided.

The summary is that, if Nigeria is to attain social and economic emancipation, then all the players in the education sector must be totally committed to implementing quality principles holistically.

References

- Akande, O.K, Olagunju, R. E, and Ayuba, P. A. (2006). "Academic Excellence in Architectural Education and Opportunities and Challenges for the Architect Graduate". *Journal of the association of Architectural Educators in Nigeria* (AARCHES). Vol.5 No.1
- Anunobi, A.I. (2005) "Training of Architects to Meet the Challenges of the 21st Century: a case for a new curriculum approach". *Journal of the association of Architectural Educators in Nigeria* (AARCHES). Vol.5 No.1
- Chaffee, E. E. and Lawrence A. S. (1992). *Quality: Transforming Postsecondary Education*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 3. Washington, D.C.: Association for the Study of Higher Education
- Cornesky, R, Sam M, Larry B, and Robert W. (1991). *Implementing Total Quality Management in Higher Education*. Madison, Wisc: Magna Publications
- Crosby, P. B. (1979). "Quality Is Free". New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Deming, W. E. (1986). "Out of the Crisis". Cambridge, Mass.: IT, Center for Advanced Engineering Study.
- Dike, V.E.(2006)"Restoring Sanity in Nigeria's University Education"
<http://www.onlinenigeria.com/education/index.asp> ,Tuesday, 05 September 2006
- Doug, O. (2003). "Sustaining a Culture of Academic Excellence" oakmande@plu.edu University of St. Thomas Community, April 21, 2003, Committee on Academic Excellence
- Freed, J.E. (1997) "A Culture for Academic Excellence": *Implementing the Quality Principles in Higher Education*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Haruna, P.B. (2005)."Culture of Academic Excellence in the Universities". A *Ph.D course seminar paper presented in the department of Architecture, Federal University of Technology, Minna.*
- Obasi,S.C.E.(2005) "Students' Living Environment and the Menace of Cultism in Nigerian Universities". *Journal of the association of Architectural Educators in Nigeria* (AARCHES). Vol.4 No.1
- Oluigbo ,S.N.(2005) "Improving the Quality of Architecture Graduate from Nigerian Universities". *Journal of the association of Architectural Educators in Nigeria* (AARCHES). Vol.5 No.1
- Saint, W. Hartnett,T.A, and Strassner, E.(2003) "Higher Education in Nigeria: a status report" *Higher Dike, Education Policy 2003*, vol.16 No 3.World Education Services.