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**Universities as
Megatrends that will
Shape Prosperity by
2030**

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**UNIVERSITIES AS MEGATRENDS THAT WILL
SHAPE PROSPERITY BY 2030**

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1. Introduction

Prosperity by 2030 would be measured to a large extent by the level of attainment of the Social Development Goals (SDGs) at the local, national, regional and global levels. Universities as institutions are established to serve as instruments of prosperity - economic, social, political, and cultural - at these levels. Universities accomplish this through their Triple Mission of knowledge transmission (teaching), knowledge generation (research) and knowledge sharing (responsive social engagement). As on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), universities have important role, even more than before, to play in attaining SDGs come 2030.

In this paper, we give a brief background to SDGs and highlight the centrality of universities to its attainment by 2030. For universities to be able to play this crucial role, weaknesses and challenges in the system are highlighted, which if addressed, and aided by good governance, chances are brighter on attainment of SDGs. Section two of the paper presents a brief narrative on the MDGs and level of attainment in Nigeria. Section three presents components of SDGs, and in the process highlights the centrality of quality education, and hence the role of universities in attainment of the goals. Section four discusses the current state of Nigerian University System (NUS), highlighting structural

weaknesses that limited its ability to contribute meaningfully to attainment of MDGs, and which would have to be rigorously addressed if it is to be able to contribute effectively to attainment of SDGs. Section five discusses what should be the nature of reforms and policy measures designed to make NUS truly functional with respect to SDGs. Section six discusses governance challenges to effective functioning of NUS, and section seven concludes the paper.

2. Millennium Development Goals and Level of Attainment

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was adopted in 2000 to guide efforts at accelerating development within its fifteen years span of action. Policies were implemented aimed at achieving its eight goals and eighteen targets. Evaluation reports suggest that limited progress was made in achieving these goals. Table 1 shows that for Nigeria, MDGs was achieved on only one goal, namely Developing Global Partnership for Development.

This is not to deny that progress was made on some of the targets within the goals. For example, according to FGN (2016), on Goal 1, Nigeria made notable progress, as prevalence of poverty declined from 65.6% in 1996 to 45.5% in 2010, and World Bank estimate for 2012/2013 reported

33.1%. However, since the target was 21.4% by 2015, the goal was adjudged not met.

On Goal 2 of Achieving Universal Primary Education, literacy rate rose from 64% in 2000 to 66.7% in 2014. However, net primary enrolment declined from 60% in 1995 to 54% by 2013. This was attributed to Boko Haram insurgency in North East part of Nigeria. Primary six completion rate, however, rose from 73% in 1993 to 82% in subsequent years.

Table 1: Evaluating Nigeria's Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MGDs)

S/N	MDG GOALS	Progress Towards Target	Conclusion
1	Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	Appreciable progress especially in reducing hunger and underweight children	Goal not Met
2	Achieving Universal Primary Education	Slight progress mainly because of the insurgencies and insecurities in some parts of the country	Goal not Met
3	Promoting Gender Equality and Women Empowerment	Satisfactory progress in areas in the ratios of girls to boys in school and weak progress in women empowerment	Goal not Met
4	Reduction of Child Mortality	Satisfactory Progress	Goal not Met
5	Improvement in	Appreciable Progress in	Goal not

	Maternal Health	Maternal Mortality Ratio. Weak Progress in other indicators	Met
6	Combating HIV/AIDs, Malaria and other Diseases	Weak Progress	Goal not Met
7	Ensuring Global sustainability	Appreciable progress in the provision of safe drinking water weak progress in other indicators	Goal not Met
8	Developing Global Partnership for Development	Appreciable and satisfactory progress	Goal Met

Source: Nigeria MDGs Report (2015), Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President, Abuja. P. 671

On Goal 3, ratio of girls to boys in basic education rose from 82% in 1991 to 94% in 2013. Proportion of women in National Parliament (Senate and House of Representatives) rose from 2.1% in 1991 to 7.7% in 2003, but declined to 6.8% and 4.7% in 2011 and 2015 respectively. In the State Assembly, the corresponding figures are 2.4%, 4.1%, 5.8%, 6.8% and 7.7% (Aigbokhan, 2017).

On Goal 4, though the target was to achieve infant mortality rate of 30 deaths per 1000 live births, progress was made by

moving from 91 in 1990, 73 in 2008, 61 in 2012 and 58 in 2014.

On Goal f5 which is on maternal health, the benchmark rate of 1000 death per 100,000 livebirths in 1990 declined to 243 by 2014. And on Goal 6, HIV/AIDs prevalence in young pregnant women declined from 5.4% in 2000 to 4.1% in 2010, and Tuberculosis per 100,000 people which was 343 in 2005 declined to 338 by 2013.

That these goals were on the whole not met is evidenced in rising level of poverty, rising unemployment and diseases for which Nigeria depends largely on imported drugs and medical holidays. Hence, no sooner the MDGs came to an end, the necessity of designing another development goals was recognized. Social Development Goals (SDGs) thus came as its successor. The all-important question is: If MDGs struggled to attain eight goals how possible will it be for SDGs seventeen goals to be achieved?

3. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 2016 - 2030

Box 1 shows the menu of the 17 SDGs. Perhaps the most important is Goal 4: Quality Education, which could arguably be seen as crucial input to attainment of other goals. It could be argued that unemployability (a factor in poverty and inequality and hunger) will reduce; attainment of promotion of sustainable agriculture and ending hunger

in all its forms would be enhanced; healthy lives and comprehensive well being for all ages would be enhanced. Attainment of quality education at all level, aided by good governance will ensure that poverty in all its ramification will be brought to an end.

This is why the role of universities is critical to attainment of SDGs. In the next two sections we highlight the current situation and desired situation of Nigerian University System (NUS) in the context of attainment of SDGS.

<p>Box 1: UNDP – Sustainable Development Goals</p> <p>Goal 1: No Poverty: End extreme poverty in all its form by 2030</p> <p>Goal 2: Zero Hunger: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture</p> <p>Goal 3: Good health and well being: Ensure healthy lives and promote well being for all at all ages. Health coverage and access for all. Access to safe and effective medicines and vaccines.</p> <p>Goal 4: Quality Education: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all.</p> <p>Goal 5: Gender Equality: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.</p> <p>Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.</p> <p>Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy: Ensure access to affordable, reliable sustainable and modern energy for all.</p> <p>Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.</p> <p>Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.</p> <p>Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities: Reduce inequality within and across countries.</p>

Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Goal 13: Climate Action: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Goal 14: Life below Water: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

Goal 15: Life on Land: Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forest, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Source: UNDP (2016) Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations, New York

4. Current State of Nigerian University System (NUS)

University education in Nigeria goes back to 1948 with the establishment of University College, Ibadan, a College of London University. The first wave of new universities was in 1962, when each of the three regions at the time established its own university, with Western Region having two. The second wave of public (Federal) universities was in the mid-1970s. The third wave of public universities was in the early 1980s, with establishment of state universities. The fourth wave of public universities was in 2011 with the establishment of twelve Federal universities.

The first wave of Private Universities was in 1980-83. Twenty-four private universities were established, but these were short-lived, as they were all abolished in 1984 by government. The second wave of private universities was in 1999 till date, which stand at seventy-five to date. With that, total number of universities in NUS stood at 160 in July 2018. With the increase in number of universities, student enrolment stood at 1.9million in July 2017, taught by 51,000 academic staff spread over 2,300 programme.

Higher education participation rate, however, remains as low as 15%, due largely to limitation of available space, and despite increase in number of private universities which are meant to expand access. Majority of private universities are not able to admit more than 6% of their allocated quota, due to high tuition fees. Academic staff strength of 51,000 represents less than 70% of actual need based on number of programmers and student enrolment.

Facilities and equipment are far below required level. A needs Assessment Study on public universities conducted by NUC in 2012 found that in many universities laboratories and workshops were old, with inappropriate furnishing, overcrowded lecture halls, tools and consumables inadequate or lacking or outdated. Student to equipment

ratio was very low in most public universities, for example, as low as 1:500 in some (NUC, 2018).

The mode of teaching is predominantly the lecture. Usually, there are no tutorials and seminars, largely due to large classes, and evaluation mode is predominately continuous assessment. The weakness in the modes is that depth of student understanding are not detected, students can, therefore, memorize lecture notes and regurgitate in examinations. There are cases of students with degree grade they are not able to defend at interviews and much less in employment. Large corporations often have to retrain recruited graduates to satisfy their job requirements.

Most private universities provide about 12% of their graduates in the first-class grade, thanks to class size, better resourcing and reading culture. However, prospective students who desire education in private universities are not able to afford the fees. This is where policy on financing education would need to be revised.

All these have implications for universities effectively executing their knowledge transmission (teaching) mission and production of quality educational attainment at tertiary level. As products of tertiary level are engaged in transmitting knowledge at primary and secondary levels, the consequence is low quality knowledge transmission at

the lower levels. The overall effect of this is youth unemployability, which affects income and wellbeing, one of the targets of MDGs and now SDGs.

For knowledge generation (research) mission, NUS as currently structured is not capable of producing research productivity. As mentioned above, quality of graduates is compromised. With unemployability of graduates, most prospective students embark on postgraduate studies on part-time. The result would again be non-effective and quality research at postgraduate level.

Similarly, with deficient laboratories, lecturers are less likely to embark on effective innovative research that would result in knowledge required to address developmental goals. In this respect inadequate funding has been a major culprit. Funding of research and development (R&D) is crucial for universities to perform their knowledge generation mission. Funding for R&D can be from public and private sources. Both sources have however not significantly supported NUS (NUC, 2018). Research and innovation expected from the system to better inform policies for MDGs and now SDGs have therefore been sub-optimal.

In summary, the major challenges confronting Nigerian University system and which have limited its capacity to

play leading role in attainment of MDGs and which may hinder same with respect to SDGs are that human and physical facilities for teaching, learning and research have been quite sub-optimal. This has been due largely to inadequate and misappropriated funding. Misappropriation in the sense that academic (teaching and research) expenses are lower than non-academic (personnel and overhead) expenses in total funding. Inadequate funding has affected teacher quality, quality of graduates research and postgraduate training, promotion of ICT-driven universities, and fostering of skill development, including for entrepreneurship.

5. Sustainable Development Goals and the Nigerian University System

SDGs do provide opportunities for NUS to play a more catalytic role in attainment of the goals. It therefore, provides opportunities to review current state of the system and introduce reforms that would enhance its capacity to produce quality, employable manpower capable of earning from paid or self-employment income which would move it out of poverty, eliminate hunger, be able to afford health care against diseases, and undertake innovative research for discovery of new technologies, drugs and medicare techniques, more environmentally conscious for its sustainability, and other goals.

For NUS to be relevant to attainment of SDGs, it must create what is referred to as civic universities. A civic university (CU) provides for the society, engages with its surrounding, partners with other universities and operates on a global scale. A CU is not only for scholars but be the hub for the development of its surroundings. At the national level, the CU will not only be contributing to national policy formulation, but more importantly will be championing them at local and regional level. A good CU will, with its academic excellence help attract inward investors, collaborate with other universities through major research platforms. It is locally relevant and nationally and globally significant in specific areas (Olomolaiye 2015:5).

We live in a world which thrives on competitive advantage. One in which every university has to do everything to remain competitive. A CU must ensure that its graduates are competitively competent, as reflected in job placements and performance. A CU must be able to demonstrate national excellence and global competitiveness in research. This it does through cross-country research proposal, cross-industry research, and cross-regional (Africa) research through centres of excellence.

National Universities Commission (NUC) in recent years have introduced two initiatives in this respect. The first is

the annual Presidential First-Class Graduate Scholarship scheme in which first class graduates across Nigerian universities compete for 100 scholarships. Graduates from public and private universities have been beneficiaries of this. The second is the African Centres of Excellence project funded by the World Bank and interested governments of West African countries. In the maiden awards of 19 universities, Nigerian universities accounted for ten. Performance of these centres has been remarkable.

According to official NUC report, through the ACE project, foreign students are once again being admitted for postgraduate programmes in Nigerian universities. For example, University of Port Harcourt Centre for Oilfield Chemicals research between 2014 and 2017 had admitted a total 137 doctorate and 38 master's students and produced 97 research publications. Obafemi Awolowo University admitted 38 foreign students into its ICT-driven knowledge Park (OAU-Park). Also, Nigeria's ACEs recorded 41 primary, 33 regional and 44 global partnerships (Excellence Vol. 1 Nos. 3 and 4. 2017). Also, the ten Nigerian universities are collaborating with each other across the country and across countries on research.

Thus, if the project is scaled up, it would greatly enhance capacity of NUS to significantly revamp its teaching and research capability and thus enhance its contribution to

attainment of SDGs. To ensure that NUS is composed of CUs capable of fulfilling its teaching mission and of producing quality, employable graduates, there will be need to expand access. This requires:

- Expansion of facilities in both public and private universities. This will require funding support to increase existing capacity in public universities, and intervention support to private universities to encourage charging of lower fees.
- Curriculum review to accommodate contextualized changing economic development paradigms as to make graduates truly employable and self-employable. This includes engagement of private sector practitioners in periodic review of curriculum to ensure industry relevance of graduates.
- Ensure adequate quality and number of teachers. This will require funding support to universities for capacity development. In addition, policy would need to be introduced to incentivize self-development, and sanction for non-subscription to terms of incentives.
- Also, there will be need to reduce the rate of expansion of universities, which provides avenues for rapid migration of junior faculties and professors. Instead, expand and encourage expansion of existing ones. NUC should periodically monitor quality of

lecturers, particularly recruitment and promotion standards.

- To ensure quality graduates, there will be need to improve funding for facilities, particularly ICT. Nigeria Communication Commission (NCC) would need to monitor internet service providers for improved services, and there will be need to introduce more industry -experience related programmes, with less emphasis on theoretical work, and more on laboratory practicals, tutorials and seminars lest students indulge in memorizing lecture notes and internet downloaded materials to pass examinations.

SDGs also provides opportunities for Nigerian universities to through the research mission be relevant to attainment of the goals. NUS would need to improve its research productivity and efficiency and effectiveness of postgraduate education. It was mentioned above that the quality of postgraduate education in Nigeria has declined over the years. In countries like Britain and United States of America, postgraduate education is a veritable source of generating, through supervised researches, results that feed into national policy or are commercialized for the benefit of the public. Over the past twenty years, about 75% of graduate students have been through part-time studies. This coupled with declining facilities for academic research has

limited capacity of universities to pursue the mission of generating knowledge through research which would be relevant to attainment of sustainable development. To reverse this trend, therefore, will require:

- improved funding for postgraduate studies
- improved funding and truly competitive research grants regime. TETFUND has this as one of its interventions in universities, but its spread is limited.
- research for national excellence and global competitiveness must be funded centrally and supported by specific Research Council and National Science Foundation Funds. This is what obtains in Britain, USA and other developed countries. There should be greater recognition to research and development (R&D) by government, as reflected in budgetary allocation. There should be development of capacity for R&D through training.

Greater incentives will need to be implemented to motivate research and innovation. In addition to funding, there should be greater likelihood for off-takes and commercialization of results. Private companies should therefore be encouraged to fund local research and innovation instead of patronizing foreign institutions. It is important to consider additional potential source of funding CU, specifically funding undergraduate education.

Sustainable funding of CU would require relying on sources other than public funding. Some workable approaches have been adopted in countries where CU model is operated. Students are required to contribute to funding of their education.

One approach to this is the benefit principle. Life time benefit of university education has been estimated on the basis of return to education. Studies have shown that return to education rises with level education (Olomolaiye, 2015). This captures return on investment on education. As such, students should be required to contribute to their undergraduate education, return to which is higher than primary and secondary education. This has led to the suggestion that 2 to 3% graduate tax will raise significant sums for the NUS (Olomolaiye, 2015).

Another approach that has been advocated is student loan scheme. A variant of this was implemented by Federal Government in 1970s and 1980s in which students obtained 5,000.00 loan from Federal Loans Board. This was paid back as interest-free loan upon graduation. The variant currently operated in United Kingdom involves students obtaining loan from banks, guaranteed by government. Upon graduation, those with graduate level pay will pay back, while those whose pay is not yet of graduate level will not pay back until their pay reaches graduate level. Total loan is

paid back over life time. That way, it becomes a revolving loan scheme. In designing and implementing this scheme, peculiarity of Nigeria's context would need to be considered, particularly trust deficit and elite capture.

The third approach is student bursary scheme. This was implemented by some state governments since the 1980s. This would need to be revived and strengthened.

6. Governance and Efficient NUS

Governance issues ranked as fourth in Nigeria, according to NUC survey. The situation is aptly summarized in NUC report: Governance in present day Nigerian university system needs to be rejuvenated with competent leadership, and with core value of honesty, integrity, accountability, inclusiveness and openness. While universities in Nigeria have from their inception, been repositories and receptacles of these core values, over time, unethical practices set in, undermining efficiency and effectiveness in the system (NUC, 2018:92).

Parochialism, poor leadership, authoritarianism, industrial strife and unethical practices among lecturers have become prevalent in the university system in the past three decades. In such situation, even with best funding profile, allocation of resources is not going to result in efficient and quality

education. The situation will be further enhanced if government honours its agreement with universities staff. This has been source of frequent industrial strife in the system.

7. Conclusion

Achievement of the targets enumerated above to revamp NUS, it must be said, is only a necessary condition for its capacity to contribute through teaching, research and social engagement to attainment of SDGs. A sufficient condition will include achieving good governance in NUS and government to ensure implementation of necessary reforms. Added to this is commitment by government (federal and state) to promoting a university system comparable to global standards.

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ABOUT CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (CESDEV)

The Centre for Sustainable Development (CESDEV) was established by the University of Ibadan through Senate paper 5386 in May 2010 as a demonstration of the University's commitment to Sustainable Development. It was based on the need to provide intellectual platform for identification of issues germane to sustainable development, critically analyse them, and provide leadership in finding enduring solutions that will enhance sustainable development.

The establishment of CESDEV was sequel to series of events, paramount among which was the winning of a USD 900,000 grant from the MacArthur Foundation to establish the Master's in Development Practice (MDP) Programme. The University of Ibadan was one of the ten original Universities that won the grant in a global competition involving over 70 Universities. Further brainstorming led to defining the composition of the emerging Centre beyond the MDP Programme. It was resolved that a number of development programmes that were "hanging in the balance" be moved to the Centre. The **Centre for Sustainable Development** (CESDEV) thus became a Teaching and Research Centre with a mandate in multi- and inter-disciplinary approach to Sustainability issues affecting not just our continent but the whole universe. The Centre is designed to be a Teaching, Research and Development unit in the University. Presently, CESDEV has the following academic and outreach programmes:

- ◆ Development Practice Programme (DPP)
- ◆ Tourism and Development Programme (TODEP)
- ◆ Indigenous Knowledge and Development Programme (IKAD)
- ◆ Sustainable Integrated Rural Development in Africa Programme (SIRDA)
- ◆ Climate and Society Programme (CSP)
- ◆ Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Programme (EPNARP)
- ◆ Leadership and Governance Programme (LGP)
- ◆ Annual Ibadan Sustainable Development Summit (ISDS)

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