

VESTED INTERESTS, UNIONISM, STAFF AND STUDENT WELFARE, AND THE MISSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (HEIs): FORGING A NEW PARTNERSHIP OF STAKEHOLDERS (HEI MANAGERS, STAFF, STUDENTS AND THEIR UNIONS, ALUMNI, CIVIL SOCIETY) FOR SYSTEM INTEGRITY, PRODUCTIVITY AND DEVELOPMENT

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By

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Higher education – the education and training at colleges, universities, polytechnics, etc. – is critical to human development and there has been and continues to be several global conventions to underpin and shore up this knowledge. For instance, in 2000, the World Bank and UNESCO accelerated the efforts of the international community for the expansion of higher education for development, with a focus on the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Based on research and intensive discussion and hearings conducted under a two-year period, it was concluded that, without more and better higher education, developing countries will find it increasingly difficult to benefit from the global knowledge-based economy (The World Bank, 2000). The power of higher education in Africa has undoubtedly not only been underestimated for decades by African governments but it has also been regarded as a luxury meant for a few and thus neglected tertiary education as a veritable means of driving economic growth and mitigating poverty (Kuhn, 2011).

It is now common knowledge that education, science and research are essential for a country's social and economic development. As Knoop (2011) noted, besides human resources, knowledge is the key factor for development. As a result of globalization, knowledge is increasingly becoming the major locational advantage in international competition. Consequently, only countries that have adequately trained human resources and

effective academic systems can benefit from globalization. It is higher education institutions, especially universities that are designed and possess the capacity to provide the required level of knowledge and skill to trainees. An efficient higher education, (HE) institution performs a variety of functions that are essential for a country's development.

The universities and colleges train the specialists and managers (including HE managers) who will initiate development and change processes in their countries. Research, one of the cardinal obligations of HE institution, can provide relevant knowledge and develop appropriate technologies that fit level local needs. Besides the traditional roles of teaching, research and community development, universities play broader roles that lead to sustainable human development. Janetzke and Scheidtweiler (2011) quoted the inspiring words of Kofi Annan, former United Nations Secretary General on the subject thus: "I believe that the university must become a primary tool for Africa's development in the new century. Universities can help develop African expertise; they can enhance the analysis of African problems; strengthen domestic institutions; serve as a model environment for the practice of good governance, conflict resolution and respect for human rights; and enable African academics to play an active part in the global community of scholars."

Higher education has remained the most virile vehicle for the transmission of ideas, skills, history and culture from one generation to another all over the World for the perpetuation of socio-economic development, human survival and self-improvement and man's ability to conquer his often hostile environment and thus improve living standards and life expectancy. The value of our knowledge in the areas of medical science, agriculture, engineering, technology, law, political economy, to mention a few, and its impact on human welfare, orderly living and overall development can hardly be overstated. Life in any of the global climes would be inconceivable without the advancement that man has made in the science of food production, health care, information dissemination, communication, good governance, and other areas of learning especially in the 19th and 20th centuries. Life is becoming increasingly complex in the 21st century and it would require a well adapted and efficient system of HE to overcome the challenges being posed to our environment, health, food security, security of lives and property and good governance.

It is in recognition of this that increased demand for spaces has become one of the key factors shaping the dynamics of HE globally. Escrigas and Lobera (2009) reported that the factor that has had the greatest influence on the evolution of higher education in recent decades has been the sharp increase in demand worldwide. Overall, world enrolment has increased from 92 million in 1999 with 44.2 million female students to 143.9 million in 2006

with 71.9 million female students. This has been caused by demographic growth, better salaries and quality of life for those who acquire HE qualifications, the social value of higher education and changes in access conditions. These are also some of the factors that are responsible for the meteoric rise in the number of universities in Nigeria from the six it had in 1970 to the current 128-130 comprising federal, state and private universities, besides several polytechnics and monotechnics. The major justification for this huge number of HEIs is the need to create space for millions of youths seeking access to tertiary education. As a consequence of the massive expansion in the enrolment rate, six key factors have appeared in the evolution of HE systems worldwide;

- (i) The inability of the state to finance this expansion and the emergence of the market;
- (ii) The sudden sharp increase in private higher education institutions;
- (iii) The emergence of new providers that are mainly 'for profit';
- (iv) The diversification of sources of income and cost sharing mechanisms;
- (v) The internationalization and cross-border provision; and
- (vi) The importance of accreditation for quality assurance and rankings.

These issues have broadened the number and range of stakeholders who hold nested interests in HEIs.

2.0 THE CONCEPT OF STAKEHOLDERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Before providing a brief discourse on the concept of stakeholders and their respective roles in the evolution, sustenance and the internal dynamics of HEIs, it is of utmost importance that some of the key words and expressions in the title of their treatise whose meaning are relatively obscure be defined within the context of this sub-theme.

Vested interests – strong personal concerns in a state of affairs, system, etc., usually resulting in private gain.

Alumni association – a union or society of graduates of a school, college, etc.

Stakeholder – a person or group not owning shares in an enterprise but is affected by or having an interest in its operations, such as the employees, customers, local community, etc.

Civil society - the elements such as freedom of speech, an independent judiciary, etc. that make up a democratic society. Civil society organization is therefore a union of persons that exists for the defense of and protection of such elements as freedoms, rule of law, good governance, etc in order to preserve the tenets of a democratic society.

With regards to HEIs, stakeholders vary greatly and comprise mainly the proprietors and their agencies, the HEI managers, staff and students and their unions, parents and guardians, civil society, etc.

2.1 WHO ARE STAKEHOLDERS AND WHAT IS THEIR ROLE?

The quote from the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (1999) provides the *raison d'être* for the evolution and existence of stakeholders with regards to HE systems worldwide: “Governments have an incentive and an obligation to ensure that postsecondary education meets stakeholder needs as part of their accountability for the deployment of public funds.” Leveille (2006) indicated that in HE as in other areas of social policy, the perception of the need for change and for transparency in the performance of institutions comes from several key stakeholders:

- From the government, which provides the bulk of the funds for running HEIs;
- From components of the workforce, who want opportunities to show their worth;
- From the leadership of public and private organizations, which are concerned with efficiency and the proper use of the resources in a competitive environment;
- From those who are completely shut out from the existing system of benefits and privileges associated with a college degree;
- From members of the general public, who want accessibility, affordability and opportunity as well as results from their investment.

For a very long time in the history of HE in Nigeria, the identification and role of stakeholders in higher education systems have been largely ignored. With increased attention being given to state and public interest in the performance and outcomes of higher education, it has become an absolute necessity to beam the searchlight on who the stakeholders are and what their role is. Leveille (2006) has provided an operational definition of stakeholders that is all inclusive in terms of who they are and their niche: “Simply put, stakeholders are people who have a stake, or interest in what occurs in any particular area. Ultimately, this includes us all, depending on where we live, work, or play. The key difference between a stakeholder and the average citizen is that stakeholders take an active role in what goes on in their communities, be they local, state, national, or international.” Technically, the word “stakeholder” evolved into a term with a particular meaning in the field of business management and increasingly has been utilized in higher education to refer to those individuals or groups that have an interest or involvement in its affairs. Within the context of higher education, the concept has been broadened to include everyone with an interest (or

“stake”) in what higher education does. In that context, “stakeholder” includes not only policymakers and governing board members but also all persons who in any way fund or made an investment in higher education and the beneficiaries of higher education, including graduates and employers. In identifying the full spectrum of who stakeholders are, Fife and Janosik as quoted by Leveille (2006) included faculties who are the creators of the knowledge base, students who are not customers in the traditional sense but major stakeholders nonetheless, alumni, parents, employers, elected representatives, donors, and the general public.

Meek and Davies (2009) noted that the term “stakeholder” originated from the business/ management literature, and is defined by Freeman (1984) as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the firm’s objectives. “The universal appeal of the concept stems from the fact that an organization’s long-term success is not solely dependent on the financial interests of its immediate shareholders, but that it must take account of a broad range of social, political, and cultural agents in order to achieve long-term success. For HEIs to completely fulfill their mandate, they must prove their relevance to society and the various entities in society (Jongbloed and Goedegebuure, 2001).

Donaldson and Preston (19995) have identified at least three different stakeholder theory types: normative, instrumental and descriptive. The normative approach concerns how managers should deal with the organization’s stakeholders. The instrumental approach sees stakeholders as a means towards an end. The descriptive aspect of stakeholder theory deals with specific organizational characteristics and managerial behaviours regarding stakeholders. These authors eventually concluded that however conceptualized, the interaction between stakeholders and HEIs has a direct impact on knowledge production.

From the foregoing, there are distinct groups with an interest in policy and decision making, accountability issues and overall superintendence of higher education. They have different relationships to the issues in terms of the immediacy of impact.

2.1.1 Government – In public HEIs, the government, federal or state and its various agencies have an interest in ensuring efficiency, effectiveness and value for money from public resources. They also have a role in regulating the demands of the other stakeholder groups and in ensuring that these are satisfied. Faced with competing perspectives, however, government attempts to balance different stakeholder perspectives often obscure the key issues and hinder the search for desirable solutions. This ineptitude of government as the

proprietor of public HEIs is what often leads to the crises and distortions in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

2.1.2 Higher Education Institutions – As providers of education and services as well as developers and guardians of the curriculum, HEIs certainly have a significant role to play in promoting accountability and satisfying the public’s interest in their performance.

2.1.3 Employers – The outputs from higher education – graduates, services and research results – are consumed by employers and to this extent, are important clients as well as stakeholders of the state’s higher education system.

2.1.4 Students, Graduates, and Alumni – As the most directly affected individuals, they constitute the primary stakeholder groups especially with regards to academic achievement and employability. The needs of graduates to have acquired as students, a range of relevant knowledge, skills and related attributes which enable them not only to compete for jobs but also to become entrepreneurs and to contribute in many other ways to society is the key issue here and one which most policy and practice should emphasize.

These are also the issues that enable graduates to develop a sense of nostalgia and pride in the quality of higher education they have received as well as the impetus and motivation for the alumni to make financial and other donations to their alma mater. The alumni association is also represented on the governing board which is the body that makes policies on behalf of proprietors of higher education.

There is an increasing global tendency nowadays for students to demand through their unions for increased political space in the decision-making structures and bodies in HEIs. In the thematic debate on Higher Education in the 21st century: Vision and Action organized by UNESCO (1998) as part of the World Conference on Higher Education, there are indications that students are insisting on their inclusion in the decision-making processes. For instance, Søndergaard (1998) writing from Denmark indicated in their three-point demand, “students’ participation in decision-making at all levels.” Yawson (1998) from Ghana in a presentation entitled, Higher Education in Africa in the 21st Century: A student’s perspective, wrote that the new African student should be one, “who has a hand in the decision-making concerning his own teaching and training.” It would seem that in the Tasmania Students Union students are already being represented in university decision-making processes and forums (TUU, 2010).

2.1.5 Staff and their unions – In all public HEIs, the staff are organized into four operate unions representing the junior cadre of non-teaching staff, the senior cadre of non-teaching staff, the senior non-teaching who are laboratory technologists and scientists and the

academic staff who are the teaching staff in order to effectively contribute to the development of their HEIs and to be well positioned to bargain for their welfare. Unionization is by no means limited to African HEIs; Gonzalez (2012) has reported that in the past decade, unions have become increasingly common on American companies. Data collected from 2008 to 2010 by the National Centre for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions show that about 440,000 faculty and graduate students are members of collective bargaining units, indicating a 17% increase from five years ago. This author also reported that in 2008, the American Federation of Teachers launched a campaign with the American Association of Professors to get more public university faculties to organize. According to Gonzalez (2012) the unions desire more than job protection; they want to influence how the whole system works – unions want to get into curricula, class schedules, grading norms, etc.

According to Fajana (1995), unionization is one reaction of employees to employers' actions. Workers of different interests and needs come together in a trade union to negotiate the price of labour. The existence of trade unions is hinged on the logic that individual workers lack power and may not be able to seek improvement in wages and other working conditions (Fashoyin, 1988). According to Adeniji and Adekunjo (2010), trade unions are the main power base of the workforce; this power can promote the resolution of problems faced by the workers in an organization. Many of the increases in wages, allowances and bonuses in Nigeria especially in HEIs are products of union activities.

Okolie (2012) has said that the emergence of these trade unions has become a desired form of association in order to restore the dignity of professional workers and to ensure a greater level of overall national development which is part of nation building. For instance, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in Nigeria has continued to press on the state and federal governments for university autonomy, good governance from HEI managers, improved funding, proper remuneration, provision of research grants, general uplift of the educational sector and the welfare of employees in HEIs. It has to be noted that the current marginal improvements in remuneration and funding are responsible for halting the unprecedented rate of brain-drain in the 1980s and 1990s. It is now well established worldwide that good working condition and attention to welfare of employees improve the productivity of a country's economy. It is the collective effort of members of these trade unions and the strength of their bargains with the government that have sustained their effectiveness and productivity.

As Leveille (2006) has pointed out, the social contract between the people and the public institutions of higher learning has been based, in large measure, on a level of trust in institutions to provide good governance in a way that is transparent and honest. Through time and the development of colleges and universities by both the federal and state governments, there often has been a tension not only among competing philosophical underpinnings but also between and among interests- i.e., stakeholders – in the support and direction of higher education. These tensions have taken on many forms, including challenges to the curriculum, use of resources, contributions to economic development, opportunity and research, state support and privatization or ability to create wealth christened Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) through the efforts of HEI managers, oversight and regulation, autonomy, the market place influence, and a number of other areas. Those with vested interests in what higher education does or those individuals or clearly defined groups who wish to influence the direction or resources of higher education, all contribute to the tensions and at times hostility and adversarial relationships that occur in higher education systems and public policy.

One vexed issue in the Nigerian HEIs is in the area of autonomy which has been demanded, sought for and protected by the unions especially the academic ones, a situation which has arisen as a response to the often bad leadership and lack of transparency in the management of resources and apparent high-handedness of many HEI managers. Inherent within the concept of autonomy is the right of employees, major internal stakeholders, to be part of the decision making processes, the way and manner in which resources are deployed; the right to demand for accountability, to influence curricula and in this way chart a progressive courses for HEIs.

2.1.6 Parents and Guardians – These contribute immensely in the funding of HEIs through payment of tuition and various fees and on this count hold a stake in the way they are managed. From their perspective these payments are investments in the future of their children or wards and they must be assured that their investments are yielding the required dividends perceived as the knowledge, skills and the matching attitudes their children or wards are being impacted with; and the exemplary leadership being modeled for them by both HEI managers and faculty. In a few HEIs in Nigeria there are efforts to formalize the forum where parents/guardians meet with HEI managers and faculty where they ventilate and share ideas as to how HEIs can best be managed to meet shared expectations.

2.1.7 Civil Society - Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are often the vanguard of the public whose members are the tax payers that indirectly fund HEIs. They have vested interests in matters of good governance and best practices; they are equally interested in higher education

systems guaranteeing the freedom to staff, adherence to rule of law in the appointment of the principal officers; an independent and competent governing boards, etc. Intervention by the organized CSO in the affairs of HEIs has become urgent and critical in recent times especially in state HEIs where many governors exhibit executive lawlessness and interfere intensely with due processes that are clearly enunciated in the laws governing individuals HEIs. This is one way to preserve the hallowed grounds of HEIs and ensure the delivery of good quality education to students at all levels.

2.1.8 Stakeholders Interconnectedness - It is obvious that all the entities that have a stake in HEIs derive their vested interests and therefore right from the roles they play, the contributions they make to the proper functioning of HEIs and the likely impact of HEIs on their lives, their communities and the society at large. It is the synergy created by the interconnectedness (Figure 1) and interdependence of the various stakeholders that propel HEIs towards the lofty goals that the society, through the expectations of members of the public, has set for them.

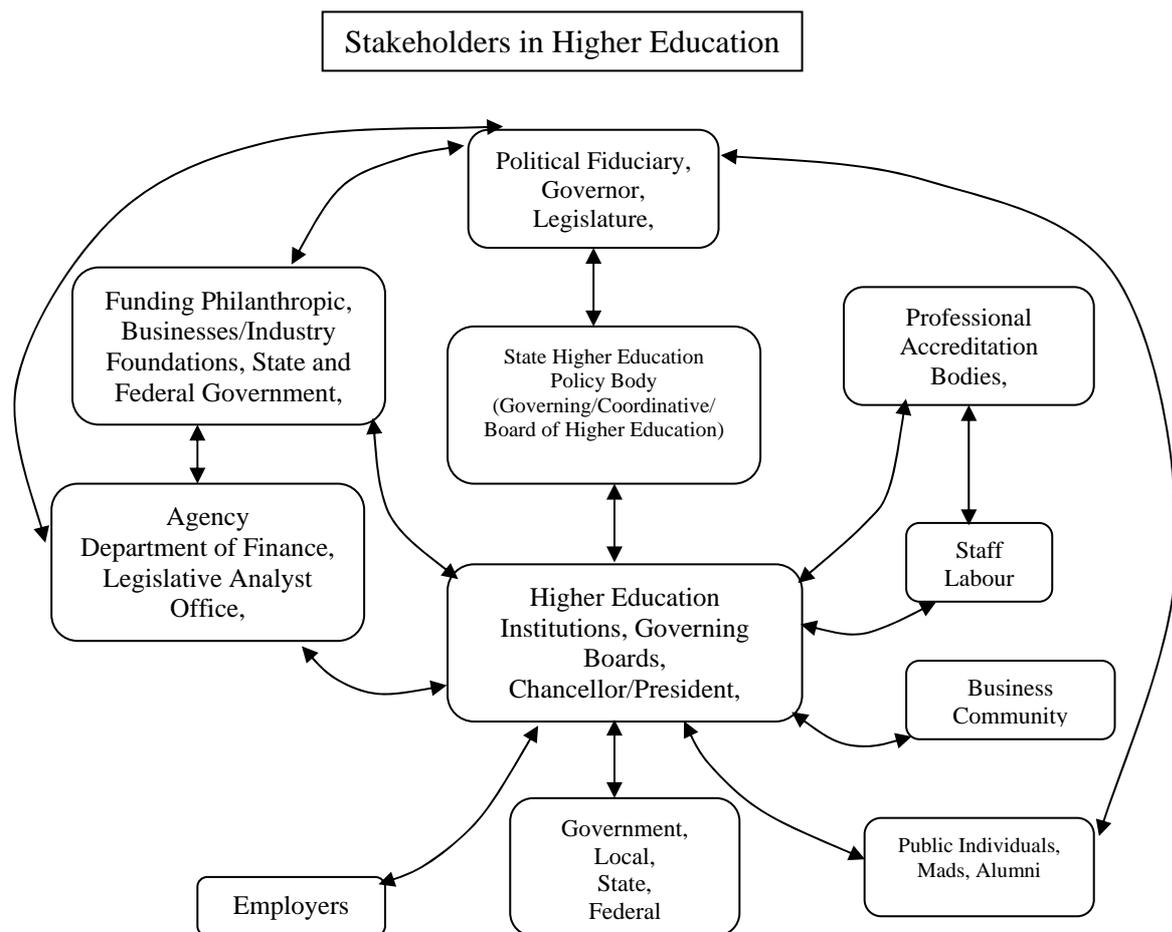


Figure1. The interconnectedness and interdependence of stakeholders in Higher Education Institutions (From Leveille, 2006).

3.0 WHAT DO HEIs OWE STAKEHOLDERS?

With markedly differing expectations and demands by various stakeholder entities, the issues to be addressed are many and varied. One essential issue concerns the responsibilities of HEIs to constituent groups. Who are the major stakeholders or constituencies to be served and what is the nature of the institutions' obligation to each? Without doubt, the categories include students, the general public, the local community, various levels of government, foundations, donors, alumni, employees and their unions, and other groups. Higher education, individually and collectively, has a responsibility to students, parents and taxpayers (and their representatives) to account for the education provided and the costs of providing it through state appropriations, tuition, fees, and financial aid.

Kennedy and Clare (1999) in their study on HEIs in New Zealand, identified four HE stakeholders and customers and the ways higher education should be accountable to them. While their study was specific to New Zealand, their discussion contains principles which are applicable to other countries as well, including Nigeria. They argue that the stakeholders of universities fall into four broad groups:

1. **The students of the institution are stakeholders (as well as its products).** They look to the institution to provide a service in the form of a course of study leading to a recognized qualification and general education benefit.
2. **The employers of graduates.** Employers need well-qualified, well-educated and adaptable employees in the shape of new graduates. Success in this area reaps other benefits such as investment by employers, research development consultancy, and collaboration with the institution in offering education and training. In this connexion, there is need to strike a careful balance between theoretical research and the needs of industry.
3. **The government (federal, state and local) and government agencies.** For the foreseeable future, these bodies will continue to be the major providers of funds to a HEI. Consequently, they should be regarded as stakeholders with needs to be satisfied. The main way in which this is currently achieved is by the institutions recruiting students into disciplines targeted as high priority (e.g) science, engineering, medicine, technology, etc) by these constituent groups, graduating quality students, and completing the funded research.
4. **The community in general.** The final group of stakeholders for the services of a HEI is the broader community.

From another perspective, Fife and Janosik (1999) have underscored the importance of identifying stakeholders and their value in defining and ensuring quality in higher education. They stated that three areas need to be considered before the quality of an institution can be determined:

1. **Stakeholders:** The stakeholders of an institution must be identified and be part of the process of defining a shared expectation for the outcomes of that institution.
2. **Expectations:** Stakeholder expectations, which differ from institution to institution, must be identified for individual institutions. For instance, the expectations of students of a College of Education differ from those of students of a Nursing School.
3. **Outcomes:** The effectiveness and success of an institution should be judged by how well it fulfills the stakeholder-defined outcome for that institution. In other words, the vision, mission and measurable outcomes should be stakeholder-driven.

The authors went on to identify the important stakeholders that higher education must satisfy and they include students, faculties, parents employers, elected representations, donors, and the general public.

A third perspective comes from the Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS) of the university Twente in the Netherlands which has noted that the role of stakeholders has changed from its historical antecedents in the decision making processes associated with higher education. In this perspective, CHEPS carefully distilled two major implications of this paradigm shift: it pointed to a major shift, in the obligation now increasingly operationalized and forced upon HEIs to render accounts to the general public or to agencies acting in its name; this shift has replaced the passive role laid upon external personalities acting on behalf of society by an active duty incumbent on stakeholders to negotiate the terms of higher education's response to demands emanating from particular interests.

It is now obvious that there are various stakeholders and competing issues involved in relationship to higher education policy and its implementation as well as the public policy processes and actions involved. Each group of stakeholders has different needs and expectations and varying capacity to leverage institutional responsiveness to its needs. It is essential that stakeholders be identified and taken into account in all the processes in the overall governance of HEIs. Leaders of HEIs and policymakers must account to each stakeholder group and therefore must recognize each group's expectations in addressing the performance of higher education as well as the decision-making and provision of services (Leveille, 2006). In the final analysis, trust between and among HEIs, policymakers and

stakeholders is based to a great extent, on the integrity of and trust in the decisions that are made, in the processes of reaching those decisions, on the actions implemented to reflect purpose and performance expectations and in the moral vision and commitment to shaping the world of higher education for society's benefits.

The maintenance of stakeholders' trust in higher education should not be limited to the theoretical discourse that often occurs on the campuses of HEIs. Actual policies, practices, and outcomes matter even more. It is critical that the gap between the theoretical discussions and practical applications of integrity, principled and ethical behaviour, and commitment to the common good rather than self-interest, be reconciled and actively bridged. Higher education's strong ideals, strong principles, and compelling vision that are shared by stakeholders have been called into question and these require effective leadership, bold and imaginative vision, and clear, honest communication to encourage and facilitate cooperation among different stakeholders. To do otherwise will stifle the ability of the HEIs to take advantage of opportunities for collaboration and it will increase the likelihood of adversarial relationships and an erosion of support for higher education.

(Leveille, 2006) concluded that systematic changes and cultural shifts are reflected in higher education's relationship with its stakeholders. For the trust historically accorded to higher education to be restored as well as for increased institutional understanding of what policies and practices are most effective and efficient, institutions of higher learning will require more transparency, less self-interest and increased information dissemination that is clear, honest, insightful, and informative. Colleges and universities must overcome their fear of measuring how well they achieve state, institutional, and stakeholder goals and hold themselves accountable for how resources are used in this regard.

3.1 Students Expectations

The vast majority of student sports, social and faculty-based clubs and societies in HEIs are affiliated directly or indirectly to the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS). These clubs and societies provide an important aspect of campus culture, running a variety of activities including sports, social, careers, cultural and charitable events throughout the year. Some societies have their membership based in specific faculties; others are more interest-based (TUU, 2010).

One key expectation of these unions and societies is that they should have the freedom to elect their officers without interference from HEI managers who in many institutions of higher learning impose officers on them for self-interest. It is by no means unheard of nowadays for some Vice-Chancellors to obtain a few students with all forms of

inducement to unleash mayhem on some internal stakeholders of HEIs who are pressing for adherence to due process in the appointments of principal officers and the overall superintendence of their institutions. This is part of what has given birth to the adversarial relationship between staff unions and managers of HEIs.

In specific terms, students expect provisions of such facilities as eateries, restaurants, sporting arenas, halls of residence, healthcare, and counselling units besides those facilities which are directly related to their studies such as adequate classrooms, libraries and laboratories. These non-academic facilities provide in the students sound minds in healthy bodies and the social intelligence needed for enhanced academic performance and the ability to function well in the larger society upon graduation.

In a study conducted on Afghanistan's higher education UNESCO (2004) identified availability of adequate medical services on campuses as critical to the welfare of both students and staff. It requested that such services should be put in place for students and medical staff trained in conveying preventive measures against HIV/AIDS and other STDs. This is especially important because students in HEIs are within the age group that would greatly benefit from preventive healthcare. Counselling services should address both health and academic issues and counsellors should be involved in monitoring discrimination and harassment of various types. To take care of all interests UNESCO (2004) recommends that the counselling unit should consist of a broad spectrum of people according to age, gender and ethnicity. It further recommends that members of the counselling unit should be linked with human rights groups and medical/ health personnel and should receive support from similar groups in other HEIs and countries.

The next expectation of students worldwide is that higher education should move further towards the need of the student. This is the key finding from the survey by the European Students' Union (ESU) and the staff union Education International (EI). The urgency of this change and the immediacy of its implementation were underpinned by the ESU chairperson who said "The shift from a teacher to student-centred approach needs better follow-up of each student. This requires greater resources for academic activity as well as for social students support services. Initiatives from higher education institutions, students and teachers, to change attitudes is long overdue within European higher education."

In the study on student-centred learning, ESU (2010) found that the general response is that teaching should no longer be seen as a one-way process from teacher to learner. Real education can only come about through discussion, projects and challenging the critical mind. Student-centred learning is therefore about seeing students as active participants in the classrooms, as partners who contribute to reaching the required outcomes of a course or programme. It is a holistic subject that ranges from questions of practical organization to issues of philosophy.

In terms of organization, any definition of student-centred learning must have both an academic and a social dimension. There is a general agreement among students that student-centred learning cannot be realized without the right mechanisms. Such mechanisms range from social and financial support to healthcare and are an integral part of a student-centred approach to education. From a philosophical standpoint, any definition of student-centred learning must have both an *ontological* and an *epistemological* dimension. The ontological dimension requires that students be seen as people who have a certain 'personal autonomy.' By the time they reach higher education, students have realized a certain age in which they are fully-grown individuals. This requires them to be seen as responsible citizens, as adults who can take charge of their own lives. This view is justified by two developments: (i) modern societies require educated, free and critical citizens; and (ii) lifelong learning asks students to develop personal and professional interests in a more autonomous way.

The epistemological aspect has also been well discussed by ESU (2010) and it stated that the epistemological shift, a change of method, required by the paradigm of student centred learning is a move from teaching to learning. In this modern, radical construct, education is seen as a 'constructive and collaborative process,' a 'democratic' process between teachers and students as well as between students themselves. The implications of this paradigm are: (i) on a practical level, studies should be organized differently, curricula and everyday university life should be focused more on the students' needs. Practically, most salient issues are the freedom to choose components within curricula, small classrooms and teaching groups, a low student-staff ratio and more counselling services (health, relational issues, study and career). On a different level, it requires to change practices in the classrooms themselves. Students should learn to become critical citizens, to change the status quo. Most student unions understand student-centred learning as activity-based learning (e.g. - project based learning, case-based learning, etc.). A more democratic classroom also needs student evaluations of teaching methods and student participation in the development of those methods as crucial components. Changing the practices in the classroom itself finally

requires teachers to change their attitudes. Training for lecturers is therefore a last important element of the concept.

Although there is unanimity amongst HEI stakeholders worldwide on the positive impact of the student-centred learning framework, it is only recently beginning to move up the political agenda. Wherever its value is recognized, it provides an opportunity to make coalitions with other players in the first place, it provides a basis for cooperation with new partners. As student-centred learning is generally viewed as very positive by staff unions, students' unions and higher education institutions, it can be an issue that unites the academic community around a common interest. Equally important is the fact that taking action on student-centred learning means taking action on a number of other areas. As an example, if student-centred learning is to become the main paradigm in classrooms, then action is needed on working conditions and funding for higher education. Hence, student-centred learning is a useful concept for realizing other long-standing needs of the higher education system as well.

3.2 STAFF EXPECTATIONS AND MOTIVATION

Beyond the regularity and promptness of payment of staff salaries and allowances (which can be serious challenges in many African universities), staff look forward to periodic improvements in the entire gamut of their working conditions, to re-training programmes for capacity building in order to be more productive and better performance, to the possibility of earning a living wage, to good quality healthcare and a range of other expectations that constitutes their understanding of motivation.

However, UNESCO (2004) analyzed motivation systems in higher education with reference to higher education in Afghanistan and identified principles and drew conclusions that may be of general application to other higher education systems. Motivation systems in higher education, as in all other activities are of two basic types: they are based either on *intrinsic* reward (arising from academic work) or *extrinsic* reward (incentives), or may be a mixture of both. Traditional motivation systems in the academia are, in the most part, based on intrinsic motivation, where one element – the quality and quantity of research output – is the major determinant of career progression. This has remained the practice in Nigeria and the downside of this is that the prolific, 'high-flyer' academics do less teaching and short-change students in the process. In many developed countries and a few developing countries, motivation systems in HEIs tend to include more frequently elements of extrinsic motivation such as salary increases and accelerated career progression for proven performance in the area of teaching as well. In order to work well, such systems must be based on transparency

and honest evaluations on the part of managers of HEIs to distinguish and appropriately reward different levels of performance. The future system for staff evaluation could be based on a combination of both intrinsic and extrinsic reward systems.

In the Nigerian HEIs cases of abuse of these systems of motivation are common in many campuses as promotions are based not on performance but on the level of loyalty as perceived by the drivers of administration. It is therefore, not uncommon to find high performing staff (both academic and non-academic) at the lower rungs whereas low-performing or even non-performing staff are at the top of the ladder. This attitude of administrators constitutes a major source of discouragement and frustration for staff within HEIs. In order to improve the system, a more regular appraisal system in which academic staff undergo a procedure which will request them to prepare report, show evidence of their performance and submit to a performance-related interview annually may be necessary. As part of this reform, regular staff appraisal should also take into account student evaluations of academic staff which should be conducted regularly in order to establish performance in the teaching domain. The results of such an appraisal system should be used to motivate staff who are contributing to training of students and the growth of the university through access to development opportunities and salary raises.

A workable appraisal system should incorporate the following items:

- * the academic activity to be appraised (research, teaching, service, administration, others);
- * the procedures and instruments for collecting evidence;
- * the role of various internal stakeholders in the decision-making process;
- * the actors who will have access to the information collected;
- * grievance procedures available to academic staff members.

A specific point for attention is how to evaluate performance in teaching. This is particularly important as most academic staff time is devoted to teaching activities. Another critical consideration is how to evaluate not just teaching but the quality of teaching that impacts positively on students. Many higher education systems have begun to introduce student evaluation of teachers. Student evaluation of teachers is indeed the most important source of information for judging performance in teaching. Given the fact that they are adults by the time they get into higher education, students are generally able to make quite objective judgments regarding behaviour which is conducive for learning, provided that they are sufficiently guided and protected from harassment and reprisal. In order to develop a system

of motivation that is congruent with the globalized world of the 21st century, UNESCO (2004) recommended that:

- the system of academic staff evaluation for promotion be revised to introduce more rigorous evaluation standards for research and textbook production;
- this system should be complemented with a more regular mechanism for staff appraisal in order to judge performance in a more comprehensive fashion, including performance in teaching and service activities;
- such a system of staff appraisal should take into account students' evaluation of teachers;
- staff development opportunities should be offered as an incentive to high-performing staff.

4.0 HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS, STAKEHOLDERS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

HEIs being objects of vested interests from a broad range of constituencies are and should be accountable to holders of these various interests. Depending on the conceptual framework and ideological orientation of these various constituencies, accountability often has different meanings for different stakeholders, but in large measure, it is a vehicle for promoting the value and success of higher education systems. As Leveille (2006) pointed out, many traditionalists in higher education claim that accountability is intrusive and is a form of micromanagement (the act of controlling a business, project, etc with excessive attention to minor details), but this ignores the historical and continuous evaluation, accreditation, and peer review processes that are now a component of the maintenance of quality HEIs. Students, elected officials, business and industry leaders – all concerned about costs, graduate preparation, human capital formation, and apparent secrecy – are increasingly calling for the higher education sector to be publicly accountable to all who have a vested interest in the enterprise.

There are several ways to look at accountability, one of the most important is in terms of internal versus external: (i) Internal accountability is the accountability of those within the institution and system to one another on how the several parts are carrying out their missions, how well they are performing, whether they are trying to learn where improvement is needed, and what they are doing to make those improvements. Internal accountability succeeds in HEIs where there is honest and congenial relationship between employees, internal managers of HEI and the governing boards or councils and a determination on the part of managers to

make those improvements. (ii) External accountability is the obligation of institutions and systems to their supporters, and ultimately to society at large, to provide assurance that they are pursuing their missions faithfully, that they are using their resources honestly and responsibly, and that they are meeting legitimate expectations (Trow, 1996).

Despite the different meanings ascribable to accountability in different contexts, accountability has been defined with regards to higher education systems as, “a systematic method to assure stakeholders – educators, policymakers, and the public – that colleges and universities are producing desired results. Accountability includes common elements such as goals, indicators or progress toward meeting those goals, measures, analysis of data, reporting procedures, and consequences or sanctions.” (Leveille, 2006). However, when individuals and organizations call for accountability, are they calling for documentation, reports, and calculations, for responsibility, or for both? Often, accountability implies responsibility. Whenever any dialogue about higher education and accountability occurs, the conversation implies that the parties involved take on some kind of responsibility. It follows that while accountability may refer to the calculating task of assessing student performance, it may also refer to one’s ability to respond, be responsible and responsive to the conditions that prevail.

Higher education and a state’s expectations for its system of colleges and universities differ markedly from country to country and even across a country. While stakeholders may have a single perception of what a college or university is, the fact remains that there are diverse institutional missions, students, and governance approaches which reflect the philosophy of the various institutions of higher learning. Globalization, nonetheless, imposes a great degree of competitiveness among graduates of HEIs using identical benchmarks of expected levels of knowledge, skills and attitudes and this defines what amounts to best practices for HEIs that produce these graduates.

5.0 THE ROLE OF NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES COMMISSION IN THE SUPERVISION OF UNIVERSITIES

The Federal Ministry of Education is the statutory organ in charge of policy-making with regards to tertiary education in Nigeria. Many of its supervisory roles are carried out by the National Universities Commission (NUC). NUC as an agency of the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) regulates academic activities in universities to ensure that these HEIs attain and maintain certain minimum academic standards, for students in order to align theirs with

global best practices. It achieves these through the establishment of benchmarks and carrying out periodic accreditation exercises in all universities – federal, state and private.

The governance system within HEIs has a direct bearing on whether these higher education systems are able to achieve NUC ideals. Many Vice–chancellors (VCs) especially those in state universities administer these institutions like private estates; they are high–handed and pursue their self–interests to the exclusion of the common good. In many of these institutions, State Governors who are the Visitors populate the governing councils with maverick politicians whose only interests are pecuniary in nature. It is the combination of these egocentric dispositions of the VCs and politicians on the council that creates the adversarial climate that pervades such campuses, and this stymies academic progress and the attainment of society’s expectations from HEIs.

It has therefore become necessary for FME and NUC to creatively interpret the express provisions in the laws empowering them to exercise oversight functions over tertiary institutions and to define the minimum experience for Vice-Chancellors, the process for their appointment and the sanctions for the council or Visitor that abuses such processes. Since governing councils are the statutory bodies that make policies for and regulate the affairs of HEIs, FME and NUC should also regulate the kinds of persons who should be made chairmen and members of these councils. Appointing people who are perceived to have succeeded in careers outside the academia either as Chairmen or members who have no experience in how universities operate and function is responsible for many of the crises that have been experienced in many public universities. It is needless to state that peace and harmony between the various stakeholders form the panacea for a virile academic environment in which excellence, innovation, creativity and increased global competitiveness are guaranteed. These reforms are also required for HEIs other than universities – the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and similar agencies should be similarly empowered.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The paper has provided a critical appraisal of the various stakeholders, their identities and expectations and the issues of their interconnectedness, relationship and interdependence which propel universities along the path of HEI’s vision and mission and what the society expects of institutions of higher learning. There is no doubt that cooperation between these different constituencies and the appreciation and understanding of each other’s roles, values and rights create the necessary synergy for rapid growth of HEIs especially in this century in which boundaries between countries and between HEIs are narrowing rapidly thus inevitably

creating increased global competitiveness among products of HEIs. The paper has also suggested critical reforms that agencies such as FME, NUC and NBTE must undertake in order to provide the necessary good governance in HEIs before the great potentials of the concept of stakeholders could be realized.

Once these reforms are in place, the new African university would be on its path to defining the society's mandate of teaching, research and community development. As Yawson (1998) put it, the new African university will then become a place where societal problems of industry, agriculture, health, etc could be addressed and where higher education would produce graduates who are not only job seekers but also successful entrepreneurs and job creators and thus build stronger partnerships with employers, a place to which governments would refer social and political problems for workable solutions.

In order to achieve these ideals, there is an absolute necessity for a paradigm shift, from the top-down to the bottom-up approach to policy-making and the overall governance of the HEIs in Nigeria. Meek and Davies (2009) defined the two concepts: bottom-up model is the system where government policy follows rather than leads, a change process initiated at the departmental, faculty or institutional level whereas the top down approach is the system where institutions are merely expected to respond to government-inspired policy initiation which are enforced by the power of the state without regard to the views of other stakeholders. Bottom-up systems are characterized by high institutional autonomy, greater harmony and productivity; top-down systems are characterized by dictatorship, frequent industrial disharmony and crises, poor institutional performance and a limited ability to attract external support.

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