

# **PHILOSOPHICAL EXPORATION AND POLITICAL REALITIES: UNVEILING THE NEXUS OF TERTIARY EDUCATION AND THE STATE IN NIGERIA**

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## **Abstract**

The study delves into the socio-philosophical dimensions of the development of tertiary education in Nigeria, considering its role in serving the common good. It underscores the importance of intellectual freedom, critical citizenship, and the pursuit of knowledge while reflecting on the evolving nature of education in an ever-changing world. Ultimately, this study reveals tertiary education as a bridge between generations, embodying humanity's timeless quest for knowledge, enlightenment, and societal progress. The subsequent sections analyze the nexus between tertiary education and the state, particularly within the Nigerian context, with politics as a central intervening variable, and with, its philosophical perspectives are examined, highlighting the state's role in promoting the common good, upholding autonomy, balancing state control and university freedom, considering education as a public good, shaping responsible citizens, and fostering democratic ideals. The study demonstrates that politics significantly influences resource allocation, policy dynamics, quality assurance, inclusivity, academic freedom, and global engagement in Nigerian tertiary education. Recognizing the impact of politicization on the quality of education, this study identifies challenges related to resource disparities, policy inconsistencies, erosion of quality assurance, inequitable access, suppression of academic freedom, and diminished global recognition. To enhance the quality of tertiary education in Nigeria, it is imperative to address these challenges by depoliticizing educational decision-making and prioritizing the long-term development of the educational system.

**Keywords:** Tertiary Education, Philosophy, Politics, Common Good, Intellectual Freedom, Nigerian Context, Quality Assurance, Academic Freedom, Inclusivity, Global Recognition.

## **Introduction**

Tertiary education, at its philosophical core, embodies a profound journey towards intellectual autonomy, wisdom, and societal betterment. Drawing inspiration from the philosophies of Kant, Dewey, Nussbaum, Mill, Arendt, Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates, this study explores the multifaceted tapestry of tertiary education. It examines the delicate balance between vocational and liberal education, emphasizing individual freedom and societal responsibility. Hence, tertiary education, the apex of the educational pyramid, stands as a multifaceted tapestry encompassing the pursuit of knowledge, human development, and societal advancement. This foundational exploration delves into the philosophical underpinnings of tertiary education, emphasizing its essential role in the cultivation of wisdom, critical thinking, and the common good. Drawing from the philosophical perspectives of renowned

thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Immanuel Kant, John Dewey, Martha Nussbaum, and John Stuart Mill, this study unveils the profound epistemic essence of tertiary education.

The philosophical journey unfolds in the context of Plato and Aristotle's pursuit of truth and knowledge, which underpin the core mission of tertiary institutions, where intellectual exploration thrives. Socrates' call for lifelong learning mirrors the imperative of continuous educational development, vital for adapting to an ever-changing world. The metaphorical "ivory tower" symbolizes the elevated realm of thought and intellectual inquiry present in research institutes and universities, resonating with Immanuel Kant's vision of education as a path to intellectual autonomy. Furthermore, this journey is marked by a harmonious blend of vocational training and experiential learning, echoing John Dewey's progressive approach, which emphasizes personal growth and societal enhancement. Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach injects an ethical dimension, highlighting tertiary education's responsibility to equip individuals for the common good, reinforcing social responsibility.

Moving from philosophy to practice, this research analysis bridges the philosophical foundations of tertiary education with the political dynamics at play, with a focus on the Nigerian context. Politics, as an intervening variable, significantly impacts the relationship between tertiary education and the state in Nigeria, shaping various aspects of resource allocation, educational policies, quality assurance, inclusivity, academic freedom, and global engagement. In essence, the philosophical ideals of tertiary education intersect with the political realities of governance, revealing a complex interplay that influences the quality, accessibility, and societal impact of higher education in Nigeria. Hence, this study aims to unravel the intricate interconnections between philosophy, politics, and tertiary education in Nigeria, providing a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities that shape the educational landscape. By examining how philosophical ideals align with political actions, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on enhancing the quality, equity, and relevance of tertiary education in Nigeria and beyond.

### **Philosophical Undercurrents of Tertiary Education**

In examining the philosophical foundations of tertiary education, one encounters a rich tapestry of human development and societal progress. Plato and Aristotle's (Barnett 1988; and Hamlyn 1996) pursuit of truth and knowledge underlie the core mission of tertiary institutions, serving as crucibles for intellectual exploration. Socrates' advocacy for lifelong learning resonates with the imperative of continuous educational development, crucial for adapting to an ever-changing world (Barnett 1994; Tesar & Locke, 1973). The metaphorical "ivory tower" symbolizes the elevated realm of thought and intellectual inquiry found in research institutes and universities. Immanuel Kant's (See, Frankfurt, 1988) view of education as a path to intellectual autonomy aligns closely with the essence of tertiary education, emphasizing the cultivation of wisdom, critical thinking, and its transformative potential. This educational journey is further characterized by a harmonious blend of vocational training and experiential learning, reflecting John Dewey's (Williams, 2011) progressive approach, which emphasizes personal growth and societal advancement (Cf, Williams, 2011). Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach introduces an ethical dimension, asserting that tertiary

education should not only equip individuals with practical and reasoning skills but also instill a sense of duty towards the common good, reinforcing a focus on social responsibility (cf, Stonehouse, et al, 2011). Similarly, John Stuart Mill's concept of intellectual freedom emphasizes the importance of free inquiry while respecting diverse cultural identities (Williams, 2011; Winch & Merriman, 1994).

Tertiary education plays a crucial role as a crucible for critical citizenship and self-development, as emphasized by these scholars (Mothersill, 1961; Standish, 1991; White, 1991). This role harmonizes with ongoing discussions about the interplay between government actions and policies within the educational sector. Furthermore, tertiary education serves as a bridge across generations, enabling intergenerational knowledge transfer and emphasizing the impact of quality education on a nation's future. In essence, a philosophical exploration of tertiary education reveals its profound epistemic essence of wisdom, intellectual autonomy, and the common good (MacIntyre, 2013; Nietzsche, 1989). It navigates the tension between vocational and liberal education while balancing individual freedom with societal responsibility. This journey bridges past and future generations, embodying humanity's timeless quest for knowledge, enlightenment, and societal progress. Regarding the relationship between tertiary education and the state, it is a complex and multifaceted dynamics, intertwined with philosophical implications that extend to the very core of societal values and aspirations.

**The State's Role in Promoting the Common Good:** The state is often viewed as a custodian of the common good, responsible for the well-being of its citizens. Tertiary education serves as a vehicle through which the state fulfills its ethical duty to empower individuals with the knowledge, skills, and critical thinking abilities needed for societal advancement.

**Autonomy and Intellectual Freedom:** The autonomy of tertiary institutions is a critical element in their relationship with the state. According to Kneller (1971) and Frankfurt (1988), the state's involvement should respect the intellectual freedom and autonomy of universities, allowing them to serve as bastions of free inquiry, diverse perspectives, and critical thinking (Barnett, 1988; Barnett, 1990).

**The Balance between State Control and University Autonomy:** The tension between state control and university autonomy underscores the delicate balance between government oversight and the independent pursuit of knowledge. The state's role should be one of enabling and facilitating autonomy rather than stifling it.

**Education as a Public Good:** Education is often regarded as a public good, vital for the flourishing of both individuals and society. The state's responsibility in providing access to quality tertiary education aligns with the philosophical principle that education should be accessible to all, regardless of socio-economic background.

**The State's Role in Shaping Responsible Citizens:** The state plays a crucial role in nurturing responsible citizens who are not only equipped with knowledge but also possess the ethical grounding to contribute positively to society (Aviram, 1992; Barnett, 1988; Barnett,

1990). The states were accepted to develop along the availability of the natural resources and the mental capacity of the indigenes. The knowledge of the people should help the management of their human and natural resources that will shape the contents of their education and development of their manpower, in references to the constant availability of federal government's budgetary allocations to the states.

**Education and the Democratic Ideal:** Education is intimately tied to the democratic ideal. Tertiary education serves as a crucible for critical citizenship, where individuals learn the skills and values necessary for active political engagement and meaningful public discourse. In a nutshell, the nexus of tertiary education and the state, when viewed through a philosophical lens, reveals a complex interplay of ethical responsibilities, autonomy, inclusivity, and the promotion of responsible citizenship. It underscores the state's role in fostering the common good, while respecting the intellectual freedom and autonomy of tertiary institutions. Ultimately, this nexus embodies society's values and aspirations, shaping the trajectory of both individuals and the collective whole.

### **The Nigerian Socio-philosophical Consciousness in the Establishment of Tertiary Education**

The origins of politics and higher education date back to the colonial era. During this time, there was a consensus among some elite individuals that, even if the colonial government were to establish full-fledged universities, certain critical questions needed answers (Kamola & Noori, 2014). These questions included how to ensure the academic quality of these institutions, where to source academic staff, how to guarantee international recognition of the degrees awarded, and whether there were enough African students with advanced level certificates to justify the significant investment required for such an ambitious undertaking (Muyiwa, 2015).

Additionally, there was a debate about whether each colony should have its own university or if there should be a single university serving all of British West Africa. If a single university was recommended, there were questions about its location and funding (Ekpiken & Ifere, 2015). In response to these questions, the Elliot Commission was formed in 1988 (Aladegbola & Jaiyeola, 2016). This commission embarked on an extensive journey across West Africa, gathering input from the local populations, colonial administrators, and individuals involved in higher education in the colonies. The commission ultimately presented two reports: The majority report suggested establishing university colleges in Nigeria and the Gold Coast (Ghana) and making significant improvements to higher education in Sierra Leone, closely linked with Fourah Bay College. A dissenting report criticized the idea of creating three university colleges, arguing that there might not be enough students in West Africa to support three universities or sufficient British academics to staff and fund them. Instead, this report recommended the immediate establishment of a single institution with university status, to serve all of British West Africa (Ibrahim, et al, 2021). This institution was proposed to be called the West African University College and be located in Ibadan, Nigeria.

The Elliot Commission followed the Asquith Commission, which was tasked with examining higher education in the colonies more broadly. The recommendations of the Asquith Commission were of a general nature and applied to all colonies. These recommendations included:

- The establishment of universities in areas lacking them, in the interest of higher education in the colonies.
- These universities should begin as university colleges and, while working toward full university status, establish special relationships with the University of London. This would help maintain the standards of London University while adapting the curriculum to local needs.
- The creation of an inter-university council for higher education to facilitate cooperation between British universities and the new colonial universities in terms of staffing.
- The allocation of a portion of funds under the Colonial Development and Welfare to specifically support the establishment of universities in the colonies (Okafor, 1971:88-89).

The Asquith Commission's recommendation for establishing an inter-university council for higher education in the colonies is worth recalling. Sir William Hamilton Fyne led a delegation from this council, tasked with reevaluating the higher education needs in West Africa (Anyanwu, 2011). The primary dilemma for the delegation was determining whether there should be one or multiple universities. They concurred with the majority report from Elliot's commission, suggesting that Achimota College could indeed be transformed into a university college. Consequently, the colonial office reversed its previous decision, considering the strong public demand in the Gold Coast (Ghana) for a university college and the willingness of Ghanaians to provide financial support (Ekundayo & Ajayi, 2009). Fortunately for Nigeria, due to its size, both the minority and majority reports of the Elliot commission supported establishing a university for Nigeria, with Ibadan as the chosen location, a decision also endorsed by the Fyne Delegation.

The establishment of Nigeria's first university was the ultimate result of the Elliot commission's work (Ekundayo & Ajayi, 2009). In January 1948, the Yaba Higher College staff and students were relocated to Ibadan to create the nucleus of the new university college, initially at a temporary site in Eleyele, Ibadan, using disused army huts. The University of Ibadan faced significant criticism from the public and press right from the start. Three major issues were apparent. Firstly, the principal lacked apparent qualifications or experience for the administrative responsibilities in Ibadan (Saint, et al 2003). Secondly, he had insufficient guidance regarding the nature of his new role. The university's birth in 1948 occurred without a governing body, academic staff, students, and only a weak connection to an advisory body in London (Aiya, 2014). The principal had to decide when and where the college would open and its scope of work. Allegations of "racial discrimination" arose in the appointment of expatriate teachers, as British instructors received higher pay and were generally better trained. There was a belief in Nigerian circles that the college set high standards to hinder Nigerian advancement.

It is challenging to determine whether the criticisms and attacks on the university college's administration were justified. Some speculated that the distrust stemmed from the fact that it was established by the colonial government, and the politics of the time fostered general mistrust of colonial authorities. Dr. M. Flanks, the first principal, did little to alleviate Nigerians' concerns. For instance, the majority of the staff were British, and he did not prioritize aligning the college with Nigerian aspirations (Babatunde, *et al* 2020). Eventually, the Nigerian legislature, the general public, and the colonial office intervened. Dr. Kenneth Mellanby was replaced by Sir Sydney Phillipson as the chairman of the provisional council and D. I. T. Sanders as principal. Despite numerous criticisms against him, Dr. Mellanby deserves credit for nurturing Nigeria's first university during its critical formative phase, gaining international recognition, and initiating the university's most prominent feature today - its medical school. Dr. Saunders was succeeded by Dr. John Parry in 1956 (Aiya, 2014). During Dr. Parry's tenure, the Institute of Education and the new Departments of Economics and Islamic Studies were established. His departure in 1960 paved the way for the first Nigerian principal of the college, Mr. Kenneth Dike. In 1962, Mr. Dike also assumed the role of the first Vice Chancellor when the institution concluded its fourteen-year affiliation with the University of London and began conferring its own degrees. Shortly after gaining independence in 1962, the National Universities Commission (NUC) was established to create guidelines for efficient and cost-effective university development (Ekundayo & Ajayi, 2009; Saint, *et al* 2003). Additionally, a National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) was founded by the United Nations in 1977 to oversee the development of technical education. Notably, as of 1983, there appeared to be no organized body responsible for coordinating colleges of education at the national level. Hence, the end of the Nigerian civil war on January 12, 1970, marked the start of a new decade characterized by significant federal government involvement, leading to substantial growth at all educational levels and across various types of educational institutions. By the end of the Nigerian civil war in 1970, the country already boasted five fully established universities.

### **The Institution of the First Five Universities**

Nigeria's higher education landscape was initially marked by the presence of five key universities. These included the federal government-owned Universities of Ibadan and Lagos, Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, owned by the Northern regional government (later the Northern States), the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) in Ile-Ife, owned by the western region (later Western States), and the University of Nigeria, owned by the Eastern region (later jointly owned by the East Central and South Eastern states). However, the distribution of universities in Nigeria seemed to be influenced by political factors, particularly given the imbalance observed until 1971, with most universities situated in the southern part of the country. This imbalance was partly a result of the political turmoil that followed soon after Nigeria gained independence, culminating in a 30-month civil war. As noted by Kosemani (1982: 6), the issue of educational inequality may have contributed to the tension and suspicion during the early post-independence years. Addressing this educational imbalance, particularly between the North and South and among different ethnic groups, became a sensitive political matter with significant implications for national unity (Ibrahim, *et*

*al*, 2021; Anyanwu 2011). Before 1975, there were six universities in Nigeria, with five in the South and one in the North. Out of the five in the South, four were located in the Western region, underscoring a clear geographical disparity in the establishment of higher educational institutions in the country.

Subsequently, Nigeria expanded its higher education system, ushering in a second generation of universities, which included the University of Port Harcourt, Calabar, Maiduguri, Jos, Bayero in Kano, Usman Dan-Fodio in Sokoto, and Ilorin. These universities played a crucial role in addressing educational disparities. In parallel, third-generation universities were established in educationally less developed states. These institutions aimed to enhance the secondary education foundation in these regions through remedial programs and create alternative, accelerated pathways for manpower development. The schools of basic/advanced/preliminary studies offered two distinct programs to support these objectives (Ibrahim, *et al*, 2021; Anyanwu, 2011).

### **The Remedial Education and Pre-degree Section**

The remedial section is primarily focused on enhancing the academic qualifications of students holding a school certificate. The program's primary objective is to address the deficiencies in their secondary education foundation, thereby increasing their likelihood of securing admission to higher education institutions, aligning with the goals outlined in the third development plan. The Pre-degree Program, on the other hand, is a specialized component of the School of Basic Studies. Its purpose is to prepare individuals who possess a school certificate for direct entry into universities

### **The Schools of Basic Studies/Advanced/Preliminary Studies**

In response to the issue of educational inequality across different regions of the country, the federal government of Nigeria, as outlined in the Third Development Plan from 1975 to 1980, designated certain states as educationally less developed while others were deemed educationally advantaged. In this plan (Volume 1:249), the government articulated its commitment to improving the qualifications of students in educationally disadvantaged states, with the aim of making them eligible for university admission (Ibrahim, *et al*, 2021; Anyanwu, 2011). One of the measures taken to address this situation was the establishment of schools of basic, advanced, and preliminary studies in the regions designated as educationally backward. These schools were set up in all ten Northern states, as well as in Rivers, Cross River, and Lagos States. Four of these regions were established before the civil war, and three were located in the southern part of the country (Muyiwa, 2015; Ekpiken & Ifere, 2015). These initiatives were integral to political strategies aimed at rectifying educational imbalances in Nigeria.

The war and its aftermath highlighted the educational backwardness of specific states, such as Lagos, Rivers, Cross River, and many Northern states. It became evident that these regions required special educational attention. Consequently, both federal and state governments adopted policy objectives aimed at expanding educational opportunities to increase access to all levels of education. These policies encompassed a range of measures, including:

- Establishing schools of basic studies in educationally backward states.
- Initiating nomadic education programs in the North.
- Implementing a quota system for university admissions.
- Mandating states to have their own schools.
- Launching the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme in 1976.
- Creating unity secondary schools by local communities.
- Geographically dispersing federal institutions.
- Introducing the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB).
- Fostering the establishment of universities.
- Continuing with measures such as the introduction of JAMB.

In Nigeria, the first effort to address the educational needs of the migrant population began in 1970. However, it wasn't until 1982 that official support was given to the program. On September 8, 1980, on the designated National Literacy Day, the Ministry of Education recognized women and nomads as groups that had suffered educational deprivation and other social disadvantages in Nigerian society. Nomadic Fulani, as described by Dogo-Fai (1988:2), were seen as conservative, educationally disadvantaged, highly mobile, isolated, and resistant to change. A compensatory scheme was introduced to cater to the educational needs of the nomadic Fulani. This scheme aimed to address the challenges faced by nomadic herdsmen, which are common to such populations worldwide (Aladegbola & Jaiyeola, 2016). At the formal launch of the program in Plateau, Col Onoja, the state governor, expressed the belief that the new opportunities would enhance, rather than undermine, the nomadic population's educational foundation. He emphasized that nomads would no longer be an educationally disadvantaged group within the state. Similarly, the commissioner of education in Borno State stressed that the scheme aimed to make education accessible to the nomads. Ultimately, providing education for nomads would empower them to understand their rights and responsibilities within the broader Nigerian society. It's important to note that, at present, the nomadic education scheme is limited to primary education.

### **Quota System of Admission into Higher Institutions of Learning**

The federal government categorized states as either educationally advanced or educationally less developed. This classification is evident in the 1980 Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) admission guidelines for Nigerian universities. According to these guidelines (JAMB/ADM/66, Vol. II, 1985:2), out of the nineteen states, twelve were designated as educationally less developed. These states included Kaduna, Kano, Lagos, Niger, Plateau, Rivers, and Sokoto, with nine of them located in the Northern region. This classification highlights a regional disparity between the North and the South. This political decision aimed to promote national unity, political stability, and equal educational opportunities, with the intention of resolving conflicts. The same political choice also led to the implementation of the quota system for admissions into federal educational institutions at both secondary and tertiary education levels in 1977 (Ibrahim, *et al*, 2021; Anyanwu, 2011). This system was introduced to address the issue of geographical imbalance in admissions to Nigerian universities. The introduction of the quota system for university admissions sought to foster



national unity, political stability, and economic development, particularly in terms of producing a well-distributed workforce

### **State Takeover of Schools**

The takeover of schools in the early 1970s was undertaken with the primary objective of ensuring that no child would be deprived of education due to factors such as race, ethnicity, social status, religion, state of origin, gender, or physical disability. Additionally, this move aimed to enable the government to establish and maintain consistent educational standards. As a result of this school takeover, the state assumed responsibility for providing education to its citizens at the primary and secondary levels. Schools transitioned into institutions of public welfare (Aiya, 2014; Nwafor & Joseph, 2021). The government's assumption of control over schools led to the implementation of a standardized curriculum across various states, linguistic divisions, subcultural groups, and previously underserved regions. This standardization contributed to increased access to education, rectifying the previously uneven distribution of educational opportunities.

### **Government Control of Education**

As a result, the doubts and suspicions harbored by non-Christians regarding Western education had been dispelled. This had a significant consequence, as it resulted in the widespread acceptance of Western education, even in regions like the Muslim North. The Muslim North had previously accused colonial administrators of neglecting the provision of both high-quality and adequate education, particularly in that region. However, this exposure to secular education demonstrated a shift in this perception (Ekundayo & Ajayi, 2009; Saint, *et al*, 2003).

### **The Universal Primary Education**

Universal Primary Education (UPE) in Nigeria has its historical roots, with significant developments occurring over the years. In 1955, the Action Group government in the western region initiated a UPE program, followed by a similar experiment by the NCNC in the eastern region in 1957 (Muyiwa, 2015; Ekpiken & Ifere, 2015). The Action Group's UPE experiment in the western region, despite its shortcomings, had a significant positive impact on increasing enrollment. However, in areas where political issues and the actions of the Catholic mission were at play, the experiment faced challenges and ultimately failed. Subsequently, in 1970, after the government takeover of schools, the federal government introduced the Universal Free Primary Education (UPE) in 1976. This particular step by the federal government gave deeper meaning to the government's commitment to democratic education and the enhancement of equal educational opportunities, as outlined in the National Policy on Education. The overarching goal was to create "a land of brightness and full opportunities for all citizens." As a result of the UPE program, every corner of Nigeria now boasts at least one primary school, ensuring broad access to primary education across the nation (Muyiwa, 2015; Ekpiken & Ifere, 2015).

### **The Establishment of Unity Secondary Schools**

The early 1960s witnessed the presence of two colleges known as King and Queen's College in Lagos under the federal government. Admission into these colleges was regulated by a quota system. The establishment of these two unity schools aimed to foster national unity and integration and reduce educational imbalances at the post-primary level across the country. The endeavor to address educational imbalances in Nigeria requires an examination of the intersection between politics and higher education. Various governments in Nigeria, whether federal or state, military or civilian, have continually strived to improve education, recognizing that it is a crucial driver of development. This emphasis on education is driven by the understanding that without education, progress remains unattainable. The civil war itself was a product of mistrust among citizens, a lack of shared understanding of the national goals, and the fear of domination by specific groups (Muyiwa, 2015; Ekpiken & Ifere, 2015).

In Nigeria, politicians, both military and civilian, at both federal and state levels, have frequently manipulated the education system to bolster their political standing and legitimacy. During the brief Second Republic, particularly in the southern states, various governments justified the proliferation of higher education institutions as a way to democratize education (Aladegbola & Jaiyeola, 2016). For instance, in Imo State, the establishment of Imo State University was seen as an attempt by Sam Mbakwe to fulfill an electoral campaign promise. In Rivers State, the transformation of the Rivers State College of Science and Technology into a university was tied to Melford Okilo's electoral success in 1979. Similarly, the Unity Party of Nigeria established state universities in Bendel (now Delta and Edo States) and Ondo as part of their political commitments. During this period, Anambra State University was also established. In the Northern region, where the educational foundation was weaker, the federal government focused more on expanding access to higher education (Ibrahim et al 2021; Anyanwu, 2011).

However, the military takeover in 1983 led to the scaling back of Bendel State University, with the closure of the school of medicine and the transfer of education students to Abraka, which became the faculty of education. The merger of Federal Universities of Technology in Bauchi and Makurdi with the University of Jos, Yola with Maiduguri, and Abeokuta with Lagos in 1984 illustrates that political considerations rather than educational needs influenced the establishment of these institutions. The introduction of universities of technology in Minna, Yola, Bauchi, and Makurdi, where the educational infrastructure was weaker than in other regions like Owerri, Abeokuta, and Akure, underscores the role of political manipulation (Ibrahim, *et al*, 2021; Anyanwu. 2011). The core issue facing higher education in Nigeria today is largely political and doesn't consider the economic implications of these actions. Even the annual admissions to Nigerian universities highlight the need for more and larger institutions in the South. For instance, in the 1984/1985 Joint Admission and Matriculation Board data, the South had a significantly higher number of applicants and admissions compared to the North. The difference in applicants between the South and North over three years (1984/1985, 1985/1986, and 1986/1987) was substantial, favoring the South (Ibrahim, *et al*, 2021; Anyanwu, 2011; Ekundayo & Ajayi, 2009; Saint et al 2003). The existence of three full-fledged universities of technology in Owerri, Minna, and Akure cannot

be economically justified, considering their student intake and the current economic challenges in the country. To optimize resources, all candidates in these three universities could be consolidated into one institution.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the philosophical underpinnings of tertiary education reveal its profound significance as a catalyst for human development and societal progress. Drawing inspiration from thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Immanuel Kant, John Dewey, Martha Nussbaum, and John Stuart Mill, tertiary education embodies the pursuit of truth, intellectual autonomy, wisdom, and critical thinking. It navigates the fine balance between vocational and liberal education while instilling a sense of social responsibility and fostering responsible citizenship. Ultimately, it serves as a bridge across generations, uniting past and future in the timeless quest for knowledge, enlightenment, and societal advancement. The relationship between tertiary education and the state is a multifaceted interplay of ethical responsibilities, autonomy, inclusivity, and the promotion of responsible citizenship. The state's role in promoting the common good, respecting autonomy and intellectual freedom, balancing state control and university autonomy, providing education as a public good, shaping responsible citizens, and upholding the democratic ideal is crucial for fostering societal advancement and individual growth.

However, in the Nigerian context, politics emerges as a prominent intervening variable, significantly impacting the quality of tertiary education. The politicization of resource allocation, policy inconsistencies, quality assurance mechanisms, inclusivity and equity, academic freedom, and international relations can lead to chronic underfunding, disruptions in educational policies, compromised academic quality, unequal access, and suppression of intellectual inquiry. As a result, the quality of tertiary education in Nigeria is susceptible to political influence, affecting the nation's educational development and global standing. Understanding the implications of politics in the relationship between tertiary education and the state is essential for addressing the challenges and opportunities facing Nigerian tertiary institutions. It highlights the need for policies that prioritize the common good, academic autonomy, and quality education while acknowledging the impact of political decisions on the nation's intellectual and societal progress.

## Recommendations

Based on the analysis of the relationship between tertiary education and the state, particularly in the context of Nigeria, and recognizing the impact of politics, the following recommendations are proposed to improve the quality and effectiveness of tertiary education:

- **Depoliticize Resource Allocation:** It is crucial to separate political considerations from resource allocation for tertiary education. Budget decisions should be based on the educational needs and priorities of the nation rather than political motives. Adequate and consistent funding is essential to provide modern infrastructure, up-to-date facilities, and access to educational resources.

- **Establish Stable Educational Policies:** The frequent changes in educational policies driven by political transitions disrupt the continuity and coherence of tertiary education. Policymakers should work toward establishing stable and long-term educational policies that align with the nation's long-term educational goals. Consistency in policies is vital for maintaining academic standards and objectives.
- **Safeguard Quality Assurance:** Regulatory bodies responsible for maintaining academic standards should be insulated from political interference. Quality assurance mechanisms should operate independently and impartially to ensure that institutions meet international academic standards and produce graduates with the necessary skills and knowledge.
- **Prioritize Inclusivity and Equity:** Affirmative action measures to promote access for marginalized groups should be designed and implemented with a focus on inclusivity and equity. These policies should be free from political manipulation to ensure that education serves as a means of social mobility for all Nigerians.
- **Protect Academic Freedom:** Academic freedom is essential for intellectual inquiry, critical thinking, and innovation within universities. Government interference in academic matters should be minimized to allow scholars and institutions to engage in open inquiry and produce groundbreaking research.
- **Foster International Collaboration:** Political decisions regarding international collaborations and the recognition of Nigerian qualifications should be made with a view to enhancing the global standing of Nigerian universities. Encouraging international engagement and promoting the recognition of Nigerian degrees can expand the contributions of Nigerian institutions to the global academic community.
- **Promote Ethical Leadership:** Ethical leadership within educational institutions and among policymakers is essential to ensure that politics serves the greater good of education. Leaders should prioritize the quality and integrity of tertiary education over political gain.
- **Engage Stakeholders:** Collaboration and dialogue among government agencies, educational institutions, students, teachers, and other stakeholders can help formulate and implement policies that prioritize the quality and accessibility of tertiary education while minimizing political influence.
- **Monitor and Evaluate Policies:** Regular monitoring and evaluation of educational policies can help identify the impact of politics on the quality of tertiary education. These assessments can inform adjustments to policies and practices to better align with educational goals.
- **Public Awareness and Advocacy:** Raising public awareness about the impact of politics on tertiary education can lead to informed public opinion and advocacy for educational reforms. Informed citizens can influence policymakers to prioritize education over political interests.

By implementing these recommendations, Nigeria can work towards depoliticizing tertiary education, ensuring quality, equity, and inclusivity, and fostering an environment where

educational institutions can fulfill their role as centers of intellectual exploration and societal progress.

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