

Transforming University Knowledge Production towards the Promotion of Inclusive Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria has been seemingly inelastic to global changes in terms of joining the post-industrial revolution. Renaissance of knowledge in Africa was identified as a potent factor for economic growth by World Bank. This factor could create opportunities to leap frogging in selected areas of economic growth and resolution of social problems in the region. Hence, this study examined transforming university knowledge production towards the promotion of inclusive development in Nigeria. This descriptive survey design study provided baseline information for supporting university knowledge-driven inclusive economic growth and equitable income distribution in order to promote inclusive development in the nation. Secondary data from National Bureau of Statistics and other data sources were obtained to answer three research questions raised in the study. Using the sample descriptive statistics, results obtained revealed low capacity in university knowledge production which yielded a low Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita and low knowledge Economy Index (KEI), but with high inclusive growth in Nigeria. The market-driven inclusive growth resulted in not having specific targets such as employment generation and income distribution. Therefore, it was recommended among others that government should create enhanced social and education environment. This will ensure sustained growth as well as fairness in income distribution towards the promotion of inclusive development.

Keywords: Development, inclusive, knowledge, university, production.

Introduction

Nigeria's development calculus portrays an economy full of potentials that can leap frog into sustained growth and development if the economy is optimized for its citizen's benefits. Despite various efforts by government regimes in Nigeria to transform the economy, it is still performing well below full employment and capacity unable to alleviate poverty among majority of the nation's citizens. Ekpo (2013) describes the economy as being backward and underdeveloped even with robust growth rates (inclusive growth) for the period of five years (2008-2012). According to Woessmann (2003), majority of macroeconomic literature on economic returns to education employs the measure of the quantity of schooling. Institutions of learning (including universities) are for knowledge production with initial phases of education more important for imitation and higher education for innovation (Topel, 2006). This follows that the standard method of estimating effects of education on economic development is to estimate cross-country growth in GDP per capita over a period as a function of measures of schooling and a set of other variables deemed important for a nation's development. Based on these facts, this study sets out to examine university knowledge production towards the promotion of inclusive development in Nigeria.

A nation's development implies creating more diversified economy whose main sectors become more interdependent for supplying inputs and for expanding markets for output. According to Mbazu (2006), it means an improvement in general well-being of all and not just a few in a society. In the light of this study, development is said to be inclusive when it brings about equity and fairness as well as creating an environment conducive to sustained growth in the economy. Inclusive development may be promoted in Nigeria given the fact that inclusive growth experienced in the country is a modified version of trickle-down effect of economic growth.

Therefore, to achieve a significant development in Nigeria, there must be growth plus qualitative improvement in standard of living of the general populace. This explains what inclusive development stands for. Development in Nigeria subscribes to the philosophy of inclusive growth approach to development which is based on market forces. This approach results in a paradox of high growth without significant development. For Ekpo (2013), the 2012 growth rate was seven percent, unemployment rate was about 22 percent (higher among youths) and it is rising; while the incidence of poverty was about 70 percent. The National Bureau of Statistics as espoused by Ekpo (2011) has it that the facts on economic performance reveals that in 1980 the rate of inflation was 10 percent while the growth of GDP stood at 4.2 percent which is higher than the growth rate of the population put at 3.3 percent. The rediscount rate was six percent while unemployment was 6.4 percent. Inflation remained double digits except for the years 1990 and 1998-2000, while the growth in the economy from 1980-1999 was sluggish. Despite on these macroeconomic fundamentals, the economy has continued to register increase growth rates which were non-employment generating. The high unemployment results in output loss indicating that the economy is producing below full potential with far reaching implications for development (Ekanem, 2011).

Generally it is an accepted fact that economic development has an indirect potential to reduce poverty as a result of simultaneously increasing employment opportunities, and labour productivity (Mbazu, 2006; Udabah, 2002 and Ekanem & Uchendu 2012). It is also apparent that education is the main plank for economic development since human knowledge in all fields of learning can stimulate creativity and sustain the development of a nation. The changing role of Nigerian universities in knowledge production (research, teaching and community service) and the importance of the subtle components relationship are critical in economic development of the nation. It is on this basis that Harman (2006) notes and modifies the university role to include a band of quadrature of teaching, research, knowledge transfer and administration. He stresses that the core of academic work is in teaching and research while other tasks are relegated to the status of distractions. It could be succinctly submitted that university education is mainly for generation, dissemination and utilization of practical knowledge for the development of a nation. Nigeria can thus be healthy and wealthy if the right type of knowledge from our universities are generated and applied.

Knowledge production from university education is multifaceted and complex as there are frequent changes in knowledge concepts, procedure and approaches. This makes learning and acquisition of knowledge to be dynamic, thus hindering dissemination and utilization among teachers and learners. Indeed, almost on a daily basis, new ideas, new objects and new methods are added in astronomic expansion to the existing human knowledge since no one knows everything about something (Abiodun, 2002). The nature and amount of university knowledge available to individuals or organizations can be utilized and turned into financial output. It becomes necessary for proper understanding of the nature and forms of knowledge production. After all, education itself is the process of imparting knowledge, acquiring knowledge and skills about ideas, values and concepts, borne out of learning, practice and experience. Proper nurturing, transmission and application of this knowledge therefore, can guarantee a strong inclusive development in Nigeria. There is no clear cut definition of knowledge. However, a good linkage of education in the knowledge economy can be captured as a tripartite mandate paradigm of transformation using the model shown in Figure 1:

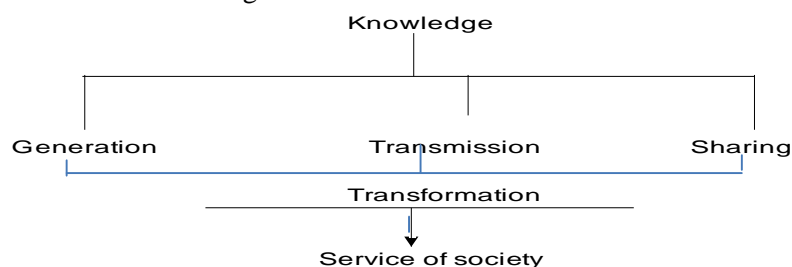


Figure 1: Process of Education in knowledge societies

Source: Designed by the researchers

Tacit Knowledge is transformed into coded knowledge (scientific form) to be taught in schools and also exported to other nations. Knowledge generation comes from education sector and reflects curriculum, methodology and its teaching. Knowledge's transmission emanates from teaching pedagogy and methodology. Knowledge sharing is a social engagement or application of knowledge to the society.

Transformation brings about market changes on previous methods of doing things, increase quality of life and upward turn-around to some benchmarks in specific strategies. The main objective of knowledge in the service of society is to transform and improve the economy with available limited resources in order to impact on economic growth and development.

A key aspect of knowledge economy is greater investment in intangible assets such as education, training, research and development, technologies, branding, marketing and distribution. The model in Figure 2 shows four major elements (4-pillars) which can support knowledge economy.

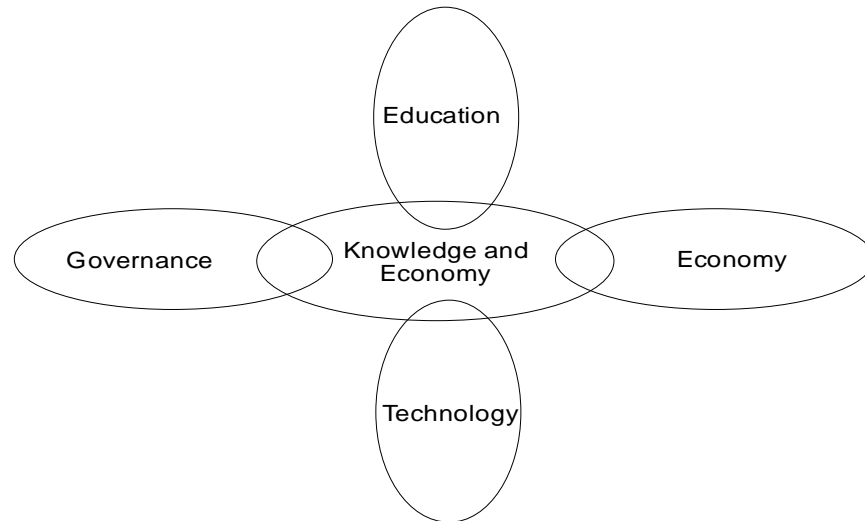


Figure 2: Four Pillars of Knowledge Economy

Source: Adapted from Obanya 2011

Education includes the various levels of education that can integrate local instructors into the school system to compliment teachers. Education aims at building the requisite resources and human capacity through prioritizing development in education. Economy is to be diversified through developing the resources for exploitation of rich potentials. Economy is meant to transform knowledge production and resources for better living. Technology through formal and informal means, enable coded (embedded) knowledge to be decided to avoid the death of knowledge with the possessor. Technology is to increase control and understanding of the environment through fashion tools and machines. Governance is a positive role of good leadership to economic growth. Effective democratic leadership targets desired destination to use knowledge production to diversify the economy for better living. Good governance is therefore for peoples' welfare needs, security and property.

The significance of the study will be seen in its acting as an inspiration for universities to be committed to effective knowledge production among other potentials benefits of the research. The government, educational administrators, students and parents will equally find this study useful as a strong and sustainable economy is yearned for among citizens in Nigeria. The study is particularly important to scholars since it examines the extent of knowledge production in order to improve inclusive growth, increase productivity, create employment and protect the economy from distortions. The scope of the study is delimited to the examination of knowledge production from Nigerian university education and the extent it can promote inclusive development in Nigeria. Therefore, the investigation wishes to contribute to the filling of the gap and hence, to bring added knowledge to literature in terms of policy direction.

Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, there has been a high rate of poverty incidence arising from unemployment among educated and uneducated youth as well as low productivity among the citizenry. The present situation depicts low capacity in university knowledge production with resultant consequences on a paradox of high economic growth without significant development in Nigeria. This inclusive growth methodology seems to be producing below full employment output, thus making growth not to be equitably distributed to reduce inequality in poverty.

Commenting on this a onetime Minister of Finance in Nigeria identified increased capacity in knowledge production as a panacea to high unemployment especially as new entrants into the labour force each year was projected to rise to about eight million by 2015. This study was therefore necessary to fill the gap by examining the university knowledge production towards a healthy inclusive growth and inclusive development in Nigeria. An observed burning issue is the mismatch of the university knowledge among educational output and the labour market requirements. This seems not to guarantee inclusive development given the prevailing inclusive economic growth philosophy in Nigeria. A perceived way out of the administrative challenge was to transform university knowledge production in order to create jobs, ensure equitable income distribution, improve inclusive growth and promote inclusive development in Nigeria. The question remains: given the inclusive growth in the economy, can university knowledge production guarantee inclusive development in Nigeria? This study was designed to find an answer to this poser.

Research Questions

1. What is inclusive development?
2. What is the level of knowledge production from university education towards, inclusive development in Nigeria?
3. To what extent is knowledge production from university education relevant to inclusive development in Nigeria?

Methodology

This study was a national survey with population comprising of all university students in Nigerian universities. The sample was purposefully chosen to examine university knowledge production and its impact on inclusive development in Nigeria within the time frame of continuous economic growth rates (2008-2012). The source of information for this study was mainly secondary data. The data were obtained from National Bureau of Statistic (NBS), National Economic Review of the National Planning Commission and any other secondary information from relevant government agencies.

Data Analysis and Results

The working research questions raised in the study were analyzed in line with the data collected using the sample descriptive statistics and tables. The analyses were shown in figures 3, 4 and tables 1, 2 and 3.

Research Question One

What is inclusive development?

Figure 3 and 4 presented the graphical assumptions of an economy with inclusive development and that without inclusive development. Table 1 presented a profile incidence of needs provision towards inclusive development in some developing countries.

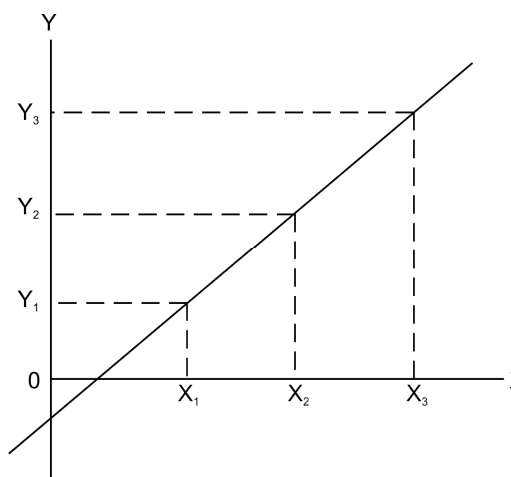


Figure 3: Economy with inclusive development
Source: Researchers

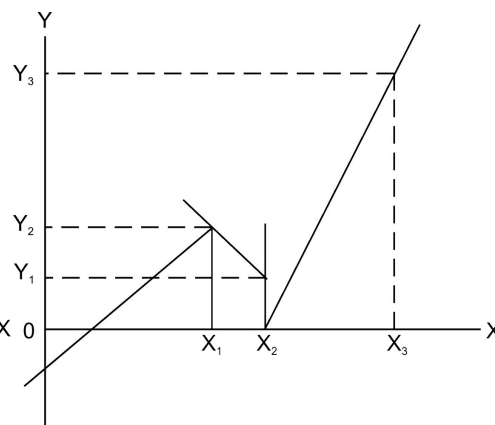


Figure 4: Economy without inclusive development
Source: Researchers

Inclusive development is an integrated approach to development which involve all round continuous development such that no part of the system suffers deficiency. However, where the deficiency exists, the system cannot collapse or be distorted because of inclusive growth. The inclusive growth is a modified version of trickle-down effect of economic growth. Growth has always been inclusive as all economic agents have always been involved in the production process. In Figure 3, $OY_1, X_1 < OY_2, X_2 < OY_3, X_3 \dots OY_n, X_n$ indicates a progress growth pattern which over time will result in inclusive development. The implication is that the production possibility frontier shifts upwards based on innovations, ideas, knowledge and technology. The economy therefore moves to a higher growth trajectory (showcases deliverables of growth) since development cannot take place without growth.

Figure 4 indicates an economy without inclusive development. It reveals neo-liberal definition of growth and implicit development process which can never be effective both in short or long terms. Graphically in figure 4, $OY_1, X_1 > OY_2, X_2$ and $OY_3, X_3 \dots OY_n, X_n$. The implication of this is that there can be growth (even if inclusive) without significant development. This type of development is the case in Nigeria and it influences the pattern in growth of education since the economy and education are directly related (Babalola, 2011). The economy depends more on market forces to spur growth and employment, with inherent low capacity in knowledge production and social support from government.

Table 1: Nations and the impact on basic need provision towards inclusive development.

Nations	Literacy of 15-24 years (%)	Improved water access (%)	Life expectancy at birth (years)
Nigeria	88.60	60.00	43.40
Malaysia	97.20	95.00	73.20
South Africa	92.80	87.00	48.40

Source: Adapted from Ekpo (2012)

Table 1 showed three developing nations and their levels of basic need provision. Malaysia was rated topmost (Literary 97.20 Water access 95.00 and life expectancy 73.20) followed by South Africa (Literary 92.80, Water access 87.00 and Life expectancy 48.40) and Nigeria as the last (Literary 88.60, with access 60.00 and life expectancy 43.40). The implication was that Malaysia and South Africa were able to balance the mix of adherence to market and government intervention than Nigeria could do. Malaysia and South African developed better as their economies spur growth, create jobs and reduce poverty with the basic needs provision than Nigeria (with unnecessary adherence to the market).

Research Question Two

What is the level of knowledge production from university education towards inclusive development in Nigeria?

Table 2: presents data analysis for answering the research question

Table 2a: Indicators of University Educational Development in Nigeria 2007-2010

Indicators	2007	2008	2009	2010
No. of Institutions	85	91	98	103
Enrolment	1,005,122	1,115,980	1,314,224	1,434,210
Total Expenditure (N'000)	275,895.20	1,377,049.50	1,205,112.93	1,395,037.31
Total Government Expenditure (N'000)	2,917,219.73	14,215,129.92	18,170,527.13	19,158,123.25
Expenditure of Government Expenditure (%)	9.46	9.69	6.63	7.28

Source: Adapted from National Planning Commission (2012), National Economic Review

Table 2b: Nigerian University Ranking in sub-Saharan Africa and the World

Universities	Nigerian Ranking	Sub-Saharan African Ranking	African Ranking	World Ranking
University of Ilorin	1 st	31 st	55 th	5,484
Obafemi Awolowo University	2 nd	34 th	61 th	5,756
University of Jos	3 rd	36 th	66 th	5,882
University of Lagos	4 th	37 th	68 th	5,936
University of Benin	5 th	42 nd	77 th	6,324
University of Ibadan	6 th	43 rd	79 th	6,425
University of Nigeria, Nsukka	7 th	49 th	99 th	7,196

Source: Umeagbalasi (2010). Nigeria inter-society’s public comment on Nigerian State of Economy. Retrieved from <http://www.intersocietying.org>. on June 27, 2010.

Table 2c: Spending on education (% GNP) for some African countries

Countries	% GNP spent on education
Angola	4.90
Cote d'voire	5.00
Ghana	4.40
Kenya	6.50
South Africa	7.90
Malawi	5.40
Mozambique	4.10
Nigeria	0.76
Tanzania	3.40
Uganda	2.60

Source: The Guardian online (2009). Extracted from African Department, Alifa Daniel's Report.

Table 2a revealed a low level of knowledge production from university education towards the promotion of inclusive development in Nigeria. These dissatisfactory indices showed inefficient and ineffective University Education System. This was reflected in the inadequate number of institutions, the geometric increase in the enrolment over the years and under-funding resulting from unfavorable funding ratio of government expenditure at this level of education. The implication of this was that, the universities in Nigeria were yet to produce the desired results to improve the human resource stock of the nation. This was critical for a nation to guarantee economy full of employment with requisite industrial capacity utilization for significant development.

Table 2b showed the low ranking of the universities in the Sub-Saharan Africa and the world at large. The best university in Nigeria (University of Ilorin) was the 31st in Sub-Sahara Africa, 55th in Africa and 5,484 in the world. Most the Nigerian-universities failed to progressively and vigorously keep abreast with the development in the world to boost self images of institutions (Babalola, 2010). Economic globalization was lacking which could induce favourable knowledge Economy Index (KEI) towards individual wellbeing and national development.

The percentage of Gross National Product (GNP) on education in Table 2c were generally low among the African countries. Nigeria's index indicated the least among the countries far below the recommended minimum of 26 percent annual budgetary allocation for sustainable development by 1990 Jomtein convention of United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization(UNESCO). This means that Nigeria has failed to benefit from more and better education which could have encouraged economic growth directly as well as indirectly increase in social equality and cohesion (Ekanem & Uchendu, 2012 and Ekpo, 2011). Effective financing of Education by public expenditure could increase human/social capital (through knowledge creation), encourage economic growth, reduce inequality in the distribution of income as well as promote inclusive development of a nation.

Research Question Three

To what extent is knowledge production from university of education relevant to inclusive development in Nigeria?

Table 3: Nigeria's Economic indicators 2000-2011

Indices	2000	2004	2006	2009	2011
Population(in millions)	127	129	141	156	167
Population density (in millions)	139	141	159	177	196
GNP (\$ billions)	32.70	55.30	90.00	126	160
GNP per capita (\$)	260	430	620	811	820
Purchasing power of parity/GNP ranked among 250 countries.	199 th	190 th	177 th	181 st	188 th

Source: Extracts from World Development Report and National Planning Commission (2011).

The presentation in table 3 showed economic indicators in Nigeria (2000-2011). The population in Nigeria was progressively high. The population density representing the number of inhabitants per unit area of land tended to be high while there was a progressive rise in the GNP between 2000 and 2011 that has continued till date.

The initial argument of Ekanem (2011) was confirmed with the lopsided economic imbalance which was hinged on crude oil export. The economy was heavily dependent on revenue from crude petroleum to finance development.

The credit to the private sector as a share of GDP indicated an increasing trend while credit to the core private sector/GDP revealed dominant trend (average 4.10 percent) between 2010 and 2011. The net credit to government in 2009 and 2011 was quite high in that it grew exponentially at 31.6 percent which could result in fiscal risk. This implied that the more these rates were, the higher the interest and foreign exchange risks for financial institutions. The macro-economic stability must consider this financial stability in order to stabilize the economy. Knowledge transformation was lacking to enable substantial part of labour to contribute to production, reduce the incidence of poverty and improve the standard of living for inclusive development in Nigeria.

Discussion of Results

Research question one revealed that an economy with inclusive development policy was associated with a progressive growth pattern which over time could produce a sustainable development. The growth in the economy of Nigeria was an inclusive growth. It can be defined as rapid sustained growth which is inclusive of a large portion of the nation's labour force. This nebulous concept of inclusive growth has potential outcomes but without specific targets such as employment generation and income distribution. This anomaly was explained by the affirmation that employment, distribution and other relevant factors have been left to the market mechanism (Ekanem & Uchendu, 2012 and Ekpo, 2012).

The development effort in Nigeria revealed backwardness in the developmental indices (literacy, improved water access, and life expectancy at birth) as the economy operated with low knowledge Economy Index (KEI) and resultant low Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita. The economy has been wholly and fully dependent on crude oil as a primary product with the price internationally determined. Therefore, a shock in that sector could affect both the education and the economy adversely. The Nigeria robust economic growth notwithstanding, knowledge production from education was an essential ingredient which could aid to distribute equitably the inclusive growth. This was not available sufficiently in Nigeria especially as the nation continues to witness rapid population changes in the last 20 years without corresponding increase in the means of sustainable livelihood.

Research question two analyzed in Table 2 revealed low level of knowledge production from universities in Nigeria towards inclusive development in Nigeria. This attested to the paradox of increased growth in Nigeria's economy without significant development. In other words, the increase growth rates over the years (2008-2012) stated were non-employment generating and without achieving specific targets such as income distribution and poverty alleviation. The inclusive growth cannot lead to inclusive development in Nigeria. The indicators of university development were weak with poor rank-order of university ratings in both Sub-Saharan Africa and the world. The ineffective financing of education by public expenditure adversely affected university knowledge production in Nigeria. The fact that there was a direct positive relationship between KEI and economic growth made the measurement of GDP per capita possible (Psachoropoulos, 1973). This means that Nigeria with low KEI also recorded a low GDP per capita. The possible reason for this revolved around the lack of requisite capacity in knowledge utilization among the workforce coupled with ineffective and inefficient management of all the components of knowledge required to create jobs and equitably distribute income for a strong industrial economy.

This finding was in consonance with Babalola (2010) in that there was a mismatch of quality of university knowledge among educational output and the labour market requirements in Nigeria. Moreso, Ararat (2007) in his study of the role and impact of knowledge from education on economic growth in the two largest economies of the former Soviet Block of Russian Federation and Ukraine, estimated significant economic growth in the two countries. Specifically, on the basis of these studies, increased access of the population to university education contributed to positive results for the per capita GDP growth in the long term. Increasing the number of university-educated specialists could lead to the promotion of inclusive development vis-à-vis labour quality and labour contributions.

The analysis of the macroeconomic fundamentals in Tables 3 revealed that investment in higher education (universities inclusive) was needed to constitute higher level technical manpower to put an economy on the path of sustained growth and development. This confirmed the report in Akangbou (1985) which debunked the initial notion of non-capitalization of higher education by the World Bank and other financial bodies.

This was because higher education returns was not as high as returns to investment in primary and secondary schooling. This view was still held high, though now abridged by most international organizations. The fact that education should be given rightful place in increased government investment confirmed why university education should be capitalized. In Table 2b, the contributions in Sub-Saharan African were plagued with low Human Development Index (HDI) and high ratio of dependency based on high population.

Knowledge production could be derived best from enhanced social and education environment. This include good infrastructure for teachers, students and opportunities for local scientists of university background (Ekanem, 2012). The high density impact negatively on social amenities and standard of living. Good research environment through provision of fellowship for exposure and possible protection of rights/patents of local entrepreneur and innovators were lacking. These were critical since knowledge from the university could transform industries, while the industries might equally utilize natural resources for the development of a nation.

Education and research were considered as bedrock of national transformation. Knowledge production capacities from higher education were utilized in East Asia and India to turn around their economies and develop the nations (Babalola, 2011). According to Obanya (2011), knowledge from higher education could aid the benchmarking areas of investment as a good strategy for national economic transformation. In Nigeria, with improper planning and low industrial capacity have adversely affected enhanced growth and employment creation. More so, the progressive inclusive growths in Nigeria over the stated period were with production employment rather than distribution. Knowledge could be enhanced with development of research fairs and collaborations where individuals and entrepreneurs could use research findings and discussions on further areas of collaboration (Ekanem, 2012). The Government of Nigeria has not been committed to encouraging individuals to fund research and nurture such to maturity to engender scientific breakthrough. Market mechanism alone however cannot generate employment and income distribution for a sustainable development in Nigeria.

The GNP per capita and parity per GNP ranking in Table 3 revealed that the national values and nationalism in current political structure were not embraced by the university curriculum. This resulted in lack of competitiveness, hard work, resourcefulness and confidence in knowledge production (Mbazu 2006). There has been the loss of erstwhile cherished values and norms being critical factors fuelling income generating revenue towards the promotion of inclusive development in Nigeria. This incorporating values and norms in this study were important since development could not be seen as a linear process. It involved ups and downs as well as struggles among contending social forces of those who may change the system for the better and those who wish to preserve the status quo.

Conclusion

The study has been able to establish that there was a wide gap between university knowledge production and absorption in Nigerian economy. The level of knowledge production from university education towards the promotion of inclusive development was low revealing: dissatisfactory indices in enrolment, low funding and low universities rank order. Though the market-driven inclusive growth in Nigeria's economy was impressive, substantial parts of the growing population (in absolute and density terms) were unable to contribute to production. Possible reasons for this loss of output include: low knowledge and unsatisfactory standard of living (Low GDP per capita). The universities, as the prime agents of human capital development, have failed to direct their policies toward the types of knowledge generation relevant to reducing unemployment and enhancing income distribution directed at the promotion of inclusive development in Nigeria. Therefore, university knowledge effectively generated and efficiently captured into the economy, could guarantee the promotion of inclusive development.

Recommendations

1. Universities and various sectors of the economy should effectively manage their available knowledge in order to derive the expected synergy between learning and doing. This will help in the reduction of unemployment and lead to poverty alleviation with implications for production and exchange of commodities.
2. Government should establish legitimacy and sustainability of social/education environment for quality knowledge from universities to aid benchmarking of areas of investment. This strategy will make university researchers to gradually bring to bear new ideas in surmounting issues in life for inclusive development.

3. The university curriculum should be tailored towards the kinds and types of knowledge relevant to various processes at various sectors of the Nigerian economy. This will enhance the Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI) in terms of adult Literacy, infant mortality and life expectancy for the citizens of Nigeria.
4. Policy makers and educational managers should engage in policies that support multiple learning in the universities. This will improve Human Development Index (HDI), Knowledge Economy Index (KEI) and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in Nigeria.
5. The university managers should promote opportunity to learn in the school curriculum according to the learners' abilities, aptitude and interest. This will retain the national values, help in wealth creation and facilitate effective appreciation of environments by the citizens of Nigeria.

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