

## The Challenges of Higher Education in Nigeria *Vis-À-Vis* Hegel's Model of Development: A Critical Analysis

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### ABSTRACT

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This work takes a critical and cursory look at the term 'education' as well as the challenges of higher education in Nigeria. The paper explicates these issues from Hegel's model of development. It argues that education is imperative for the development of any nation and underscores the relevance of man to his social-cultural milieu. It insists that the current problems or challenges bedeviling higher education in Nigeria is a systemic one, especially given the long, total neglect by the Nigerian political institution. The article concludes that Hegel's view of society as containing intrinsic or inner contradictions; exemplified by the dialectic of history—portrayed by the triadic movement could not be sustained when x-rayed vis-à-vis the enormous problems plaguing higher education in Nigeria. However, the view of the paper is that though the challenges are not insurmountable, determined and pragmatic efforts must be made by all stake-holders to address the ills bedeviling Nigerian education sector.

**Keywords:**

education, higher education,  
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## Introduction

The paper sets out by explicating the meaning of education as well as articulates a brief history of education in order to make clear the categorization and types of education. The profound question to be asked, is, why higher education? It is in this light the paper shall thoroughly approach the challenges of higher education in Nigeria. Attention will be turned to Hegel's philosophy—the triadic movement of reality, whose ultimate objective is the resolution of all conflicts, aimed at an ideal end. This will be used to explicate the problems confronting higher education, perhaps to determine the stage we are in the advancement/progression of history. It is apt to beginning by analyzing or explicating the meaning of the main concepts and terms used in this paper.

## On the Meaning of Education

Etymologically, the word "education" is derived from the Latin *educatio* ("A breeding, a bringing up, a rearing") from *educio* ("I educate, I train") which is related to the homonym *educio* ("I lead forth, I take out; I raise up, I erect") from *ē-* ("from, out of") and *duco* ("I lead, I conduct"). Education is seen as a continuous process, a progressive reconstruction of experience (Aguolu, 1975: 66). Azenabor (2005: 4) examines the meaning of education when he asserts that "in its broad sense, education refers to any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character, or physical ability of an individual." The aim of education therefore is not only to inculcate knowledge but to also instill good character and behavior on the individual. An epigrammatic look at the history of education will make us to appreciate this view.

## History of Education

Education began in the earliest prehistory, as adults trained the young of their society in the knowledge and skills needed to master and overcome their environment. In pre-literate societies, this was achieved orally and through imitation. Story-telling continued from one generation to the next. As cultures began to extend their knowledge beyond skills that could be readily learned through imitation, formal education developed. Schools existed in Egypt at the time of the Middle Kingdom (Assmann, 2002: 127). Plato founded the Academy in Athens, the first institution of higher learning in Europe (Meinwald, 2002). The city of Alexandria in Egypt, founded in 330 BCE, became the successor to Athens as the intellectual cradle of Ancient Greece. There mathematician Euclid and anatomist Herophilus; constructed The Great Library of Alexandria and translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek.

European civilizations suffered a collapse of literacy and organization following the fall of Rome in AD 476 (Blainey, 2004). After the Fall of Rome, the Catholic Church became the sole preserver of literate scholarship in Western Europe. The church established cathedral schools in the early Middle Ages as centers of advanced education. Some of these ultimately evolved into medieval universities and forebears of many of Europe's modern universities (Blainey, *op. cit.*). During the High Middle Ages, Chartres Cathedral operated the famous and influential Chartres

Cathedral School. The medieval universities of Western Christendom were well-integrated across all of Western Europe, encouraged freedom of enquiry and produced a great variety of fine scholars and natural philosophers, including Thomas Aquinas of the University of Naples, Robert Grosseteste of the University of Oxford, an early expositor of a systematic method of scientific experimentation (Urquhart, 1910) and Saint Albert the Great, a pioneer of biological field research (Kennedy, 1907). The University of Bologna is considered the oldest continually operating university. Education can take place in formal or informal educational settings.

Education in its general sense is a form of learning in which the knowledge, skills, and habits of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next through teaching, training, or research.

Education is the process of educating or being educated. It is the series of training given to students practically and theoretically. The places of training include the nursery and primary schools, secondary schools and the higher institutions (Uzochukwu, 2019).

Education frequently takes place under the guidance of others, but may also be autodidactic (Dewey, 1944: 1-4). Any experience that has a formative effect on the way one thinks, feels, or acts may be considered educational. Education is commonly divided into stages such as preschool, primary school, secondary school and then college, university or apprenticeship ("education", Wikipedia).

Education also means 'learning that takes place in schools or school-like environments (formal education) or in the world at large; the transmission of the values and accumulated knowledge of a society. In developing countries, there is often little formal education. Children learn from their environment and activities, and the adults around them act as teachers. In more complex societies, where there is more knowledge to be passed on, a more selective and efficient means of transmission—the school and teacher—become necessary.

The content of formal education, its duration, and who receives it, varied widely from culture to culture and age to age, as the philosophy of education. Some philosophers (e.g., John Locke) have seen individual's mind as blank slate onto which knowledge can be written. Others (e.g., Jean-Jacques Rousseau) have seen the innate human state as desirable in itself and therefore to be tampered with as little as possible, a view often taken in alternative' (Merriam-Webster). Education in whatever form we envisage it involves desirable changes in behavior. The mechanics to attain this include enunciation of aims and objectives, teaching, learning, design of appropriate curriculum, school management, co-curricular activities, evaluation, research and out-of-school learning (Maduka, 1998: 3).

### Higher Education

It means study beyond the level of secondary education. Institutions of higher education include not only colleges and universities but also professional schools in such fields as law, theology,

medicine, business, music, and art. They also include teacher-training schools, community colleges, and institutes of technology. At the end of a prescribed course of study, a degree, diploma, or certificate is awarded. Any form of learning provided for adults. In the U.S. the University of Wisconsin was the first academic institution to offer such programs (1904). Empire College of the State University of New York was the first to be devoted exclusively to adult learning (1969), while in Nigeria it was the University of Ibadan, Nsukka and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Continuing education includes such diverse methods as independent study; broadcast, videotape, online, and other forms of distance learning; group discussion and study circles; conferences, seminars, and workshops; and full- or part-time classroom study. Remedial programs, such as high-school equivalency and basic literacy programs are common.

In recent years the variety of subject matter has expanded greatly to include such topics as auto repair, retirement planning, and computer skills. Education beyond the secondary level; *especially*: education provided by a college or university. Higher education is an educational level that follows a completion of a school providing secondary education, such as a high school, secondary school, or gymnasium. Tertiary education is normally taken to include undergraduate and post graduate education, as well as vocational education and training. Colleges, universities, and institutes of technology are the main institutions that provide tertiary education (sometimes known collectively as tertiary institutions) (Pucciarelli; Kaplan, 2016). Higher education includes teaching, research, exacting applied work (e.g. in medical schools and dental-schools), and social services activities of universities. Within the realm of teaching, it includes both the undergraduate level, and beyond that, graduate-level (or *postgraduate* level) (“Higher education”, Wikipedia).

### **Why Higher Education?**

This cannot be over-emphasized. The quest for higher education is hinged on expansion and intensification of elementary knowledge and ability. It goes beyond learning; it involves research which serves as catalyst for development. Most of the advancement that is seen in areas of human endeavours like medicine, physics, engineering, chemistry, agriculture, etc. would have been impossible if not for the importance of higher education. Heather Allen (2020) highlighted some of the benefits of higher education thus:

Higher education improves an individual's quality of life. Studies show that... college graduates have longer life spans, better access to health care, better dietary and health practices, greater economic stability and security, more prestigious employment and greater job satisfaction, less dependency on government assistance, greater knowledge of government, greater community service and leadership, more volunteer work, more self-confidence, and less criminal activity and incarceration. In addition, college graduates supposedly have greater use of seatbelts, more continuing education, greater Internet access,

greater attendance at live performances, greater participation in leisure and artistic activities, more book purchases, and higher voting rates.

Furthermore, higher education stimulates productivity and reduces the high rate of illiteracy. It fills the gap in the circle of the three levels of education—informal, semi-formal and formal. It adds to the value and economic-cum-social status of a society. It is one of the vital indices in the measurement of a developed society. It is a strong indicator for economic evaluation of a country. It adds to the progression of knowledge and leads to the production of man-power or human resource critical to the driving of any economy. It provides the basis for capacity building, professionalism and technical-know-how. It provides full or ancillary assistance to research institutes.

It is also a large source of employment. In Nigeria institutions for example, higher education accounts for almost 40% employment rate, both academic and non-academic staff, and also businesses around the institutions. It facilitates fast pace of development—infrastructural amenities and socialization of the communities where the institutions are situated, to mention a few.

### Hegel's Model of Development

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel was born in Stuttgart. He lived from 1770-1831 during the Romantic Movement in Germany. His ideas were closely associated with that of Schelling, one of the Romantics who “had said that the deepest meaning of life lay in what they called the ‘world spirit’” (Gaarder, 1996: 361). Hegel was famous for his speculative philosophy and rationalization of the ‘world spirit’—a progress throughout history; that is, human life, human thought, and human culture. Hegel's thoughts are christened the crystallization of ideas; formulated along specific goals. He sets out to explicate the movement of the absolute spirit—an idea that present itself in all things; and to articulate the unfolding activities of this phenomenon in our existential world. This thought is succinctly asserted thus: Between the lowest and highest grades of intelligence and will, there are several intervening stages, around which a complex of derivative ideas, and of institutions, arts, and sciences, in harmony with them, are aggregated (Hegel, 2001: 10).

Furthermore, philosophy, according to Hegel, is a science of things in a setting of thoughts. It is the science of the universe as it is interpreted by thought, and as it has significance for the mind which observes the wealth of its varied manifestation (Hibben, 2000: 8), also, that intelligence which characterizes the observing mind and the world which is the object of the observation is one and the same (Hibben, 2000: 8). Hegel developed a method (which mainly depicts his philosophy) for understanding the progress of history. Thus, “he believed that the basis of human cognition changes from one generation to the next” (Gaarder, *op. cit.* p.362). He linked this to truth or reason which he held to be dynamic; a historical process, which is relentlessly expanding and progressing. Jostein Gaarder (1996: 364-365) captures Hegel's method thus:

Anyone studying history in depth will observe that a thought is usually proposed on the basis of other previously proposed thoughts. But as soon as one thought is

proposed, it will be contradicted by another. A tension arises between these two opposite ways of thinking. But the tension is resolved by the proposal of a third thought which accommodates the best of both points of view. Hegel calls this a dialectic process.

It is apparent from the above that Hegel's dialectic process displays a triadic movement, which is usually described as a movement consisting of thesis, antithesis and synthesis (Russell, 1946: 663), after which the synthesis becomes a new thesis and this process continues until the *Absolute Idea* is realized. What Hegel emphasized in his dialectic logic or matrix was that thought moves and that contradiction, rather than bringing knowledge to a halt, acts as a positive moving force in human reasoning (Stumpf, 1994: 332). Hegel expresses a firm belief that ideas have their own internal laws of change, so that when a partial truth is examined and pushed to its limits, it will reveal its own inadequacies at the same time that it points to its successor. Thus, every idea is a roadside inn, only a temporary stopping place on the mind's journey toward completely adequate knowledge (Lawhead, 2002: 362).

In all, the supposed goal of Hegel's dialectic is development or progress. This means a positive change of reality. By this assertion, it implies that no reality in our society should be understood as evolving freely at its own will. Everything is subject to the laws of the 'world spirit', which operates through clash of opposites. Having explicated Hegel's method, it is necessary to delve into the reality of higher education in Nigeria and the application of Hegel's method.

### **The Reality of Higher Education in Nigeria**

There are so many challenges plaguing higher education in Nigeria. The paper will only focus on the most daunting ones which have been highlighted thus—insurgency, cultism, strike and unionism, brain drain and low remuneration, government interference and absence of autonomy, and finally academics and learning environment.

**Insurgency:** Recent happenings, especially with regard to the activities of Islamic militants based in northeast of Nigeria (Cook, 2011) have had grave impact on the education sector in Nigeria. The Boko Haram terrorist group for example, started as a reaction and protest against western education. It proposes that interaction with the Western world is forbidden, and also supports opposition to the Muslim establishment and the government of Nigeria (Bartolotta, 2011). The group claimed that western education is sinful (Ogbonnaya, 2011). This reaction has degenerated into bloodshed, kidnapping, killings and maiming of innocent lives and citizens, in an attempt to putting a stop to what it deems "Westernization" (Olugbode, 2011)<sup>1</sup>. The group is known for attacking Christians, bombing churches, attacking schools (Lobel, 2012), for example in 2012 the

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1. The sect in posters written in Hausa and pasted across the length and breadth of Maiduguri Wednesday morning signed by the Warriors of Jamaatu Ahlis Sunna Liddaawati Wal Jihad led by Imam Abu Muhammed Abubakar Bi Muhammed a.k.a Shehu claimed they embarked on the killings in Borno "in an effort to establish Sharia system of government in the country.

deadly attack on Nigeria Bayero University and the temporary shutdown of the University of Maiduguri campus citing security concerns (see University Of Maiduguri Shut Down As Boko Haram-Linked Killings Increase, *Sahara Reporters*) in July 11<sup>th</sup> 2011. Furthermore, the detestation for education by the group has been buttressed thus:

In a 2009 BBC interview, Mohammed Yusuf, then leader of the group, stated his belief that the fact of a spherical Earth is contrary to Islamic teaching and should be rejected, along with Darwinian evolution and the fact of rain originating from water evaporated by the sun. Before his death, Yusuf reiterated the group's objective of changing the current education system... (Boko Haram, Wikipedia).

This is an immense challenge to higher education in Nigeria. Though federal government has made conscientious effort by declaring state of emergency in three northern states—Borno, Adamawa and Yobe where the insurgent's activities are rife as well as massively mobilizing the armed forces (see "Massive' troop deployment in Nigeria - Africa". *Al Jazeera*), yet there seems to be no end to the awful situation.

**Cultism:** It is a major problem to tertiary education in Nigeria and the larger Nigerian society since the first decade of the existence of university education in Nigeria. It is worrisome to have children on campuses due to the fatal activities of the sect. Secret cult activities which started in tertiary institutions in Nigeria within the first decade of the existence of university education in Nigeria, have taken different dimensions and have different and dangerous faces: Secret cults and their activities started in Nigeria universities through the activities of a small group of "rascals" at the University of Ibadan. The first of such group was the Pirates. As "Pirates", they sailed to high seas to 'prosecute' evil doers, injustice, corruption and oppression which characterized the few universities at that time (Aluede, 2000: 6-7 & Oroka, 1998).

The activities of cultists on campuses are incommensurate. At least, the former Vice Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt, Professor T. Vincent (1997) owned up when he said, "Cultism worries", while he was still in office as Vice Chancellor. Cultists have wrecked havoc on campuses. Academic programmes and calendar of many universities in Nigeria have had to be disrupted as a result of the mayhem by Secret cults.

Apart from the above, in Enugu State University, University of Benin, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and Delta State University, Abraka, inter cult clashes have resulted in the death of members. In 1992, six students were killed admits violence of secret cult fracas at the Federal Polytechnic, Oko. A cross-section of the Nigerian mass media reported these developments (Olukoya, 1994). A lot more are happening on campuses and University communities today. Cultism has generated a lot of fear, tension, insecurity and closure of schools. Neither the school authorities, parents, the general public nor the government have developed an acceptable framework on how to ameliorate the menace of secret cults which have continued to create insecurity to life and property on campuses.

### Strike and Activities of Unionists

The table below succinctly captures the enormous impact of strike and unionists' activities on Nigeria's education. The analysis revealed the negative blow strike has had on Nigeria's education sector.

1970s	1980s-1990s	2000-2014
1970's Students vs University Authorities. Students vs Government Policy	1980's University staff agitation for improved conditions of service	2000 ASUU strike for the resumption on negotiation of Basic salaries, University funding, and Autonomy
1970's student's agitation for improved academic environment, residential accommodation and feeding	1981 ASUU strike led to the setting up of the Cooley Commission (universities closed for 6 months)	2001 ASUU strike for 3 months over stalemate in the Negotiation. Agreement signed on June 30, 2001
1972 University of Ibadan closed due to student's riot	1986 Students rioted against the introduction of SAP	2002 ASUU strike for 2 weeks over perceived non-implementation of the 2001 Agreements
1973 Students of University of Lagos rioted against NYSC scheme	1992 following the resumption of Negotiation, the Agreement was signed on September 3, 1992.	2003, all the Unions in the University System went on strike over the following issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate Feeding</li> <li>• Non-implementation of Agreement</li> <li>• Disparity in Salary</li> <li>• Retirement Age</li> <li>• Non-implementation of Allowances</li> </ul>
1978 Students went on rampage at the review of the cost of meal ticket from 50K to "1.50	1993, 3 months strike by Non-Teaching staff demanding for parity in salary	Between 2003 and 2010 Unions in Higher Institutions in Nigeria went on strike over the implementation of agreements and proper handling of the above issues
	1994 ASUU strike for increase in salary	From 2012-2013 Union went on indefinite strike over non-implementation of 2010 agreement, funding and earned allowances
	1995 ASUU strike for the review of the 1992 Agreement	
	1999 ASUU strike over perceived non-implementation of the October 26, 1999 signed Agreement	



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From the year 2017 to 2020, ASUU has embarked on numerous strike actions over unresolved and contentious issues as well as failure for Federal Government to meet its demands. It is appalling that part of the reasons for the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) embarking on strike in March, 2020, in spite of both parties reaching agreement in 2013, 2017 and 2019, is the demand for more funding for public universities and renegotiation of 2009 FGN/ASUU agreement.

Strike activity by any union could arise from two sources; from labour management collective negotiations and when the wage rates set by the commissions are not acceptable to the employers but are forced to comply with these wage rates through unions strike actions. Frequency of strike can also occur through economic and noneconomic or institutional factors in the economy

The rapid expansion of higher education systems over the last three decades was compounded by the more recent global economic crisis and fiscal stringency. This was due to over dependence on oil which has left many higher institutions in Nigeria short of funds in relation to the demand imposed on them. The problem of higher education in Nigeria is enormous. These includes under funding; poor quality; overcrowding of the classrooms, deteriorating physical facilities, high ratio of teachers to non-teaching staff, high ratio of students to lecturer, poor salary structure of both academics and non academic staff when compared to their counterpart in other countries has caused the unions (ASUU and NASU) in higher institutions to embark on frequent strikes over the last three decades.

These strikes distorted the development of these institutions especially the years that the students planned to finish their studies. The distortions in higher educational system through ASUU/NASU strike had effects on different people, such as the students, parents and the economy at large. Most of the effects were felt by the final year students because it paralyzed the administrative and academic activities on the campuses of public institutions (Okuwa & Campbell, 2011).

### **Brain Drain and Low Remunerations**

Standard Dictionary defines brain drain "as the loss of skilled intellectual and technical labour through the movement of such labour to more favourable geographic, economic, or professional environ , depletion or loss of intellectual and technical personnel, a gradual depletion of energy or resources; a drain of young talent by emigration" (Adelugba). The impact of this on higher education in Nigeria is huge. Apart from the education sector that is affected, the economy also suffered. The growth and development of any nation is hinged on her resources, particularly the human resource. The continuous draining of the best brains of our nation due to low remunerations, poor condition of service, etc increases corruption and distort good democratic principles. In the new world order, it is the best brains that oil or fuel the engine of development. Brain drain is a situation when people leave their countries of birth to other countries (migration), they gain many benefits including money, a better quality of life and a challenging environment in which they can thrive and fulfill their potential. Indeed in the West, actions are linked to results and hence work

has purpose. All of these benefits emanate from the fact that the leading nations of the world such as the United States, Britain, Germany, Australia, Japan etc. have systems that function (Suleyman, 2008).

It is disheartening to know that “Nigeria has more than 1,000,000 immigrants in the United States alone. In the United States, sixty-four percent of foreign-born Nigerians aged 25 and older have at least a bachelor degree. Forty-three (43) percent of foreign-born Africans living in the United States have at least a bachelor degree. Nigerians and Africans are the most educated ethnic groups in the United States” (Suleyman, 2008). Worse still, “...the UN Development Programme (UNDP) notes that in Africa, the loss of medical doctors has been the most striking” (Suleyman, 2008). To curb the menace, higher education in Nigeria should be given monumental attention through massive funding, strategic cum pragmatic policy and competitive or attractive remunerations.

### **Government interference and absence of University Autonomy**

The lack of respect for university autonomy or academic freedom constitutes a big challenge to higher education in Nigeria. These are likely to jeopardize the basic objectives of excellence in teaching, research and community development associated with the university. Reckless government intervention and dishing out of inchoate policies in a bid to regulate or control the affairs of higher education are responsible for the low quality of education in Nigeria institutions. For example, the National University Commission (NUC), a specialized body that is supposed to ensure quality control and the enthrone of best practices in the activities of higher education in Nigeria has become inimical instrument used by the government of the day to perpetuate self-seeking and self-centered ends. This argument is buttressed thus:

The Federal Military Government (FMG) in 1978 (under the General Obasanjo government) made wholesome changes on matters relating to students' welfare without reference to the university authorities. From the beginning of the 1977/78 academic year, the Federal Government, through the National Universities Commission (NUC), reduced the fees payable for meals from between 70k and 75k per day to 50k per day and accommodation from between 36.00 and 72.00 per session to 30.00 per session. Six months later the NUC recklessly raised the corresponding fees threefold to 1.50 per day for meals and 90.00 per session for a room. The result was that the hopes of both students and their sponsors, which had earlier been raised so high, were dashed badly. To add salt to injury, the FMG about the same time announced its decision to shelve its direct commitment to the students' loan scheme and transferred the responsibility to State Governments. This led to a nationwide student protest, as a result of which the

FMG set up the Mohammed Commission of Inquiry into the crisis (Onyeonoru, 2007).

It is ridiculous that government plays politics with the education of its citizens. The essence of insisting on university autonomy is that in certain circumstances governments tend to place unnecessary limits on the scope and/or the nature of knowledge acquisition in the universities to the detriment of scholarship (Onyeonoru, 2007). Not allowing each university to appoint or elect its governing council wholly and significantly affects the policy and core values of higher education.

### Academics and Learning Environment

This challenge would be x-rayed from two perspectives: *Academics' flaws and Learning environment*. Many lecturers in Nigerian institutions of learning do not carry out their assignments well. They do not know how to offer quality services to the students. A great number of them still rely on obsolete materials, thereby failing to update lecture notes; making use of the text books which their "fore-fathers" used during the time of their study and do not update as the technology changes and advances. Some of them only dictate notes to the students without taking time to explain what the note is all about. This is a big blow on the face of our education system (Uzochukwu, 2019). For example, how many lecturers are acquainted with the latest changes in the teaching of their students?

*Learning environment* is the area where students undergo their daily studies. The classrooms and lecture halls are not well organized. The nature of the environment that students study in matters a lot. The problem with the study environments of the students is that it is jam-packed with students. A lecture hall that is supposed to accommodate 50 students has about 150 students in it. This makes understanding by the students void. The lecture hall generates heat, students feels uncomfortable and assimilation becomes problem. In many tertiary institutions in Nigeria, undergraduate students still learn under the sun. This condition makes students to perform low in their individual departments. It is argued that African students are more intelligent than those of the developed countries of the world. The problem is that we are affected by the environmental conditions (Uzochukwu, 2019).

### Evaluating the Problems using Hegel's Model

The first application of Hegel's method to this study is the ills pointed out about Nigeria's education system. This is akin to the dialectical pattern; a situation where we discuss or analyze something, i.e., thinking dialectically and trying to find flaws. This, Hegel called negative thinking. Hegel's concepts apply to reality itself, for the world as it falls under concepts is all the world can be at any moment in its unfolding: it is the real (Shand, 1993: 182). This presupposes that the current problems facing Nigeria's education sector are part of what makes the sector realistic. Sincerely, how would one imagine a society without social ills? That society would not have existed in our

existential world. Thus, the problems are what make the sector known and our ability to cognized it.

Another application of Hegel's model to the problems of Nigeria's education sector is the understanding that these problems stand as inner contradictions which would serve as catalysts for progress. One may ask what is the importance or purpose of contradictions. In Hegel's philosophy as well as in Heraclitus, clash of opposites is imperative for development. It shows that humanity is moving toward greater rationality and freedom. Hegel called freedom self-contained existence of spirit, which he held is *co-existent* with self-consciousness. It is this self-consciousness that acts as the internal self-regulation or autonomy of *man as such* which serves as the basis for the ordering or regulation of every other thing (Unah, 2010: 26).

The activities of unionists for example ASUU and NASU clearly depict the attempt to draw attention to the grave problems bedeviling Nigeria's education sector and with a view to jettisoning and improving on the level of higher education in the Nigerian society. This is aimed at fostering order in the society. The clamor for autonomy, academic independence, welfare, improvement of infrastructure, quality services and better learning environment to mention a few, can only be realized through such internal clash of ideas. This can be illustrated thus; government current policy, thought and position to higher education could be taken as the thesis, while the opposing or counter position being mounted or proposed by unionists could be seen as anti-thesis. An arrangement that result from these two dividing/opposing paths will be christened synthesis which would again turn out to be a new thesis.

There are also obvious objections to the application of Hegel's thesis to the ills of Nigeria's education sector. To begin with, a close inspection of the history of higher education and its varied or attendant problems reveals seldom stability or consistency. A comparative analysis of the early emergence of higher education and its current state unarguably shows that one cannot categorically or succinctly assert which place or stage in Hegel's triadic movement is Nigerian education situation. What seems clear is that the Nigerian education sector is probably floating between the thesis and anti-thesis stages. What is also perhaps clear is that Hegel's thesis can be read backward when it is tested and applied against the Nigerian education situation. Hegel's view of society is a progressive one, in line with the expected movement of the Absolute Spirit. On the contrary, these elements are supposed to be making higher education in Nigeria advancing but are also contributing to its retrogressive state. We can then read Hegel's model vis-à-vis Nigeria's higher education sector as synthesis, thesis and anti-thesis. It is like backward movement.

This is clearer when one examines Nigerian leaders' attitude towards the alleviation of the ills confronting higher education in Nigeria. A large number of Nigerian political leaders are degree holders from Nigerian universities. They went through the system, they are aware of the challenges, the inadequacies, the set-backs etc. But, when they ascend the helm of affairs in government, yet they do not remember these ills or even if they do remember, they lack the will to act. Thus, the

forces which are thought to catapult higher education in Nigeria comparable to the ones obtainable in developed societies are themselves deteriorating it. This is an antithetical contradiction!

### Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is pertinent to affirm that the challenges x-rayed in this paper are fundamental and should be thoroughly addressed by all stakeholders in the education sector. It is also important to note that the paper is not confining these challenges as the only ills bedeviling higher education in Nigeria. There are other problems but the paper only restricted itself to these significant ones. Though these challenges may not be completely eradicated but a conscientious effort should be made to address all the concerns raised in this paper.

The set-backs in higher education in Nigeria should be embraced using a more vigorous approach and through a proactive way. Sincere and committed attention which reflects anti-thesis stage in Hegel's model should be given to these challenges, if higher education in Nigeria is to be enlisted among the best in the globe and international communities. This paper is a clarion call on the urgent need to revamp higher education in Nigeria. The paper offers a comprehensive analysis of each challenge in order to appreciate the level of decadence. There is fundamental need to step-up quality control and intensify checks and balances in order to put an end to these challenges. Finally, in a compelling manner, the paper submits that Hegel's view of society as containing internal contradictions; exemplified by the dialectic of history—portrayed by the triadic movement cannot be sustained when x-rayed vis-à-vis the enormous problems plaguing higher education in Nigeria. It is either, the 'Absolute Spirit' has not started evolving or it does not have a place in the Nigeria social-cultural milieu.

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