

Innovations in Global Part-Time Programmes: Implications for Widening Access in Higher Education for the Less-Privileged in Nigeria

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Abstract

University education is critical to manpower development. Globally, reports of increase in demands for university education is instrumental for nations adopting innovative approaches in order to widen access. In Nigeria, university ownership has been liberalized so that state governments, corporate organizations and individuals could participate in expanding access. Even though university has increased in number, the nation has only supplied admission places to a very small fraction of applicants in the full-time programmes over the decades. In this piece efforts were made to highlight the history of part-time programmes in Nigeria as well as examine recent innovations on the operation of the part-time programmes in Nigerian Universities. It was however argued that the innovation is too restrictive compared with recent developments in other parts of the world thus, depriving those who would have taken the second chance opportunities to climb out of poverty and ignorance. Short comings were highlighted while suggestions for improvement were also made.

Key words: education, University, part-time programme, innovation, access

Introduction

Globally, increase in demand for higher education stimulates adoption of various innovative approaches in resolving access issues. Invariably, dual mode delivery has been recognized as an approach to widening access in University education. In Nigeria, admission placement in the full-time undergraduate University programmes has not satisfied a larger fraction of applicants since independence in 1960. Measures taken to widen access into higher education in the country include liberalizing ownership and establishment of distance

learning opportunities. Still the pressure for placement in the nation's universities has not abated leading to very many seekers demanding admission placement in universities based abroad including some questionable ones. For instance, NUC denounced some off-shore Universities in Niger, Ghana, Uganda and Republic of Benin offering part-time undergraduate programmes in science, engineering, health and allied sciences etc to students mostly Nigerians in 4 semesters.

A semester in some cases was a three day contact lecture (Okeke 2015). Of course, many off shore universities now openly canvass and provide on the spot admission placement in Nigerian big cities such as Lagos, Abuja, Kaduna and Port-Harcourt for rich Nigerians. It is estimated that Nigeria losses billions of Naira to education tourism as the super-rich resort to Universities in Asia, Europe and North America while the not too rich pitch their tents in universities located in nearby African countries. What about those from poor socio-economic background? In this piece we shall discuss the historical background, local and global innovative approaches in the part-time programmes with a view to improving Nigeria situation.

The Concept of Part Time University Education

The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2015) which classified University as a tertiary education defines tertiary education as the education given after secondary education. It is a higher learning institution provided to equip beneficiaries with the knowledge, skills and techniques to perform expected roles upon graduation. Peretomode (2008:21) asserts that

Universities are the principal institutions for dispensing the higher learning. They also provide an entrance ticket to the upper class of society and serve as the main innovators and disseminators of specialized or sophisticated knowledge required for the functioning of modern society.

Thus, the more the University discovers the more it dispenses to knowledge seekers who in turn utilizes such to further enhance societal development. Hence, the university is constantly in quest of knowledge updates. The word university is derived from the Latin *universitas magistrorum et scholarium* meaning 'community of teachers and scholars' (Wikipedia, downloaded 27th Sept 2012). Some of the earliest modern universities include the University of Bologna (founded in 1088), the University of Paris (1150), the University of Oxford (1167), the University of Palencia (1208) and the University of Cambridge (1209) (Boyd and King 1981). Nigeria first institution of a university status was the University College, Ibadan established in 1948.

Worldwide, the Universities are 'institutions with certain universal and basic principles which distinguish them from other institutions and agencies' (Arikewuyo and Ilusanya, 2009). The university is an assemblage of many professions, professionals and learners who come from varied backgrounds in pursuit of varied shades of knowledge. In its earlier stages, it dispenses knowledge in the field of medicine, law and religion. Today, the Universities are advanced centres for learning and dissemination of knowledge, skills and techniques in virtually all fields of human endeavour whether concrete or abstract.

Jarvis (1990) defines a part-time student as an adult who is a registered student but who has other obligations such as work or domestic commitment and so is unable to pursue studies full time. In Nigeria, part time degree programmes includes those organized for weekends (as in the Universities of Benin.), evenings (as in University of Port Harcourt) and sandwich (as in education holiday programmes in some Nigerian Universities).

Origin of Part-time Programmes in Nigerian Universities

The historical background to the part-time undergraduate education in the Nigerian university system is anchored on the Ashby Commission of 1959. Sir Eric Ashby chaired the commission which was set up by the Colonial government to look into the Post-Secondary School Certificate and Higher Education in Nigeria. The Commission recommended in its report titled **Investment in Education** 'that a university should be established in Lagos with day and night degree courses in Business, Commerce and Economics' (Fafunwa, 2004: 166). Right from conception, the University of Lagos which was eventually established in 1962, was planned to provide a dual mode university programme delivery. The night (part-time) programmes were designed for workers who were willing and able to combine work with study.

Benefits of Part-time Programmes

Empirical studies show that the part-time degree programmes are beneficial to both seekers and suppliers. The Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada (AUCC 2011) did a 30 year survey of the trends of higher education in Canada. The study found that demand for places during the period increased by 16%. The study hinged on the 'revised expectation' hypothesis which emphasized that because of changes in the requirement for new jobs, 'individuals revised earlier decision to forgo university and began to pursue part-time studies to meet the shift in labour market demand'.

Oluremi (2013) surveyed the effectiveness of the sandwich (part-time education) programmes on teachers' performance. He found positive co-relationship between teachers' academic qualification and role performance in responding to future challenges in the school system. Fleisher, Lu and Li (2011) investigated the role of education on workers' productivity using firm level panel data from China. They found that every additional year of schooling raises marginal productivity by 18.3 – 24.5%. It implies that workers return to part-time studies in order to sustain industrial productivity. Globalization and information communication technology are influencing the emerging knowledge economy thus compelling return to school.

Certainly, the benefit of education is unquantifiable and so, the part-time programmes are not exception. The pecuniary gains extend beyond any particular generation and even to generations yet unborn. It is not restricted to any family nor neighbours. It also extends to every other sector of human endeavours. For instance an educated woman can encourage her friends and neighbor on family planning, be appointed secretary in her local club and may even be a councilor in her ward. Her education can place her in position of affluence which could attract a project or programme to a locality which benefits may linger on for long. The generational benefits of parents' education are enormous also.

Guidelines for operating Part-time Programmes in Nigerian Universities

Nigerian Universities operated the part-time programmes to the dissatisfaction of the regulatory agency. In 2012, the National Universities Commission ‘clamped a moratorium on admission of students into part-time programmes to sanitize and rectify existing anomalies’ (Sun News, 2012). **Below are the recent guidelines for the part-time programmes released in 2014.**

- (1) The admission and graduation requirements, staffing, library and physical facilities must be in line with the benchmark minimum academic standards (BMAS) for the various full-time academic programmes.
- (2) Eligible part-time programme must have approved full-time equivalent in the University, must have earned full accreditation and must run within approved campuses.
- (3) The enrolment into part-time programmes must not exceed 20% of total student’s population in the programme.
- (4) The minimum duration of the part-time programmes must be 150% of the approved duration of the full-time equivalent.
- (5) Approval shall not be granted for part-time programmes in environmental sciences, engineering/pharmaceutical sciences, dentistry and veterinary sciences.
- (6) All admission into part-time programmes must be through the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB).
- (7) Part-time programmes must be run within approved campuses of Universities where the human and material resources for the teaching of the programmes are domiciled.
- (8) Part-time programmes shall be subject to NUC accreditation assessment upon maturity of the programmes.
- (9) For any programme to be eligible for part-time mode, it must have produced 2 sets of graduates and satisfied the resource verification requirement.
- (10) Commencement of a part-time programme MUST be subject to NUC’s approval. **(Obogare, Iyiewuare & Oronsaye 2014:123).**

Innovations in Global Part-Time Programmes

Innovation is about thinking outside the box, infusing new ideas and processes. It requires thinking and acting beyond existing, predefined parameters (Malhotra, Schulte, Patel & Petesch 2009). The main essence of innovation is to change from a former way to a new pattern of product or service delivery which could make the former process easier, faster, better or more enjoyable in some ways. Innovations in part-time programmes as used in this work is the designed improvements infused in the running of the part-time programmes in order to enhance better process of service delivering in the part-time programmes in Nigeria.

Globally University education has undergone some innovations. In Israel, academic colleges were created to reduce the admission demand pressure on universities (Meltz 2001). In the United Kingdom, retirees are encouraged back to the economic mainstream activities through the part-time programmes (Ratcliff, 2013). In Canada, universities have experienced tremendous growth over the last 30 years hence her focus was to ‘expand access to higher education for untapped segments of the population and international students, and increase the quality of education students receive’(AUCC 2011). Irrespective of mode of delivery

University education enjoys high return on investment both for individuals and the public. Innovations in access and quality promote opportunities for educational attainment.

(a) Innovation in Part-time programmes as Revenue Generation for the Government: Although part-time programmes generate revenue for institutional development and lecturers engaged, education is not packaged to generate revenue for the government in Nigeria. This may be the bane of the system. Kings (2008) acknowledged the financial contribution of university education generally as she earns up to £10bn for education and the knowledge based services. On a comparative base, she said education earned higher revenue for the UK than the aviation or pharmaceutical sector. Countries are increasingly attracting candidates to their universities from the global market not just to satisfy demands but also to generate revenue. The tendency is that policy makers will adequately provide and protect such an income yielding sector because of its revenue generation potentials. United Kingdom Part-time programmes attract enrollee from all over the world. Table 1 presents the UK part-time percentage.

Table I: Part-time students as percentage of total student headcount: top ten institutions

	Full-time	Part-time	Total	%part-time
Open University	282	181,082	181,364	99.8
Birkbeck College	555	15,469	16,024	96.5
University of Wales, Lampeter	881	5,780	6,661	86.8
Institute of Education	1,300	4,928	6,228	79.1
Institute of Cancer Research	51	174	225	77.3
London Business School	176	323	499	64.7
Edge Hill University	7,089	12,871	19,960	64.5
Harper Adams University College	1,454	2,546	4,000	63.7
Cranfield University	873	1,486	2,359	63.0
University of Teesside	8,913	15,084	23,997	62.9

Source: Callender, Jamieson & Mason (2010).

Table I presents ten universities in the United Kingdom that enroll more in part-time than in the full-time programmes. These could be models for creating paths to access and financial backbone for sustaining institutional development and global competitiveness. Nigeria may not operate part-time programme exactly as the universities in Table 1 but should be a hub attracting students from all over Africa into her universities as they were in the 1970s and 1980s; instead, the reverse is the case as smaller African countries are pulling university seekers from Nigeria without a corresponding response from Nigerian universities.

(b) Innovation in Part-time Programmes as Access Route for Marginalised Group: Part time programmes widen access to degree programmes all over the world. In Finland, The World Bank (2003) reported that the part-time programmes placed more applicants than their full-time counterparts. AUCC (2011) stated that over 33% of Canadian universities enrolment comes from the part-time axis. It is not clear to the writer what percentage of undergraduate programmes NUC aims to supply through the part-time option? No doubt, demand for highly skilled labour, globalization, emergence of new jobs, new technology and desire to earn higher wages necessitated noticed increase in demand for part-time degree

programmes (Higher Education Fund Council for England-HEFCE 2000, Branson, Leibbrandt and Zuze 2009 and AUCC 2011).

By the NUC guidelines for operating the part-time programmes, the agency aimed to restrict admission in the part-time programmes to only 20% (1/5th) of their full-time counterpart enrollments. Nigeria merely operates the humanities in the part-time undergraduate programmes (Imakpokpomwan 2014a) As discussed earlier, universities concentrating on part-time programmes are emerging elsewhere while others are aiming at increasing access, why then the restrictions of access in Nigeria? All sorts of universities now take advantage of the huge gap between demand and supply of university education in the country to exploit unsuspecting Nigerian admission seekers. The standards of universities based elsewhere wooing Nigerians cannot be under the supervision of NUC hence Nigeria cannot be too sure of the cultural or programme relevance of such off-shore programmes to our national aspirations. In contrast, full-time programmes admissions in Nigerian universities are within the neighbourhood of 20% of applicants since independence (1960). Such a system inhibits popular demand for more open access for university education noticed globally. According to Enaohwo (2014), ‘restricted access to higher education in a developing country like Nigeria may not augur well for the development needs of the future’. Establishment of more universities in the country has not ameliorated the situation because national and school populations keep increasing while private Universities charges are expensive for most families. There is a need for extension of the part-time programme to include courses in science and technology based programmes.

(c) **Innovation in Financial Support for Part-timers:** Part-time students in Nigeria do not enjoy financial aid such as student loan, bursary award, scholarship, subsidy, grant for computer services and even tax exception to reduce the cost burden as it is now the norm in advanced countries. Part-time undergraduate students in Nigeria are mostly from poor socio-economic background whose efforts are to get hold of the second chance opportunities to obtain a higher qualification. In advanced economy, authorities have adjusted their position to accommodate the part-time enrollees by providing them some forms of grants, student loan, scholarship or tax exception. The USA, Canada and the United Kingdom are good examples (Direct Government 2010, Ratcliff, 2013 and Urquhart, 2013). Table 3 shows grants enjoyed by part time students. N496.08 Naira exchange for 1 British pound in April 2018.

Table 2: Some grants extended to the Part-Time Undergraduate and Post-graduate Students in the UK.

For	Details	Naira equivalent
Disabled students allowances	Helps with extra costs relating to disability	
Specialist equipment allowance	Up to £5,161 for the whole course	N2,560,268:88
Non-medical helper allowance	Up to £15,390 a year	N7,634,671:20
General allowance	Up to £1,293 a year	N641,431:44
Travel allowance	Helps with extra travel cost	
Fee grant	Helps towards the cost of tuition fees charge by individual universities.	

Source: Student Finance (2013)

With varieties of financial support from employers and government since 2012 in the United Kingdom, students are attracted to the part-time programmes. Demand for part-time

undergraduate education is derived demand. As derived demand, consumers of part-time degree education are determined to forgo alternatives in order to acquire a qualification that can enhance their productive capacities in their work place. This no doubt is to the benefit of society, their employers as well as individual enrollee whose goals are to improve productivity and earn higher returns. At present, part-time enrollees in Nigeria rely on savings or loans secured from friends and relatives to finance their education while employers such as governments and its agencies do not grant loans, subsidy, bursary or scholarship for part-time studies.

Part-time students are family men and mostly women, more matured in their demands and above all workers contributing to economic productivity of the society whose tax the governments rely on to finance the budget. So, they too should taste from the tax they contribute to its collection. Staugher-Defoe, Addae, & Bell, (2002), argue that if the females are to be educated, part-time educational options should be encouraged through financial and other incentives. Though this platform does not argue for free part-time programmes but enrollees deserve some form of financial incentives to encourage more people to take to the part-time outlet.

(d) Innovation in Diversity in Part-time Programmes Floating: Part-time programmes in Nigeria are restricted to mere humanity. Imakpokpomwan (2014a) studied the phenomenon in South-South Nigeria. He found that the part-time programmes placed 91% humanities (Arts, Education and the Social Sciences) and 9% science (Physical, Life and Agricultural sciences). The major reason for this is that the NUC ban the study in most other disciplines as outlined in the guidelines regulating the operation of the part-time programmes. A nation craving for scientific and technological development cannot take the study of sciences at any level for granted. Callender, Jaimeson & Mason (2010) listed part-time programmes offered in universities in the United Kingdom to include the following disciplines; medicine and dentistry, subjects allied to medicine, veterinary science, agriculture and related subjects, physical sciences, engineering and technology, law, architecture, building and planning. Maguire (2014), survey of part-time programmes in the 2010-11 session is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Distribution of Undergraduate Part-time Programmes in UK and Nigeria

	Programmes offered	UK	NIGERIA
1	Subjects allied to medicine	Available	Not available
2	Education	Available	Available
3	Business and Administrative Studies	Available	Available
4	Social Studies	Available	Available
5	Languages	Available	Available
6	Biological Sciences	Available	Available
7	Engineering and technology	Available	Not Available
8	Historical and Philosophical Studies	Available	Available
9	Law	Available	Not Available
10	Computer Science	Available	Available
11	Creative Arts & Design	Available	Not Available
12	Architecture, building & planning	Available	Not Available
13	Physical Sciences	Available	Available

14	Medicine and dentistry	Available	Not Available
15	Agricultural and related subjects	Available	Available
16	Mathematical Sciences	Available	Available
17	Mass Communication and Documentation	Available	Available
18	Veterinary Science	Available	Not Available

Sources: Maguire (2014), *New Entrants 2010-11 for the UK*, Imakpokpomwan (2014a) for Nigeria.

Table 4 shows distribution of the part-time programmes in the UK and Nigeria. In Nigeria, courses such as medicine, and courses allied to medicine, engineering and technology, law, architecture, building, veterinary science are not allowed in the part-time programmes. This opens the part-time space for mere humanities. For instance, a registered nurse desiring to upgrade to administrative position should have pursued a degree programme on part-time in her nursing career but because that is not approved she switches to a bachelor degree (B.Ed) in Health Education. Nursing is not exactly one and the same thing with Health Education. Again, what is the rationale for floating a sub-degree and post graduate on part-time in a field such as Pharmacy whereas a bridge between them; the bachelor is not floated in the part-time programmes. This could encourage quackery in the profession such as a primary school drop-out operating a hospital in Lagos (Ihedigbo 2018). When those eager to upgrade have no educational opportunities to advance higher in the face of dearth of qualified professionals operating in the field quackery could enjoy a field day. Brain drain depleted the stock of health personnel and the nation is yet to fully recover still we place so much restriction on access which could have helped the nation to replace some of the departed personnel.

Planning Implications for Educational Development in Nigeria

- (1) ACCESS: Socio-economic status, ignorance and lack of school provision have been identified as factors inhibiting enrolment in higher education. It is very relevant that government plan for the provision of second chance education which would accommodate those who missed out earlier. Imakpokpomwan (2014b) found that the girl-child is mostly deprived of education in Nigeria. The study also established that in terms of rural/urban dichotomy, the rural areas are less endowed in educational resources distribution and so less educational opportunities for the rural child. Therefore, the rural/poor girl is most often the one to drop out of school, hawk on the street, married off early in life or did not attend school at all. Since studies confirm that the part-time student is likely a female, it means that part-time undergraduate programmes widen additional access opportunities for this marginalized group to bounce back on enrolment. The implication is that part-time programmes are pro-poor initiative that widen access in order to aid people emerge from poverty and deprivation.
- (2) FINANCE: Finance is the life blood of any organization. Inadequate financial flow into an educational system could lead to developmental lacuna. Inadequate funding has resulted in low salary payment, industrial unrest/strikes, low learning quality outcome, inadequate resource allocation, dilapidated infrastructure, over enrolment, low capacity utilization etc. However, the part-time programmes guarantee financial in-flow in the system hence some described it as being commercialized. The implication is that with adequate attention, the part-time programmes provide model

for improving the financial in-flow in the Nigerian university system. This implies that if well planned and managed, improved funding could improve university educational opportunities in the country.

- (3) EQUITY; Numerous studies have found less female enrolment in the regular degree programmes in Nigerian universities (Ojobo 2008, Omoike 2009, Ibadin and Inegbedion 2011). Increased participation of females in university education at the part-time basis bridges the existing gap between male and female education and thus enhances equity in education. Imakpokpomwan (2015) studied gender dimension in the part-time programmes in the University of Benin. The study found that the females are well represented in the part-time programmes at the University. In a similar study of the part-time programmes in the South-South Nigeria universities, Imakpokpomwan (2014a) established that there were more females (51.3%) than male placement (48.7%) in the part-time programmes in the public universities in the South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria. This is in contrast with Nwagwu (1998) who found 20:80 females to male placement in the 1980s, Adeyemi and Akpotu (2004) found 30% females and 70% males in the 1990s in the full-time programme. Therefore, part-time programmes is an avenue for promoting equity in educational provision in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Having discussed the innovation in the global part-time programmes, it is established that the governments all over the world are responding to increasing demands for university education in novel ways. Nigeria cannot be left behind in university education provision especially for the under-privileged group who missed out earlier. It is here concluded that the part-time programmes are veritable instruments for widening university educational provision in order to meet the social demand for the service in a globally competitive milieu. Government, institutions, employers of labour and even individuals should promote opportunities to enhance people chances in attaining educational provision. Here some suggestions are made for improvement.

Suggestions

1. Federal and State governments can support part-timers with at least grant for text book, subsidized learning aids such as laptop, scholarship and even tax exception. Local Government Authorities should not discriminate against the part-time students in their bursary awards..
2. Open up admission spaces through the part-time programme in order for those already in the field with pre-requisite qualifications to upgrade their skills and competence through such opportunities.
3. NUC should reconsider its stand on some science based courses with a view to lifting the ban for the science based discipline so that mature students such as those with first degree in similar discipline or those with sub-degree but have spent many years in the industries who which can be trained through the part-time programme to become qualified to fill some critical positions especially in the health sector.
4. The part-time programmes should be refocused to contribute to quality education as well as create path to improved education funding in Nigeria.

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