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I. Introduction

Education is one of the most crucial sectors in any society, because it is central to the preservation of the society membership.¹ Education as a "process of imparting knowledge, skill and judgement facts, skills and ideas that have been learned, either formally or informally",² forms the basis for human capacity development, both physically and mentally to fit into the society. It is in this context that education is perceived to be the system motivating positive institutional changes and developments³ geared towards creating the required internal solidarity, cohesion and integration of people to achieve the common good for all in the society. Developed countries like United States of America and Britain, and of course, the fast growing countries in Asia, such as China, India, Singapore and Malaysia, and in Africa, for example, Ghana, neighbouring Nigeria, are investing heavily with most sincere commitments to achieve required goals of educational developments. One basic drive for achievements in these countries is the fruitful exchange relations in knowledge production, distribution and commitment of resources to achieving full intellectual employment and development. The case in Nigeria is on the contrary. On the other hand, the government have been

blamed for poor financing of the sector and on the other, educational managers including policy makers, have also been accused of attributing to the deteriorating standard of education in Nigeria basically for lack of effective policy making and management. Beyond these impasses, the sector is suffering from virulent politicisation to untoward tendencies such as ethnicity, religion and *godfatherism* which have become an enduring legacy of colonialism and post-colonial politics in Nigeria.

II. Methodology

The methodology used in this research paper is both observational and historical methods. The choice of these methods is informed by the fact that, observational technique provide not only the ability to perceive events as they occur, but to also provide the opportunity to nose for fine details that may be taken for granted. The decision is also prompted by the attempt to summarise, systematise and simplify the discourse on the subject under consideration.⁴ In addition, the historical technique is also used. The decision is also informed by the need to engage in critical investigation of events, developments and movements, with regard to the thrush of this research across time and space in order to evaluate them given the current situation under investigation.⁵ It is in this context that the observational and historical approaches are considered to be appropriate to appraise politicisation of education system in Nigeria.

III. Theoretical Framework

The neoliberal theory of educational liberalism is used in approaching this paper. The bases for the adoption of the neoliberal theory hinges on the principles of equality and meritocracy. The theory reflects on the multicultural society like Nigeria that is highly diverse in terms of ethnicity, religion and other primordial affiliations. It seeks to promote the ideals of acceptability of such diversities to foster a more democratic educational system and citizenship, where everyone has equal rights and opportunities.

James and Saville-Smith cited in Olszen, Codd and O'Neill, argues that the grounds for educational liberalism is built on "constructing a society in which all are equally eligible to compete for society's position" irrespective of social status or ethnic and religious

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identities of competitors. The theorists aver that primordial identities or status are not decisive in determining the height an individual should attain in the society.⁶ Young concurred that “intelligences and effort” demonstrated in the competitive environment should be the bases, because it produces merit.

He further argue that meritocracy is based on “the believed that intelligence quotient (IQ) plus effort, equals merit”.⁷ The environment that can produce the neo-liberal educational system requires a multi-cultural educational set up – a setting that encourages diversities not only limited to ethnicity and religion as the case is in Nigeria. In such an environment, primordial sentiments are promoted so long it does not compromise the principle of meritocracy as a standard measurement for reward, even when ‘federal character system or quota system’ is used. This applies to recruitment system and admission of students into educational institutions, and other cognate arrangements.

a) Nigerian State Formation and Educational Development

Nigeria is a multicultural state formation. As a modern state formation, as obtained throughout Africa, the current nature of Nigeria is a product of European colonial adventurism and rivalries – a process which was motivated by internal contradictions of capitalist development in the European continent.⁸ To attend to the requirement of capitalist development, the gregarious capitalist nations in the drive to build colonial empires outside their territorial boundaries decided at the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 to partition Africa.⁹ Before their final boundaries were decided, the people who constitute the Nigeria state formation at a point lived in different state formations with different communal characters.¹⁰ They were mutually but also exclusively different in terms of state structures and bio-social relations. The state formations in the era before colonisation in Nigeria coincided with the development of indigenous educational systems which were largely informal in nature. They were, however, organised to meet the needs of the society.¹¹ These state formations espoused a communitarian posture that necessitated indigenous educational development, aimed at inculcating moral norms and values to the younger generation for both self and society development.

The discourse on the pre-colonial state formations, particularly in Nigeria, often excludes the pre-Islamic states, such as the Hausa states and Borno Empire located in Northern Nigeria,¹² which later formed the Sokoto Caliphate in the 18th century. The Fulani, who constituted a minority, achieved this by fostering a religious war and annexing these states under their imperial control. They transformed the existing educational system of these the annexed ethnic

communities to reflect the typical practice on the Arabian Peninsula by adopting Arabic as a major medium of communication and knowledge delivery. Before British colonial domination, extant literature on Nigeria have pointed that the Islamic expansionism to the south intuitively meant some sort of Nigeria state formation was going to emerge in comparative terms with states in Western Europe. They posit that western colonization halted the development. Suffice to note that Islamic expansion transformed the process of indigenous educational development to meet new requirement of the Fulani imperial rule in the century before it was brought under British colonial rule.¹³

In the pre-colonial times, educational development was closely linked with the social development and was in conformity with the successive stages of physical and mental upbringing of the child. It was difficult to distinguish between education and productive activities, or create a division between manual and mental education because they concurrently went together. Before the establishment of Islam and its attendant institutions, particularly the education sector in the North, indigenous educational development went on unabated. In the same way, indigenous education system was construed in the south to enhance the already existing ethno-religious system.¹⁴ Religion provided for the indigenous population the definition, principle of judgement and criteria of perception. It offered them the reading of their world, history, society, time, space, authority, justice and ultimate truth. It was also functional to legitimising new forms of aspirations, new forms of organisation, new forms of relations and new forms of social order.¹⁵ Religion was located in everything and everything was clothed in religion.

The ethno-cultural traditions of the people in this epoch, directed the process of formal education such as the passing of an individual from one age-grade to another. Such was also instrumental for the development and specialisation of individuals into various professions such as haunting, priesthood, blacksmithing, farming and practical medicine among others.¹⁶ This implies that Nigerian ethnic groups as were beyond Africa demonstrated through informal and formal education the tradition of general knowledge and communal participation through enculturation.¹⁷ Such knowhow was demonstrated by occupational specialisation and division of labour in craftsmanship which distinguished the master/experts from the generality of practitioners. The cavers also were differentiated from the dancers, musicians, the sculptors and so on. These big leaps were informed by the stylistic tendencies, cultural norms, ideational formulation as well as social and aesthetic tenets which guided the society.¹⁸ This attest to the development and domestication of the various indigenously generated

professions throughout the country today. For example, the perfection in sculptures such as the famous Nok terracotta in the central Nigeria and the bronzes sculptures in Ife in south-western Nigeria dates before colonial domination of ethnic natives by the Fulani and Britain at different historical epochs. The same applies to other areas such as agriculture and technology development.

b) British Colonisation and Politicisation of Education System in Nigeria

Colonisation in Nigeria as an historical epoch deliberately brought together different ethnic groups to signal that Nigeria was going to emerge as a multicultural state formation.¹⁹ In the process, they liquidated the internal harmony and fragmented them by generating primordial loyalties which became manifested in the post-colonial era. The people crystallised and exploited to attend to British colonial requirements and development generated by industrial revolution. Since the British colonialists could not do as their presupposition would have permitted them, they fall back on the indigenous traditional rulers to foster colonisation, while limiting their boundaries of operations.²⁰ This was classically 'indirect rule system' but largely referred as 'divide and rule system' by Afro-centric scholars. Colonialism destroyed ethnocentric values of the Nigeria ethnic groups and stirred up rivalries that have become an enduring character of Nigeria in the 21st century. Falola (2004) avers in this context that colonial manipulations laid the foundation of the current problems in Nigeria, which post-colonial elites fed on.²¹

Ethnicity and religion were very important materials factors for achieving colonial ambition in Nigeria. Under the name of tribalism, colonial anthropologists constructed tribal stratifications and christened some ethnic groups as higher races and majorities - Hausa-Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba respectively. They debased other ethnic groups and sub-grouped them regionally for these 'big-three' to lord over them.²² They were instrument used to stimulate internal tribal jealousies in the post-colonial era. How was the foundation laid? The colonialists fostered unabatedly the Christianisation of Southern Nigeria and the minority areas of the North and allowed Islam to flourish unabatedly in Hausa-Fulani dominated areas. The forerunners of British colonialism – the Christian Missionaries were not allowed to penetrate the core North with their gospel. The colonialists ensured that two dominant religions emerged with dominance in each of the poles. The Central Belt of Nigeria became the battle ground for the two religions in search for converts in the post-colonial era. This era marked the beginning of normlessness among the Igbo-speaking people as described by the Chinua Achebe in his most

revered literary book the *Things Fall Apart*. Cultural values of these people were destroyed and the Islamic culture in the North was allowed to consolidate.²³ Even though the introduction of Western education in the south gave them an edge over the North, the purpose renegotiated to meet new ends.

Rodney contended that the educational system adopted for the colonised was underdeveloped and under-developing, meant to attend to the task of colonisation. The success was informed through the use of laws, taxable system and other processes that were considered favourable for capitalist profits.²⁴ Sargent concurred thus:

Even more dangerous was education...although Christian missionaries provided schools and, in fact, education of many leaders of the later independence movements. The fact that most education was provided by Christian missionaries illustrates another fact about the colonial experience – the attack on indigenous culture. This process of deculturation proved traumatic for many people.... On hand the imposition of an alien culture stripped many people of their sense of self, their religions were suppressed; their language were replaced; their customs were replaced by western styles. Everything indigenous was treated as inferior, and this attitude was taught in schools.²⁵

Kazah-Toure argues connectively that:

Construct such as 'Muslims', 'non-Muslims' and 'pagans' became categories that were applied for the status and to some extent class position of individuals and groups in the colonial system. Regardless of such categories many groupings were presented as primitives, savages, fanatics, and full of "pagan superstitions" (Administrative Policy, 1935). Urban settlement, labour camps, schools and other institutions were segregated along ethnic and religious lines on the basis of "non-Muslims", "native Africans", "non-native Africans", and all sorts of "tribal" and primordial categories.²⁶

Remarkable to note is, although the Fulani imperial domination, who in the name of religious reforms conquered and brought many under control in Northern Nigeria, and turned many of these communities into vassals under the Sokoto Caliphate, the situation later became compounded under colonial rule. The colonialists carefully studied and understood that religion was the cement of relationships in various societies, and continue to act as a dominant element of the super-structure; they relied on the religious arms to penetrate the pre-colonial societies. In the North, the presence of Islam was important for mystifying the people to accept colonialism; as such it was promoted and adopted as part of education curriculum. In the south, the traditional practices of the people were considered barbaric and as such it was considered not

in tandem with universal practice. A new religion was introduced into the social system to dispel the old ones as life guiding principles and of course, educational system. The process, however, was not conclusive because in the post-colonial era ethnic groups in this region of Nigeria retreated to cultural institutions for direction of society.

Scholars such as Adebisi; Osaghae and Okwori, in different contexts argued that the religious arms of colonialism imposed a dominant pattern which denied the people cultural equality. They destroyed indigenous institutions and values by perpetuating cultural violence mostly in southern Nigeria and pagan areas of Northern Nigeria while allowing intact the religious systems of the Muslim North. They adopted a colonial policy that kept the North from the spell of western education with informed concern not to affect them with virulent nationalistic tendencies of the southerners fostered by western education.²⁷ The later decision to introduce western education by establishing the famous Katsina College to open-up officially in 1922 was restricted only to the sons of the Emirates Aristocrats to the exclusion of the commoners. The purpose was to create Hausa-Fulani Muslim intelligentsia that will work in the interest of British colonial government.²⁸

The colonial politicisation of educational system later manifested virulently in the politics of independent struggle. Within this period, Nigerian elites crystallised and transformed into ethnicity and religious bigots within respective regional enclaves. The Northern Nigeria in terms of western education and skills refused to accept the 1959 proposal for national independence.²⁹ According to Odojin,

Before the national independence, several problems afflicted Nigeria federation, out of which two were fundamental (a) the structural imbalance in the federal system and (b) the difference spread in the pattern of western education. These two problems were the original sources of fears of domination arising out of population and size and employment opportunities within the federation. These constituted a conflict of reward power versus the expert power.³⁰

c) *Post-Colonial Development and Politicisation of Education in Nigeria*

In the 1950s, particularly at the height of nationalist struggles for independence,³¹ colonialists in Nigeria manipulated identities as political factors of determining who should get what in the political process of post-colonial Nigeria. One of such processes manipulated by the elites, according to Soyinka was census and the other was the electoral process, skewed in favour of the Northern aristocrats by the colonialists, which he identified as their surrogates.³² This explains non-cohesion among post-colonial Nigerian elites

toward developing all inclusive system of education that became manifested in the immediate post-independence Nigeria. In fact, emerging from colonial rule Nigeria engaged in an overshadowed rationalistic character and was left in a doldrums. Elites could not come to terms to develop an acceptable system of education that will strengthen and unite the country and transforming the Nigerian society towards inclusive citizenship. They devised separatist systems of education across the three regions. Olaniyi pointed that:

...the government of the Western Region adopted a 6-3-3-2-3 system: 6 years primary education, 3 years Modern school, 3 years secondary school, 2 year Higher School Certificate, and 3 years university education; both Eastern and Northern Regions settled for 7-5-2-3 system: 7 years primary education, 5 years Secondary/Teacher education, 2 year Higher School Certificate, and 3 years university education.³³

The inconsistencies were informed by the adoption of the Federal Constitution in the country in 1954 which granted internal self-government to the three regions. The division did not only affect the political sphere, but also regionalised the education system. This continued until 1973, following the report of Simeon Adebode committee of National Policy on Education.³⁴ The educational policy stipulated the following objectives: a) the inculcation of national consciousness and unity; b) the inculcation of right type of values and attitudes for the individual and the Nigerian society; c) the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around, and d) the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mental and physical and equipping the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society.³⁵ These laudable objectives have not fully been implemented in the education system because primordial and patrimonial politics have taken the centre stage of the sector. The post-colonial politics in Nigeria also enthroned ethno-regional confined educational policies, which elites exploited to pursue ethnic and religious group interests and recruitment was determined by primordial identities in all sectors of the federation, including education sector. The concept of indigene/non-indigene and Christian/Muslim identities and Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, Igbo, gender and class categorisation were exploited in the education sector with minorities from each region at disadvantage. This practice is still very much visible in contemporary Nigeria and it is indeed responsible for identity contestations in recent times.

As an attempt to create an egalitarian posture in the education sector, the federal government adopted the 'quota system', 'federal character' and 'catchments area' principles to dispel the ethno-religious divides and imbalance in the sector. On the final analysis, they

further compounded the problem of identity consciousness. The system have bequeathed the problem of integration and enhanced regionalism. This was not different under the military even though they tinkered with the federation and emasculated group identities; they consistently stifled the sector's quest for autonomy and under funded it. This further enhanced divisive tendencies and made education institutions, especially universities and tertiary institutions fallow grounds for ethnic and religious mobilisation in Nigeria. The military nurtured a cabalistic class structure of intelligentsias from various academic institutions to promote their in-genuine philosophy and continues stay in power.

The military government particularly that of the General Ibrahim Babangida, changed the curriculum of education to reflect their own interest. It was within this period that History received shape decline of patronage in favour of government as a course of study the Nigeria secondary schools and the universities. The hatred developed for history was fashioned on the conception that historians have caused serious problems for the country. This was indeed erroneous because history is the bedrock if any society must develop. The regime introduced the 6-3-3-4 system where a student have to spend 6 years in primary school, 3 years in junior secondary school, 3 years in senior secondary school, and minimum of 4 years in the university. Toward the end of the regime, Nigeria education sector has become ethnically and religiously driven. Meritocracy was abused, compromised and jettisoned.

d) Military Exit and Politicization of Education in Nigeria

Military exit ushered in a new age of politicising the education sector. The former military leader, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, who emerged victoriously from the democratic transition of General Abdulsalam Abubakar, introduced changes in the sector based on the philosophy of National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS).³⁶ The government was committed toward gearing a private sector driven economy which education was enlisted as one of the major sectors to be privatised to attract investors and to assist buster education in Nigeria. There was also the assumption that with private sector engagement, employment opportunities would be generated which consequentially will reduce the rate of unemployment in the country.

The government also change the curriculum by introducing the 9-3-4 system; this system of education provided for 9 years primary education, 3 years secondary education and minimum of 4 years University education.³⁷ To achieve this end at the primary school level, the federal government contracted teaching staff and engaged them for the period of two years. It is expected that the teaching staff employed on the

platform of Universal Basic Education (UBE) should be incorporated into the regular teaching staff of the various states in the federation. In most parts of the North, only few states were able to incorporate them as state government teaching staff. This was a remedial solution but did not in any way solve the problem of unemployment. Besides, religion and ethnicity were determining factors in the recruitment exercise. The transitory changes in Nigeria education curriculum as observed reflected on the politicisation of the sector at the policy levels in search for effective system of education. As beautiful as the policy is, it has remained unrealistic and unattainable due to the deep seated systemic corruption in Nigeria.

Nigerian politicians, both governing and non-governing elites, and school managers and proprietors have not come to terms to depoliticise education in Nigeria. Although, at the national level, Nigeria have had several people in the academia manning the prestigious ministerial position as education Ministers, they have achieved less at ensuring that the sector receive best attention it requires to meet the standard of international practices. It is a known fact that structural facilities and human and material resources are inadequate in most educational institutions in Nigeria. In the past, Nigeria had an outstanding record of having the best of primary and tertiary institutions, especially Universities, in Africa and was competitively measured along with universities of international repute. Students and lecturers from all over the world were coming to Nigeria. The impetus for this was the material conditions that were readily welcoming at that time. Foreign investors were willing to invest in the Nigerian education sector without being beckoned to come.

The baton has changed; Nigerians go looking for investors to come to come and invest not only in the education sector but also other sectors. Today, even the oil-rich Niger Delta region has lost much patronage due to the rising tides of ethno-religious identities which has destabilised the country. To be specific, the education sector has received the highest level of threats in recent times, not only from 'cultists' which we use to know about, but also from ethno-religious radical groups. In Kano State, for example, over 15 Lecturers and Students casualties were recorded at the Bayero University and the Vice Chancellor's office of the Gombe State University was brought under attack by unknown gunmen in the year 2012. Nevertheless, several lecturers at the University of Maiduguri in Borno State were also attacked and assassinated. Today, the situation is frightening as serial killings of people in the academia occur almost on the daily bases.

The impact of this is enormous and is causing a lot of damages to the education sector in Nigeria. The effect is that usual cross-fertilization of Scholars and students in the various universities and tertiary

institutions across the country has drastically reduced due to the increasing level of restiveness, especially in Northern Nigeria. The situation has a multiplier effect on the development of the country, because the idea of evolving a more democratic country, where multiculturalism is respected and upheld is threatened every day. Because of these circumstances, most universities and tertiary institutions have lost the patronage they use to get from students and Scholars that are not 'indigenous' to the sited areas. What is obtainable now is the increasing clusters of ethnic and religious groups 'indigenous' in those universities, and indeed, is not healthy for integrated development of the country.

Scholars of Marxist orientation such as Harvie, Hill, McLaren, Cole, and Rikowski³⁸ have in different context and collectively, argued that the situation which ethnically and religiously is manifesting virulently in the national politics and indeed, in various institutions of learning as it is currently in Nigeria, reflect 'politics of human resistance' against the neo-liberal system. More specifically in their co-authored book: *Postmodernism in educational theory: Education and the politics of human resistance* published in 1999, Harvie, Hill, McLaren, Cole, and Rikowski, contended that education under normal circumstance supposed to produce the society required social change to uncover how apparently positive, for example, the social inclusion, lifelong learning, higher education 'standard' and creativity in education is important for the development of individuals, community and the country at large. On the contrary, according to them, the system has failed when measured in the context of capital's social universe.³⁹ In a nutshell, positive aim of education in the neoliberal system has dissolved into negativity. This failure is caused by the inability to determine what system of education the country operates? What education policy framework the country seeks to adopt and be committed to it? And what does the education system seeks to produce? Often, such system produces inequality rather than egalitarian society as it professes.⁴⁰

Contrary to the foregoing assertions, the problem in Nigeria is not a problem of liberal education as it is assumed in most countries of Arab extraction, relating it to the fundamental factors that led to Arab spring in 2011. The problem is about individual group quest for ethnic and religious hegemony in a multicultural diverse country like Nigeria. The quest of multiculturalism is to build a society where within the philosophy of meritocracy individuals are given what they deserve. What is obtainable in Nigeria is not democracy in the real sense of the word. It is a quasi-practice of democracy that has succeeded in enthroning identity and personalised interests; while exploiting these identities, they have assumed new logics of modern colonisation in Nigeria.⁴¹

The manner in which ethnicity and religion are expressed in the various sub-sector of the education sector in Nigeria is very glaring and destructive today. The desire to build an inclusive and integrated Nigeria so blessed with natural providence of ethnic and religious diversity is more threatened now under the frame of identity politics, which started earlier in Nigeria's history. The various institutions of education which were to promote national cohesion and solidarity were established and associated with the names of some ethnic chauvinists and religious bigots, who masqueraded themselves as national heroes. This was notable in the immediate post-independence Nigeria's universities and other tertiary institutions. It was known that initially the naming of universities and tertiary institutions in Nigeria were associated to areas where they were established, the process changed gradually to assume ethnic and religious dimension, which has become more pronounced today in Nigeria.

Several universities such as the University of Ife was renamed Obafemi Awolowo University, to glorify the ethnic heroic tendencies of the late sage, Dr. Obafemi Awolowo. In the Northern Nigeria, a university was established in Zaria, and was named after Sir, Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto and premier of Northern Nigeria. In Bauchi, a University of Technology was established but was named in honour of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. The Usman Danfodio University established in Sokoto took after the name of the Islamic sage and jihadist. Notwithstanding, in the South-East Nigeria, Nnamdi Azikiwe University was established in Akwa in honour of the late Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, who was from Anambra. To promote inclusive citizenship, these universities would have taken cross-ethnic or national identities in the various regions they were established, for example, Nnamdi Azikiwe University would have rather been named Ahmadu Bello University, where as the Obafemi Awolowo University would have been named Nnamdi Azikiwe University and Ahmadu Bello University would have been named Obafemi Awolowo University. This would have reflected the spirit of oneness and national integration, but the manner in which the universities were regionally confined to particular ethnic, religious and regional settings purportedly proved that there were no national heroes but ethno-regional heroes instead.

In most parts of the country, particularly as from the post-Civil War era onward, more ethnically and religiously driven identity education institutions emerged. Recent examples around the country are revealing. The Federal University of Technology, Yola, is now Modibbo Adama University of Technology (MAUTECH); University of Lagos is now Moshood Abiola University, Lagos and the Federal University of Agriculture, Umudike in Abia state is now Michael Okpara University of Agriculture. The names of these universities were changed, following President












Goodluck Jonathan's assiduous to the National Assembly to obtain endorsement to immortalise some acclaimed national heroes. This glaringly reflected the politicisation of education sector in Nigeria which started earlier in the country that have unconsciously or consciously generated waves of ethnic and religious identities movements and violence in contemporary Nigeria. As this dilemma is lamentable, the perceived excluded minorities in various states have also engaged in such pursuit. The community university in Wukari that was formerly Jubilee University was renamed to Kwara University, purportedly to immortalise 'mythically' the Jukun heroic confederacy. In the same manner state universities and tertiary institutions have been emerging across the country. As they are emerging, whether directly or indirectly, the leadership of these states and institutions ensures their candidates given consideration before any other people. The criteria used are essentially primordial rather than merits. It is this factor that has succeeded in enthroning ethnicity and religious identities as yardsticks for recruitments of workforce and admission of students in

various Nigerian schools – the universities and tertiary institutions alike. This is at the heart of the falling standard of education in Nigeria that is much to be desired.

e) Politicisation of Education in Nigeria: What Implications?

As from 1999, Nigeria has witnessed an unequivocal increase in the numbers of educational institutions, following the private sector driven economy in Nigeria. For example, the number of private universities in Nigeria now stands at over fifty. This is accompanied by quite a number of ever increasing states and federal universities and tertiary institutions in the country. In spite of the increase, the standard of education has been deteriorating, as the objectives for which they are established are much to be desired.⁴² This problem is more worrisome now given the positions of Nigerian universities, including the tertiary institutions as presented by the Webometrics 2012 ranking of universities in Africa and the World below.

Table 1 : Webometrics Ranking of World's Universities, January 2012

| Position | Continent Rank | University | Country | World Rank | Position | | | |
|----------|----------------|-------------------------------------|---|------------|----------|------------|------------|----------|
| | | | | | Size | Visibility | Rich Files | Scholars |
| 22 | | University of Benin |  | 1,639 | 5,768 | 1,802 | 7,522 | 1,697 |
| 35 | | University of Agriculture Abeokuta |  | 2,266 | 2,916 | 9,426 | 5,248 | 1,271 |
| 38 | | University of Ibadan |  | 2,515 | 7,146 | 4,645 | 6,696 | 1,866 |
| 47 | | University of Nigeria |  | 3,228 | 4,072 | 9,375 | 8,440 | 1,752 |
| 49 | | Obafemi Awolowo University |  | 3,263 | 8,626 | 8,408 | 8,414 | 1,741 |
| 52 | | University of Lagos |  | 3,486 | 2,688 | 9,521 | 9,241 | 1,841 |
| 55 | | Ahmadu Bello University |  | 3,512 | 4,058 | 10,399 | 8,159 | 1,756 |
| 63 | | University of Ilorin |  | 4,302 | 7,386 | 9,139 | 1,985 | 2,261 |
| 88 | | University of Jos |  | 5,681 | 5,022 | 10,220 | 4,760 | 2,900 |
| 95 | | Auchi Polytechnic |  | 6,254 | 2,101 | 2,331 | 18,742 | 9,576 |
| 100 | | National Open University of Nigeria |  | 6,576 | 12,658 | 9,157 | 4,064 | 3,528 |

Source : http://www.webometrics.info/about_rank.html (retrieved 23 July 2012).

From the foregoing, could this problem be linked to the poor policy making process, poor financing, poor implementation of policies and programmes, and poor monitoring process of the programmes? Although, these could partly attribute to, and explain the reasons for the deteriorating standard of education in Nigeria, the problems in recent times could be highly associated with the ethnicity, religion and *godfatherism* factors in Nigeria, because in Nigeria where ethnicity is less pronounced, religion assumes dominance. This also applies to where religion is less dominant, ethnicity takes proceedings. In some other areas where ethnicity and religion assume moderate status, godfathering becomes operational. Within this setting, godfatherism applies to determine 'who gets what, when and how'. The propelling factors for the manifestation of these identities in Nigeria education sector could be clannish or sectarian conception of social life in Nigeria societies which most people associate it to political elitism and manipulation of the *mass mind*.

In Nigeria today, evidence abound that Vice Chancellors, Provosts and Rectors as well as other education managers such as Principals and Headmasters are motivated by primordial factors. This situation reveals itself to the extent that today certain positions must be kept for the 'indigenous people' of the institution's host communities. If the positions are occupied by 'non-indigenes', the process of institutional governance/administration becomes frustrated. In some circumstances, they go to the length of watering down the criteria for recruitment in order to accommodate their primordial interests. Such system is never healthy for the development of education in Nigeria because it excludes those who merited the positions.

Another factor that indicts such practices is that when primordial identities become prominent, established rules seize to function. The system of rewards and punishment are determined by primordial considerations or informal conventions. In such institutions, multiple layers of red tapes are created and the consequences of being caught and punished for corrupt practices are low relatively to the benefits.

The managers shy away from asserting their proper disciplinary authority because of such affiliations. Those who would want to execute their primary responsibilities find themselves isolated and endangered. If care is not taken, they are dramatically eliminated or made to suffer sabotage for wanting to be just.⁴³ Because of primordial dominance, systemic operation becomes subservient to poor policy design and implementation processes, poor financing and monitoring processes. Even while finance is available, they are not often used for the purpose assigned to them rather mismanaged or siphoned and channelled into private uses, and punishment for such offence(s) committed becomes difficult to enforce.

Cumulatively, since the people recruited to pilot the affairs of the sector is carried out on basis of primordial considerations of ethnicity, religion and political balancing the system tends to produce poor leadership and followership in the society. The system ends up as a mere jamboree where grading of students is determined by such institutional misnomer and as such also tends to produce graduates that are unproductive to themselves, their immediate social milieu and the larger society. Many of such graduates because of clandestine connections are given consideration when it comes to employment far above those, although are intelligent and can fit adequately into the given job, but because they are poor and lack connection suffer delay. It is in this context that Timawus (2010) submits that "a political system that rewards school dropouts with more honours and income than a university professor in a whole lifetime is fit to breed *Boko Haram*".⁴⁴

The politicisation of education in Nigeria has also led to the loss of intercontinental cross fertilization of scholarship in Nigerian universities. This is because of the unfriendly nature of the Nigerian societies to foreign Scholars. Within Nigeria, the usual mixture of Scholars from various ethnic, religious and philosophical backgrounds in most Nigerian universities are fast disappearing. The reason is because these institutions have been overtaken by ethnicity, religious bigotry and clandestine relationships. The implication is more visible now that ethnic and religious restiveness has reached the moon in Nigeria. Because of this situation, many Scholars are relocating to their 'indigenous homelands' or areas considered being relatively peaceful. The politicisation of education therefore has open the space for the rediscovery of old boundaries of ethno-cultural identity such as described by Professor Eskor Toyo "Ethnic chauvinism, born-to-ruleism, Ilorin memories, Oduduwaism, Arewaism, Ohaneizism, etc."⁴⁵ Despite over fifty years of Nigeria's independence, the situation is ever alarming. The derogatory space for this development is has expanded, for example, the renaming the University of Lagos to Moshood Abiola University by the federal government of Nigeria led to violent demonstration among students in Lagos, majority of them were Yoruba. Tracing the problem, it will be revealing that it is associated with the memories of the 12 June 1993 Babangida's annulled election. Although, there were no demonstrations in Yola but the expression of the people showed that the renaming of the Federal University of Technology to Modibbo Adama University of Technology has succeeded in consolidating the domination of the Hausa-Fulani over the various ethnic groups in Adamwa State.

IV. Conclusion: Depoliticising Education System: Imperative for Future Generation

Education is imperative for any meaningful development of any country. The politicisation of the sector is the major factor truncating Nigeria's match to socio-economic, political, scientific and technological development. There is no gain saying that extant literatures on the education in Nigeria have blamed poor policy making and implementation processes and indeed, poor financing as central to the deteriorating condition of the sector in Nigeria. However, these literatures underscored the role of primordial identities in contributing to the fallen standard of education. The former are repercussive effects of the latter which are both historical and contemporary. The reflection of the poor condition of the education system in Nigeria is historical, because the origin of the problem generates from the contact with colonialism, first of the Arab-type and later, the Western-type. The problem is also contemporary because after fifty years of independence, the effort to build integrated and the all inclusive system of education has received utmost commitment.

It suffices to note that the main objective of education worldwide is to assist in constructing socially established normative cultures that will provide security and build the capacities for strengthening, uniting and pursuing the common good for all. This is attainable only in a democratic system, if democracy is given the utmost visibility. Democracy, which is embedded with liberal ideals, allows all sundry to have a stake in the governing process no matter the class or status of individuals in the society. The reason is that democratic culture is constructed on the basis of liberal culture and multiculturalism, which allows for competition within the same social arrangement. Therefore, it is adequate to state that the liberal-type or multicultural type of education system is a one that encourages meritocracy or excellence, because it is constructed on the belief that intelligence quotient (IQ) plus effort equals merit.⁴⁶ Banks and Banks

Multicultural education is a field of study and an emerging discipline whose major aim is to create equal educational opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, and cultural groups. One of its important goals is to help all students acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function effectively in a pluralistic democratic society and to interact, negotiate, and communicate with people from diverse groups to create a civic and moral community that works for the common good.⁴⁷

To achieve the merit of building an egalitarian society where merit count, stakeholders must

appreciate and given in their commitment that educational institutions are major avenues through which equality of opportunities can be achieved. Merit can be celebrated only when all are equally eligible to compete for society's rewards irrespective of their birth, social positions, or primordial affiliation.

This can practically be obtained in the academic institutions where staffing and the admission of students when excellence is allowed to precede ethnicity, religious consideration and *godfatherism* in Nigeria. One thing is at stake for the survival of democracy in Nigeria, which is, Nigerians must appreciate and articulate the "conception of education which recognises that without a democratic development of society, a more democratic system of education cannot be promoted, and without a more democratic system of education the development of society is unlikely to occur".⁴⁸ With this principle, politicisation of education Nigeria would give way for meritocracy that can instil discipline and hard work among citizens of this country. This way, the standard of education in Nigeria can be revamped.

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