

Strengthening Postgraduate Environments in African Academia: The Nigerian Humanities Doctoral Supervision Example

Abstract

Globally, postgraduate programmes constitute avenues to deepen scholarship and progress the possibilities of providing solutions to the challenges in the immediate environment, and by extension, the human society. While Nigeria has a rich history of postgraduate education, it has progressively witnessed a downturn in fortunes, and this has been occasioned by a multiplicity of factors. In this article, we explore the history of postgraduate education in Nigeria; identify the contemporary realities of PG supervision in the Humanities; and, recommend possible ways through which solutions – home-grown especially – can be devised to resolve these challenges. The myriad of inhibiting factors include the bureaucratic administrative structures, heavy workload for academic staff, absence of domestic research grants, poor supervisor-supervisee relations, quality and professionalism of doctoral candidates, infrastructural and technological deficit, and deficient research culture. In our discussions, we rely on personal and institutional experiences in recounting the realities. It is hoped that through systemic reorganisation, sustained in-house trainings and collective call-to-action of stakeholders, the Humanities supervision system and the Nigerian postgraduate system as a whole can be reinvented to become more practical-oriented and more attuned to the constantly evolving global realities.

Keywords: Postgraduate Studies; Nigeria; African academia, Knowledge development; Challenges

1.0. Introduction

Universal Basic Education and easing access to education continue to be critical aspects of the United Nations' Millennium Development goals, especially in developing countries. The focus is predicated on the conviction that knowledge and properly harnessed human resources have become crucial ingredients for economic and national development (OECD, 2001). At the heart of the drive is the need to ensure that education institutions meet the immediate national needs, and by extension, provide requisite manpower necessary for the global economy. Universities within this context function as bridges which link existing and necessary knowledge to the need of their nations as they provide the required human resources. They thus constitute the spearhead of knowledge development and revolution. Of course, universities do not represent the only available platforms of higher education, with polytechnics, colleges, etc. being some other institutions of higher learning. However, universities represent the peak of higher education. It is a community of scholars and promotes high-level research. Universities are also geared towards producing highly skilled human power for professions. Universities award degrees when students have been found to have fulfilled the demands and requirements for successfully completing their studies. These degrees vary depending on course of study as well as the level of educational achievement. Ruegg (1992) asserts also that the primary responsibilities of universities are the cultivation of intellectual power and the methodological studies of academic disciplines. The achievement of these objectives relies on the community of scholars: the Professors or faculty and the learners/students. Alemu (2018: 211) recognises the intersection and relationship when he submits that:

Universitas, a name applied to diversified corporate bodies of the Middle Ages in Europe, also include the organization of teachers and students. Through time, the name had more particularly attached to the teacher-student corporate organization as *universitas litterarum*, from which, particularly since the 18th century, the name University was derived.

While students take courses and are evaluated through tests and examinations, a cogent component of higher education is thesis writing. At this stage, students/candidates are expected to undertake independent research, with the guidance of a supervisor. During supervision, it is expected that the faculty member is able and willing to assist the student through their study, although this changes the higher on the rung one is, in terms of the academic degree, as candidates are then expected to be more independent in their research activities. Supervision is therefore envisioned as a form of mentoring process. In fact, for some people, especially at the doctoral level, the relationship built is often a life-long one.

The place and impact of postgraduate supervision is usually in the spotlight for several reasons. One is the high attrition rate among candidates (Burgess, Hogan, Pole & Sanders, 1995). Another reason is the quality of the products of supervision especially in view of the twin forces of globalization and internationalization which mean that candidates might move elsewhere upon the completion of their academic programmes (Gurnam et al, 2013). Calma (2007) for instance regards supervision as a professional practice which is critical to the creation of knowledge, not only within the academia but also as a positive contribution to the larger environment. With respect to the relationship which exists between the supervisor and the candidate during supervision, Lee (2009) avers that supervision connotes a sense of hierarchy, power structure, discipline and oversight of work. In addition, effective supervision requires providing conducive environment so that postgraduate candidates can be encouraged and assisted to contribute new knowledge in their discipline. Kandlbinder & Peseta (2001) stress that the three key elements of research supervision in helping postgraduates build a co-learning relationship with supervisors are through establishing clear goals (via a good researchable research question), developing partnerships and managing the supervisory process through regular meetings and seminars. Sze (2008: 4) felt that co-supervision can ‘contribute to the proximal zone of development of the postgraduate students in those particular aspects of the research projects where the chief or principal supervisor may lack the required expertise’.

In this article, we examine the doctoral supervision terrain in Nigeria, paying attention to its structure and objectives. We identify its strengths and also proffer suggestions on how its challenges can be overcome. In our discussions, we apply anecdotal evidences as young academics who ourselves completed our doctoral programmes within the last decade and who are also in the system as supervisors. We especially draw on our experiences from the Humanities faculty.

2.0. Higher Education in Nigeria

Higher education varies in practices from one country to another. In Nigeria, higher educational institutions include Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education. With regards to practices on much of the African continent, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017) identifies three stages to the evolution of ‘university’ in Africa’ and this he calls ‘triple heritages’. These are the indigenous pre-colonial higher education (which have largely been obliterated by Western formal education); universities which were established as campuses of the colonial higher education institutions (which continue to be the model for many existing African universities); and the struggle for ‘African university’ through decolonisation attempts focused on infusing indigenous epistemologies and Africa-rooted cultural and intellectual practices (Alemu, 2018).

In Nigeria, the higher education system still significantly follows that introduced by the British during their colonial administration. Early Nigerian university systems had leaning to ideological/international fronts. Thus while the British system as a result of the colonial influences was more widespread, there are also American influences (in Nsukka for instance) as well as Middle East ones (Ahmadu Bello University). Indeed, the first higher educational institution in Nigeria was the Yaba Higher College in Lagos and this was established in 1932 under British colonial rule. However, the first Nigerian university was the University College Ibadan, now University of Ibadan, which was founded in 1948 as an affiliate of the University of London. The institution was the sole university institution in Nigeria until 1960 (Jubril, 2003) when agitations for more institutions for Higher education led to the establishment of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka by the Eastern Region government in 1960 while the now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife (formerly, the University of Ife) was established in 1961. Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (then as University of Northern Nigeria) and University of Lagos were added to the list in 1962. The competitive spirit of the regional form of government in practice as well as the yearning for even more institutions led to, in 1970, the establishment of the University of Benin by the then Bendel State. These six universities which came into existence before 1970 have come to be known as first generation federal universities since they were eventually taken over by the federal government. Between 1975 and 1977, seven new universities were established. However in view of the rising population of students desirous of university education, especially because of the oil boom which enriched Nigerian states, the 1979 constitution transferred university education from the exclusive list to the concurrent legislative list thus allowing state governments to establish state-owned universities. However, despite the increasing number of higher institutions, not more than 30% of applicants were able to gain admission to tertiary institutions annually (Obasi and Eboh, 2001; Ojerinde, 2011).

The challenge of admission pressure which manifested in the huge gulf between population of admission seekers and available admission spaces in the institutions soon led to the establishment of private universities (Obasi, 2005; Aluede et al, 2012). This came in the form of the first privately owned university in the country, Igbinedion University, Okada (IUO) established in 1999. Since then ownership of private universities has been made available to individuals, corporate organisations and religious bodies. In fact, private universities, despite their huge fees, have been performing very well in terms of metrics. They have also been relatively immune from the infrastructural decay which has crippled most government owned universities. Despite the elitist perception which subsists about them, another allure for the patronage of private universities is the usually uninterrupted calendar. Therefore, a critical classificatory model for universities in Nigeria is based on ownership. Thus as earlier stated, while, the federal government set up the first

generation of universities in the country, the rise in population of university-education seekers in the 1970s led to state governments starting universities. The continued upsurge in admission seekers, recurrent strike actions by the university academic union, and the obvious infrastructural decay in the existing institutions culminated in private intervention from 1999. This operational disparity continues till date in university administration in Nigeria.

3.0. Postgraduate Education in Nigeria

The National Universities Commission (NUC) performs oversight or supervisory role over all the universities in Nigeria. The Commission coordinates both administrative and academic programmes and policies with the principal duty being to ensure uniformity of standards. According to the NUC website, the general functions of the Commission are:

- granting approval for all academic programmes run in Nigerian universities;
- granting approval for the establishment of all higher educational institutions offering degree programmes in Nigerian universities;
- ensure quality assurance of all academic programmes offered in Nigerian universities; and,
- channel for all external support to the Nigerian universities.

In addition, the NUC conducts accreditation exercises and provides national ranking of universities. According to the NUC statistics for 2019, there are a total of 170 universities comprising 43 federal universities; 48 state universities; and 79 privately-owned universities in Nigeria. Out of these, as at January 2019, ninety-three universities consisting of 30 federal universities, 30 state universities and 33 private universities are accredited to run postgraduate programmes¹. In line with the goals charged towards national development, researches in Nigerian universities at the postgraduate level are expected to be impactful and transformative, benefiting not only the immediate society but also the Nigerian society at large.

A cursory historical evaluation of postgraduate programmes in the country shows that at the University of Ibadan, the first postgraduate degree was awarded in 1952 when the University was still affiliated to the University of London. Postgraduate studies in the university however enjoy a special status compared to other universities in the country because Postgraduate School enrolment takes about 50% of the entire student enrolment. The University of Ibadan produces an average of 3,000 Masters and 250-400 PhDs every year². At the Obafemi Awolowo University,

¹ <https://www.nuc.edu.ng/approved-universities-to-run-postgraduate-programmes/>

² <https://www.ui.edu.ng/History>

Postgraduate Studies and research started in 1964 and has continued to grow since then. According to information on the Obafemi Awolowo University webpage³:

the University has a postgraduate student enrollment of over 5,000 and offers postgraduate programmes in all Faculties, comprising 16 Postgraduate Diplomas, 106 Masters (including professional degrees), 32 Master of Philosophy and 80 Doctor of Philosophy degree programmes.

In the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), postgraduate programmes commenced in 1965⁴ while Ahmadu Bello University had awarded several postgraduate degrees by 1972⁵. The University of Lagos (UNILAG), although established in 1962, started its postgraduate programme in 1981⁶. A recurring thread across the mission and vision statements of the different institutions is the necessity for postgraduate studies to concentrate on research and innovation in the training of quality manpower.

As the supervisory body which ensures the maintenance of required standards in the running of Nigerian universities, Nigeria's National Universities Commission (NUC) maintains a set of documents which guide universities on the minimum requirements for getting their degrees approved. The first – and only, thus far – of such documents to address postgraduate studies in Nigerian universities was released in 2011, sixty-one years after the award of the first postgraduate degree by a Nigerian university and fifty-one years after the establishment of the commission. The document clearly spells out the “Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards” that institutions must meet in order to have their postgraduate programmes accredited. For the purpose of this essay, the part of the document which focuses on postgraduate studies in arts will be focused on. A general overview of the document reveals that simplicity (in relation to structure and system) – without compromise of standards – is a major driving force behind the drafting of the document. Among other things, the document identifies the various postgraduate programmes that can be run under the broad arts discipline; these include courses such as English Language and Literature, Music, Theatre Arts Religious Studies and Philosophy. It also distinguishes between the various levels of postgraduate studies, namely Postgraduate Diploma, Masters Degree and Doctor of Philosophy. Other notable things spelt out include the entry requirements for the respective programmes.

Our major concern in this article is the PhD programme and for this programme, the NUC states that a prospective candidate is expected to have “a good masters which includes coursework and research thesis from a recognised university...”⁷ provided the

³ <https://oauife.edu.ng/admission/postgraduate>

⁴ <https://spgs.unn.edu.ng/wp-content/uploads/sites/35/2015/10/History-of-SPGS.pdf>

⁵ <https://abu.edu.ng/history/>

⁶ https://unilag.edu.ng/?page_id=2524

⁷ “National Universities Commission: Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards for Postgraduate Programmes in Arts in Nigerian Universities” p. 2

candidate satisfies other matriculation requirements of the university. For full-time PhDs, the duration is expected to be a minimum of four semesters and a maximum of ten semesters. For part-time PhDs, the duration is expected to be a minimum of six semesters and a maximum of fourteen semesters. These durations are fixed by the NUC with “allowance for minor individual university variation[s]”⁸. Staffing requirements for postgraduate programmes generally in the arts requires that:

Teachers of postgraduate courses should normally be holders of a Ph.D. with at least one year post-doctoral experience in a university or research institute. In special circumstances, other categories of teachers may be approved by the Board of the School on the recommendations of the Faculty Postgraduate Committee. All such lecturers must not be registered postgraduate students.⁹

For PhD supervision, apart from holding a PhD degree, a supervisor must be of a rank of, at least, Senior Lecturer and they must not be registered postgraduate students. Also, a PhD supervisory committee is expected to comprise two supervisors for each PhD student, where one of the supervisors will serve as the main supervisor. Among other things, a supervisor is expected to “guide a student in his studies and keep a record of the candidate’s progress and submit an annual progress report through the Dean to the Board of Postgraduate Studies.”¹⁰

As for the workload of a PhD programme, the minimum requirement is 18 credit units, where a unit of workload refers to “one hour lecture per week for 15 weeks (one semester): OR A 3-6 hour laboratory/studio/practical class per week for 15 weeks (one semester)”¹¹ Of these 18 credit units 9 credit units are assigned to the thesis while another 6 credit units are assigned to seminars. Also, no postgraduate course is expected to have less than 3 credit units. The minimum pass score for all postgraduate coursework is 50%. A candidate’s thesis or dissertation must be orally assessed by a panel of examiners which, in the case of a PhD candidate should, at least, comprise of: the Head of Department (Chief Examiner and Chair), the Supervisor, a Co-Supervisor, One member from a related Department within the Faculty who holds a Ph.D. degree and is not below the rank of a Senior Lecturer and a Representative of the School of PG Studies. The oral examination can also be organized “according to individual university characteristics”¹². These above mentioned are the general requirements as stated in the NUC Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards for postgraduate programmes in arts. For specific programmes there are other requirements which vary from one programme to the other.

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¹⁰ p. 3

¹¹ 3

¹² p 4

4.0. Postgraduate Supervision in Nigeria: Theory vs. Praxis

Gurnam et al (2013: 137) identify some features which they say make a good supervisor. These are that he/she should:

- be an expert in their area and provide expert knowledge and guidance in terms of research methodology and data analysis;
- be available and easily contactable via email, SMS and phone;
- provide prompt and constructive feedback to help students progress (time-on-task);
- be interested in students' work and place importance on students' work beyond personal interest;
- be punctual and have regular scheduled meetings and intellectual discussions;
- provide reasonable time lines and monitor students' progress to ensure completion of research project according to mutually agreed time frame;
- give students the space to make mistakes and grow as researchers and encourage students to become confident, independent learners;
- be friendly, supportive, encouraging, motivating and respect students as learning individuals so that they do not fear supervisors;
- be a professional and possess good communication skills; and,
- be flexible and encourage creativity.

While these features represent the essence of supervision from the perspective of the faculty, it is obvious that supervision does not exist in a vacuum. It also requires the input of the supervisee as well as the availability of an enabling environment. Some of the contending factors which negatively affect the quality of supervision within the Nigerian postgraduate system are obsolete infrastructure, low number of qualified supervisors, and high ratio of supervisor-supervisee means that supervisors are overstretched and are unable to properly guide their students. In addition are inaccessibility of up-to-date equipment and materials; unavailability of research grants which then limits the possibilities of innovative researches; lack of motivation especially in view of poor remuneration for lecturers; increase in the level of brain drain which means the best hands consistently look to relocate from the country; poor laboratory facilities; and, limited access to field trips and academic conferences. Following is an overview of some of the general issues common in postgraduate studies in Nigeria. These are mostly personal experiences from one of the first generation universities, Obafemi Awolowo University.

The quality – whether academic or otherwise – of supervisors has serious implications on the success of supervision. This is because supervision requires immense time investments, regular feedback, and other forms of professional commitment to the wellbeing of postgraduate candidates. Consequently, supervisors are expected to be approachable and supportive of their students. They are also considered to be in position of trust, and are expected to guide their candidates in their

research in terms of quality of work and meeting expectations of research guidelines (Mutula, 2009). However, manpower challenge with staffing has become an inhibiting factor to proper supervision. More often than not, supervisors are saddled with a lot of academic and administrative responsibilities while also having to manage their activities with their postgraduate students. In fact, in most public Nigerian universities, the number of students is usually too large for the available number of lecturers. The same lecturers also manage the workload both at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. This reality significantly diminishes their involvement with and insistence on the quality of their supervisees' works. It also affects the availability of academic staff for other postgraduate administrative responsibilities such as the panels and boards constituted for postgraduate affairs. While Brabazon (2009) recommends the provision of institutional support for candidates and their supervision in order to properly harness the proceeds of researches especially through the possibilities of joint supervision, the challenge of adequacy of staffing makes the proposition a difficult one to achieve in Nigeria. This is because, consistently, most departments in Nigeria universities are grossly understaffed especially in contrast to the population of students' intake. Another challenge is the academic quality of the supervisors. Many supervisors are themselves struggling to build visible profiles while new PhDs are also drafted into supervision immediately. Many more of such supervisors patronise predatory journals and are not productive enough to direct or motivate their candidates. There are also situations where supervisors force their students to produce manuscripts which might be published with the supervisor enjoying the status of first author in exchange for fast-tracked completion of the programme.

The quality of supervisees is also a huge impediment in supervision activity. More and more, the quality of applicants to postgraduate studies is becoming poorer. This may be related to the urge by many job-seeking individuals to go for higher education since they are unable to be employed and productively engaged. Consequently, there are many postgraduate candidates who are in PG programmes as a last resort and really do not envisage a future with their certifications. In addition, there are students who have very poor academic backgrounds and are unable to conduct independent researches. They therefore become 'liabilities' who have to be spoon-fed by the supervisors, especially as any major delay in the completion of the programme is blamed on the supervisor. What is also often lost in the supervision cycle is that the research undertaken often lays the foundation of the academic career of the supervisee. Therefore, there is the need for supervisees to knuckle down and develop themselves personally in order to meet expectations.

In addition to the poor academic capacity of supervisees is the reality of absent students (Kimani, 2014). Some students are on their programmes on part-time basis while some others, as said before, have only enrolled because they have been unable

to gain employment. Some of such candidates thus disrupt their programmes either in search of gainful employment or because of lack of adequate interest to pursue the research part of the programme. While before now it had been difficult to track such students and to report or evaluate their progress (or lack of it), the integration of ICT in students' registration which is done on a semester basis in some institutions provides adequate information on the status of supervisees and functions as a supervision tracking device since it indicates when a candidate has failed to officially register. However, more sophisticated tools may be developed to record, in terms of contact dates and consultations, the activities of supervision. This may result in less abandonment of programmes.

Unsuitable supervision allocation and guidelines also constitute serious challenges for proper postgraduate supervision. In many Nigerian universities, candidates are allocated to supervisors. This is usually because of the need to ensure that all qualified academics have students to supervise and to avoid having some staff extremely overworked. However, the allocation of candidates discountenances the necessity of compatibility between the supervisor and supervisee. Fractured or incompatible relationships often mean that supervision is not thorough. In many cases, candidates are often frustrated to the extent that they terminate their studentships and simply move ahead. In some other cases, allocation is done without physical contacts and pre-knowledge of the student's academic inclination. This sometimes leads to either the supervisor being unable to meaningfully contribute to the candidate's research if the research is not in their area of strength, or the candidate feeling estranged with the supervisor.

There is also the challenge of inefficient check system to keep abreast of the realities of supervisor-supervisee relations. While the NUC clearly states that supervisors are required to regularly submit progress reports through the Dean to the Board of Postgraduate Studies on the work of their supervisees, the system in place does not ensure the enforcement of such measures. More often than not, the outcome of this is a situation whereby the student is left entirely at the mercy of the supervisor. In addition are bureaucratic bottlenecks created as a result of unnecessary administrative paper work. This has been a longstanding issue in many Nigerian universities, especially in the postgraduate programmes of Obafemi Awolowo University. As at the year 2017, the average regular postgraduate programme which is completed without any delays or hassles will involve the processing of at least five different administrative forms, most of which will be considered during sittings that are carried out physically by panel of academics, a good number whom do not know anything about the field of study under review. There are therefore situations where recommendations which do not fit the focus of a candidate's research are proffered for

inclusion in a study. In addition, the paper work delays the completion of a postgraduate programme while also adding to the expenses incurred by the candidate.

Professionalism and professional boundary between supervisor and supervisee is also critical. There are a number of unwholesome and unprofessional practices which unfortunately have become rife in certain contexts. There is the belief among some supervisors that since the PhD is a terminal degree, it is necessary to milk candidates before they successfully complete their programmes. For the candidates, the pressure of finishing their programmes in good time as well as the consideration of the resources which have been devoted to the programme make them susceptible to the unprofessional demands made by the supervisors. Some of such unprofessional conducts range from material benefits from the students, usually solicited, as well as sexual relationships. It therefore becomes necessary to draw the boundaries between personal and academic responsibilities.

Generational gap and infrastructural challenge further constitute a challenge to proper supervision. Generational gap rears its head in the choice of research topic or areas. Many young supervisees are interested in contemporary issues like Hip-Hop, musical analysis, sexuality studies or the application of statistical packages in their analyses. However, for many older supervisors, such topics are 'unserious' and do not contribute significantly to existing studies. Many older supervisors prefer 'traditional' topics, which for young supervisees are too conservative. In terms of infrastructural challenges, many supervisors do not utilise new technology in their supervision activities. There is the need for more flexibility, for instance, with e-supervision as against the insistence by some supervisors that their candidates must always be physically present while their reports must be in hard copy too. Some suggested applications are Bit.ai, Microsoft 365, Google Docs, Confluence, Dropbox Paper, Quip, etc. as well as Track changes on Microsoft Word which are useful for collaborative editing of research reports and other necessary documents.

Funding has been a recurring impediment to supervision in many Nigerian universities. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in Nigeria has consistently drawn attention to the implications of the underfunding of Nigerian tertiary education system. One of the government's interventions has been through the TETFund (Tertiary Education Trust Fund). While this has helped in providing some infrastructural needs, there is still a long way to go. Unlike their counterparts in several other institutions on the continent, Nigerian postgraduate students hardly have access to research funding while most of their supervisors also self-fund their researches. The implication is that, if the supervisor has to contribute to funding the research, they can also influence the results as well as lay claim to the publications

that emanate from such studies. Funding also affects access to up-to-date texts and materials and might lead to repetitive or circular researches.

The insistence on the use of theories in all researches regardless of whether such add academic value to what is being done is another noteworthy challenge. What makes this even more difficult is the realisation that many, if not all, of these theories are foreign postulations in which many candidates are not grounded¹³. The realisation draws attention to the deficit in home-grown theories which would have had more and direct relevance to the realities of the candidates.

5.0. Recommendations

As explained earlier, the reality of postgraduate supervision in Nigerian universities is one which suggests that the fate of graduate students rests largely in the hands of the supervisor. This is different from what can be seen in the benchmark provided by the supervisory body overseeing the running of university programmes in Nigeria. The NUC's benchmark has a structure designed for simplicity as already mentioned. Also, as stated earlier, the document only emerged more than sixty years after postgraduate programmes began in the country. It is also important to note that the benchmark often made provision for universities to run their postgraduate programmes as they deem fit in some areas such as course duration where the documents clearly gives "allowance for minor individual university variation[s]" and conduct of oral examination where it is stated that institutions can run oral examinations can be conducted "according to individual university characteristics". There is therefore the need to ensure compliance with the NUC's benchmark for supervision. It is also necessary to encourage supervisors to see supervision as a positive contribution to the academic lives of their supervisees.

There is the need for increased funding for postgraduate studies. This can come in different ramifications. For one, there should be adequate remuneration and allowances for academics as this will help to motivate them in the discharge of their responsibilities. Adequate funding should also be focused on the provision and integration of technological tools in postgraduate education. These will be useful to both the supervisors and their candidates as it will simplify the process of supervision.

To forestall situations where supervisor-supervisee relations break down, it is necessary to allow candidates to select their supervisors while there might be a restriction on the total number that an academic can supervise at any given time. In addition, joint supervision may be further encouraged. Through this, supervisors will have more time to engage with their supervisors while the supervisees will also be able to make the most of the access to their supervisors. Joint supervision, while

¹³ <https://educeleb.com/the-academic-nonsense-called-theoretical-framework-in-nigerian-universities/>

having its shortcomings, holds a lot of promise within the Nigerian postgraduate system, especially when a senior academic is paired with a junior one.

Teacher education (through constant training and re-training) and mentoring are positive contributors to the quality of supervision. Therefore, to improve supervision, there is the need to integrate the organisation of orientation seminars regularly into the Postgraduate calendar of Nigerian universities. Through these avenues, experienced academics have the opportunity of guiding younger or less experienced one on how to enhance their capacity for supervision. Such platforms may also avail access to the Dos and Don'ts of supervision as well as other necessary guidelines and expectations.

The huge population of people going for postgraduate education in Nigeria is almost unsustainable especially when one considers the equally high rate of unemployment. There is the need to therefore reduce the public fetishization of university and postgraduate education. The belief that postgraduate education eases the possibility of being employed has led to more applicants embarking on postgraduate programmes, thus flooding the institutions. Unfortunately, most institutions are ill-prepared for this while many graduates of postgraduate programmes eventually get disillusioned.

There is also the need to cultivate systemic maturity. Many Nigerian universities nowadays want to start their postgraduate programmes immediately they graduate the first set of Bachelors students and usually without having on ground the human and material resources to cater to the huge demands of postgraduate programmes. One can contrast this with, for instance, as identified earlier, the University of Lagos which was established in 1962 but which however started its postgraduate programme in 1981. The advantage of planned growth is that not only will the institution be mature enough in terms of infrastructure, its human resources would also have been developed enough to meet the demands of postgraduate education. This situation will better serve the candidates better while also ensuring that supervision and research meet both national and global expectations.

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