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LIVING ON THE CREDIT LINE

REFORM AND ADAPTATION IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES, 1960−1992

Abdalla Uba Adamu

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PREFACE

This book analyses the *mechanism* of the adaptation process, as well as the *management* of reform in Nigerian university curriculum from 1960 to 1992. In particular, it looks at how Nigerian universities adopted the American university undergraduate curricular structure, and explores the parameters needed for effective management of such institutional transfer in developing countries.

The Nigerian educational system has always been in search for new inspirations and directions since the independence from Britain in 1960. Over the two decades following independence, a series of criticisms had been mounted about the inappropriateness of the British system of education to Nigerian social and economic environment. Arguments included lack of correlation between school curricula and social reality of pupils; and the inadequacy of the universities in preparing graduates for effective employment in an increasingly diversified economy.

Political events which included many changes of government brought newer strategies of making Nigerian education more accountable to the future of the Nigerian child. But of great significance was the growing disenchantment with not only British oriented education, but also British political stance over a variety of issues including the future of the Commonwealth. This disenchantment, coupled with economic recession which has succeeded in creating a large pool of unemployed graduates led to Nigerian educational policy planners to seek out new influences on the directions of Nigerian education. The United States of America, with its increasingly multicultural population and more diverse educational strategies aimed explicitly at tackling social problems, particularly unemployment, was increasingly seen as a possible model for a liberal education from the secondary school all the way to the university in Nigeria. In 1969, the bases for trans−national transfer of educational strategies from the U.S. and Nigeria were established at a National Curriculum conference that led to the eventual emergence of a National Policy on Education in 1977.

The National Policy on Education provided for a total reconstitution of Nigerian education, and a virtual complete departure from its British roots. The American comprehensive educational framework was adopted in a 6−3−3−4 formation which saw six years of primary schools, two stage comprehensive secondary schooling divided into a three year junior secondary school and a senior secondary school, and a four year university. The new secondary schools were to provide *general education*, marketable vocational skills as well as advanced academic electives for those students who wish to continue their education beyond the high school.

A strong factor in this process were the efforts of American aid agencies in reshaping Nigerian education. The Rockefeller Foundation, Carnegie Corporation, and the Ford Foundation, in particular, have contributed immensely in providing context situations through which Nigerian education was slowly steered away from its British antecedent structure to a more cosmopolitan, American model. The Carnegie Corporation, in particular, provided bases for redefining the directions of Nigerian university curricula in 1959 through its initiation and sponsorship of the Nigerian *Commission on Post−School Certificate and Higher Education in Nigeria* under the Chairmanship of Lord Ashby of Brandon. The Report of the Commission formed the core structure of Nigerian higher education after independence.

Further, through the provision of training facilities for Nigerian academics in the Unites States universities, as well as sponsorship of institutional programs in Nigerian universities, the American aid agencies, coupled with generous Nigerian government scholarship provisions that saw a relative preference for studying in the United States than the United Kingdom among the scholarship recipients, enabled a steady flow of ideas from the U.S. to Nigerian universities and subsequently succeeded in creating a large pool of relatively influential academics who started to challenge the dogma of British model of university education in Nigeria in early 1970s; and eventually introduced small scale innovations in their individual departments in curricular structure and organization, notably through the introduction of *general studies*, *course credit system*, and the *grade point average* system of curricular measurement.

By the end of the decade to 1980 — when the American aid agencies seemed to have withdrawn their interest in Nigerian education — the Nigerian university curricula had assumed a mosaic pattern in which it combined elements of both British and American organizational structures. Indeed, the National Policy on Education prescribed the adoption of "a *credit system* which is transferable among universities and the institutions of higher learning on a reciprocal basis."

Further, the Policy required Nigerian universities to teach common core courses, including a specific course on *General Studies* that emphasize general education with particular attention paid to Nigerian peoples, economy and culture, before students can begin to chose courses leading to their degree specialisations. The *general studies* — multi−disciplinary and compulsory courses — were to be offered in the first two years of the newly created four year degree curriculum to provide breadth to the Nigerian undergraduate educational experience. The directives of the National Policy were implemented in stages. The six year primary school stages started with the University Primary Education scheme on September 6, 1976; the junior secondary school stage in September 1982, and the senior secondary school in September 1985. The university stage started in October 1988.

Thus by mid 1970s and 1980s many Nigerian universities had developed a distinctly American curricular organizational structures in various departments. In 1988 the National Universities Commission (NUC) directed that *all* departments in all universities in the country should adopt the *credit unit system* of curricular structure. This was not just a reaffirmation of the original National Policy on Education directives. It was based on the observation that the universities themselves seemed to favor American curricular organizations since there was no single university that was not using the course credit system in one form or another. The NUC directive in 1988 provided a uniformity to the system, encoded with a newly created *Minimum Academic Standards for Nigerian University Education* (MACS).

This book traces the circumstances that led to the introduction of the new structures in university curricula from a historical perspective. It also analyses how the reform is currently being implemented in the Nigerian universities. It begins by tracing the history of higher education in Nigeria, and specifically draws attention to the American influences in the development of Nigerian universities. The work of American aid agencies, particularly Carnegie Corporation, Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation were analyzed in relation to the development of American ideas in Nigerian universities.

To provide an effective analytical framework around which comparative judgments can be made, the book also provides a very brief history of the development and emergence of the American university curriculum, paying attention to its *select* features that make it amenable to adoption in other countries, particularly the general education curriculum, and the credit system. The main theme explored in the book therefore is the issue of globalization through institutional transfer.

The idea of writing this book came to me while I was the Sub−Dean, Faculty of Education Bayero University Kano, Nigeria in 1989. At that time the university had started to implement the new harmonized structure for Nigerian university curricula created by the National Universities Commission. The new curricular reforms

provided a very stimulating opportunity to observe the internal mechanism of *structural substitution* — where a new structure was borrowed from another system to replace what was an alien system to begin with. What further increased the analytical appeal of the situation was the lack of base experience by many Nigerian faculty in implementing an educational system they are not entirely familiar with, as well as lack of immediate supportive mechanism to effectively sustain the new structures.

During the first two years of the reform, and in my role as a primary participant observer, I started to gather relevant episodes of our experiences that illustrate our attempt to adjust to the new system. These episodes — collected from departmental, faculty and senate minutes of meetings, seminar records, a structured questionnaire distributed to academic faculty in Bayero University in 1990 — provided the raw material for an analytical framework for discussing the mechanism of the change process in Nigerian higher education.

However, a vital element that was missing was lack of primary experience concerning how the American educational system was structured and operated. While the curricular reforms we were implementing in Nigerian universities at the time may not exactly duplicate the American educational structure, they are nevertheless derived from it and are based on American educational concepts. It was at this stage that the United States Information Agency (USIA) through the Council for the International Exchange of Scholars (CIES) came in and offered me a Fulbright African Senior Research Scholar (ASRS) award in June 1991. The award was tenable for an academic session (1991/92) at the Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley (now Center for Study of Society and Education).

My tenure as a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at Berkeley provided me with the perfect opportunity to study the elements of U.S. educational structure ported to Nigerian universities, and in the process, provided me with the necessary framework I needed to understand the directions of the Nigerian university curricular reforms. This book is the outcome. I hope it will contribute to the sustaining debates about the institutional transfer of ideas and the reform process in other third world university systems.

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CHAPTER 1

CONVERGING TO DIVERGENCE: THE REFORM PROCESS IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

Over the last four decades, third world universities have come increasingly under western influence and impact. Nowhere is this particularly so than in Africa where virtually all sub−Saharan African educational systems were derivative of a specific European tradition. After independence of these countries beginning in the late 1950s, most retained the European metropolitan traditions in their educational structure, although reforming the contents to reflect a more explicit drive to using education as a central instrument of social transformation and national development. In many ways, retaining the metropolitan educational framework in the curricula structures of these countries seemed to be an attractive administrative strategy. This was because the labor market and particularly the civil service of these countries was based on the metropolitan models of their former colonial leaders. Changing the education system would require significant system−wide changes in the way the labor market assesses and absorbs the products of these educational systems. In an era of internationalization, it is doubtful whether that would yield a too significantly favorable result.

However, despite the independence, and especially in Anglophone sub−Saharan African countries, under the still lingering influence of British educational inheritance, education as a whole remained an elitist fare dedicated to the production of the crop of “gentlemen” to run the civil service. Curricular choices were narrowed, and diversity restricted. And for quite a while well over a decade after independence — the elitist orientations of university education, especially in Nigeria, lived up to the expectations of its founders. The

products of the system became its leaders and collectively steered the destiny of the emergent nation.

Independence, however, opened up these countries to other influences. The region rapidly became a cold war front with opposing ideologies clamoring for regional power and influence. The United States came out more forcefully in this new assault, easily dislodging the remnant British educational influence in many countries, and limiting Soviet influence in others. Nigeria, with the largest population and wealthiest economy bolstered by oil resources became a very important regional stranglehold. Nigerians themselves started questioning the long−term relevance of their British educational inheritance, even before the British left in 1960. The elitist nature of the educational system was especially challenged. It was observed that education from primary schools all the way to the university has not addressed the problems of Nigerian *economic* development. Access to schooling was limited, the function of the existing curricula in a rapidly developing economy questionable.

Certainly, Nigeria was not the only country in the sub−Saharan African region to question its British educational legacy and introduce system−wide reforms in its university educational structure, although such challenge in other countries has been rather slow, occurring well after the geopolitical superpower games of the decade of the 1980s. For instance, the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, started its reforms particularly in management effectiveness in 1990 — a process which led to the emergence of a course unit system for its undergraduate curriculum. Other African countries seriously contemplating the credit system to replace the former colonial educational structure in higher education included Cameroon, Ghana, Mozambique, Niger Republic, Uganda and Senegal (Saint, 1992).

Similarly, the national elections in Zambia in 1991 led to a series of university reforms, most of which radically departed from tradition such as the refusal of the new President of the country to serve as the university's chancellor; instead nominating a prominent citizen for the post. The University of Botswana also established a review committee in 1990 which proposed a series of changes in key areas such as re−structuring of administrative processes and academic reform. In the same way, the University of Dakar, the Eduardo Mondlane University, Mozambique, the National University of Benin all reported beginning reforms in their administrative and academic structures (Donors to African Education, *Working Group on Higher Education*. Notes of Meeting, Maputo, Mozambique November 2−4, 1992. Washington, DC., AFTED, World Bank, December 1992).

Earlier on in Nigeria, the disenchantment with the British educational structures led to a scramble for alternative educational structures. The United States government aid policies, together with major US. philanthropic foundations proved catalytic in the quest for what seemed to be such an alternative framework for Nigerian education. This was realized through well developed programs of institution building and linkages between Nigerian universities and various US. institutions. But perhaps the most significant US. impact was the training Nigerians received from the US. as compared to the United Kingdom.

What made the US. institutions quite attractive to the Nigerian students at the time (early 1950s to mid 1970s — the formative period of Nigerian university development) were the less restrictive admission procedures of US. institutions, coupled with a far more diverse curricular offering. Nigerian students were used to strict and centralized restricted access to university education with limited curricular choices characteristic of both the Nigerian and British educational systems. As a result, more Nigerian students tended to study in the US. than in Britain. For instance, in 1961 there were only 552 Nigerian students in the United States, while there were 1,124 in the United Kingdom. By 1964 the US. share had gone up to 2,945 while the number of Nigerian students in UK. was only 1,382 in the same year (UNESCO, 1966).

Eventually those who received early training in the US. either by personal sponsorship or through aid agency process especially immediately after the Second World War returned to Nigeria in the early 1950s and 1960s. These *returnees* soon occupied positions of power and authority and created context situations around which

the continued relevance of the British educational legacy in Nigeria that neither emphasized science, technology or agriculture, nor was it developmentally oriented, was continuously challenged.

The impact of such returnees, both explicit and implicit had been nothing less than spectacular in many developing countries, and perhaps no region in the world vividly illustrates the impact of these American returnees on the adoption of American educational traditions than South−East Asia. For instance, in Thailand, the transformation of the educational system at all levels was initiated by American trained returnees from Minnesota, Oregon, and SUNY−Buffalo (Fry 1984). And although the Japanese educational system was a quilted mosaic of influences from Germany, France, and Britain, nevertheless the American influence was more sustaining (see Nakayama, 1989). The Philippines, a former American colony, has retained its definite American educational heritage (Gonzales, 1985). Even Malaysia, a showcase of British educational tradition in the South−East Asian sea of reform, had at one stage contemplated the *relevance* of American higher education to the country (Ahmat, 1985). And dramatically, in Indonesia a group of government officials and policy makers became dubbed *The Berkeley Mafia* on account of the fact that in 1968 virtually the entire cabinet of the Indonesian government was dominated by American trained individuals, most of them alumni of University of California, Berkeley (Ransom 1970).

In Nigeria, Coleman (1958) had also argued that Nigerians trained in the US. during the second world war have been leading figures in postwar nationalism. And upon their return to Nigeria, they

became crusaders for American practical (“horizontal”) education, as contrasted to the British literary (“vertical”) tradition. Their agitation in behalf of American education...was one of the principal reasons for the post war migration of hundreds of Nigerians to America. Their propagation of the American educational ideal and their positive nationalism contributed to the antipathy of both British and British educated Nigerians toward American education and American−educated Nigerians (Coleman 1958 p.243).

The influence of the Nigerian returnees, while quite explicit in political affairs (the first President of Nigeria, Dr. Nmandi Azikwe was an alumni of Lincoln University) was rather subtle in educational matters, but nonetheless, effective. The 1969 National Curriculum Conference initiated by a group of highly influential Nigerians trained in the US. and co−sponsored among others, by the Ford Foundation, set the tone of Nigeria’s educational policies for the next three decades and in calling for a restructuring of the Nigerian educational system, reflected the distinct American influence of its conveners and sponsors. Mass education and education for self−reliance and development were its distinct themes. Definite departures from the British educational inheritance included proposals for a two tier secondary schooling divided into a three year Junior High School, and a three year Senior High School, followed by the abolishing of the two year intermediary Higher School Certificate/General Certificate “A” Level, and a direct transition to a restructured four year university education.

The National Policy on Education that was derived from this Conference was even more explicit about its orientation with regards to university education. It prescribed the adoption of a *credit unit* system of structuring university curricula for Nigerian universities and *general education* for the first two years. At that stage (1977) these were recommendations, although gradually some universities started to implement these as internal policy decisions. Further, some universities had already started experimenting with these concepts in the 1960s, even before the National Policy on Education made it a recommended practice.

A common argument for this departure, which helped to understand the readiness to accept the change, was that the British established the educational systems in Nigeria to enable them train enough Nigerians to help

them administer the country. Now that the British are gone, these legacies must be tuned to the genuine development of the country. Thus the American aid agencies, while not recommending a specific educational pattern to be followed, created the context situations around which US. educational frameworks were seen as more viable to development than sustaining the British legacy. This political move also ensured Nigerian sensitivity to US. economic and political policies and philosophies.

In this way, the American aid agencies also helped create a comprehensive Senior High School in Aiyetoro, Western region based completely on American high school structure, as well as a university in the Eastern Region (the University of Nigeria, Nsukka), modeled on the Michigan State University. A strong teacher education project in Northern Nigeria sponsored by the USAID and the Ford Foundation coordinated by Ohio State University and University of Wisconsin ensured a federal coverage of American educational activities in the entire country. Consequently by the end of the first decade of Nigerian independence (1960), the country was receptive enough to reform its entire educational structure from elite to mass education.

Parameters of Reform and Nigerian Universities

Thus in the case of Nigeria outside impetus for reforms in the universities came because of political beliefs that the university education should be made more relevant to contemporary social needs — a vision that will fit university graduates for jobs in a developing society. It is this linkage between relevance, job markets and development that serves as a direct antecedent to the reform of the university curricula in Nigerian universities.

The mixture of returnees and American educational aid efforts, which must be seen as outside intervention agents, further sensitized the Nigerian universities and made them amenable to structural changes in their curricula, especially from 1965−1980. General education made the first appearance at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1964 and spread slowly to other first generation universities, particularly Lagos and Ife where it became a focus for providing *breadth* to the undergraduate degree in African studies. A stringent effort was made to ensure that such *breadth* requirements were not merely copies of general education curricula at Harvard, Columbia, Michigan or wherever. The University of Lagos, for instance, developed a very comprehensive general education program with exclusive focus on African studies. This provided a stimulus for similar development of such programs in other Nigerian universities.

In some universities, faculties organized themselves into *Schools*, departing from the traditional *faculty* structure. Yet other universities converted their single sessional year of three terms to a two term *semester* system each of 15 weeks duration.

But perhaps the most striking transformation of the university curricular structure was in the introduction of the *course* unit system of instruction evaluated in terms of credits with its associated accessories (especially grade point, cumulative grade point, and grade point average). Individual units of various universities started experimenting with this new structure in the mid 1960s, requiring, as usual, only their academic senate to approve them. The practice soon spread to other universities, and a mosaic pattern of adoption and usage of the course unit system practice emerged. At the same time, it became quite common to observe both the British and American academic curricular structural traditions in many Nigerian universities for about two decades after independence from Britain; for while the American model had its attractions, the British model offered a more acceptable degree of certitude through familiarity, especially when it comes to looking for

jobs in a British style labor market economy. Students also came to be subjected to the different traditions in their studies, especially in faculties that operated different structures in their programs and yet required a student to offer programs in both.

The course *contents* of most of the programs were enriched to reflect the reforms. Further, the programs were fragmented to provide diversity of choices especially under the course unit system. All these reforms were possible because although Nigeria had a National Universities Commission (modeled on the British Universities Grants Commission), this Commission existed mainly for *funding* purposes, at least in the 1960s through to early 1980s. Thus since the university programs were not under central control of the Commission, the changes were not very noticeable, and perhaps not surprisingly, their management and outcomes little studied. Further, they do not seem to have produced any adverse effects among students. If anything, the novel nature of the reforms make them a source of competition among the faculties to see which would attract the brightest students.

Thus surprisingly, some of the traditional reasons ascribed to resistance to change in higher education do not seem to have applied themselves in the case of the transformation of the Nigerian university curricular structure. For instance, Philip Altbach has consistently drawn attention to the conservative nature of universities that made them resistant to radical changes (Altbach 1985, 1991). Yet such conservatism merely makes the process of change and reform in universities complicated, rather than impossible. For instance, although each stage of the Nigerian university curricular change process — general studies, semester system, course unit system — had to go through the Departmental Board, Faculty Board, University Academic Development Committee, and finally the Senate before any department can adopt it, nevertheless this was a process freely, and often eagerly endorsed by the faculty. This seemed to have discounted a British view that

New schemes rarely arise from the careful deliberation of committees and is often than one might expect from convincing demonstration of a systematically researched need. An innovation is more typically triggered off by a chance meeting..or by the arrival of a visitor interested in modular courses (“The Drift of Change: An Interim Report of the Group for Research and Innovation in Higher Education” in *The Times Higher Education Supplement* February 2, 1975 p. 111).

Thus although there was no *research and development* to inform in the process of adopting the new structures (such as suggested by Havelock and Huberman, 1977) there was a careful assessment of the consequences of such adoption by the units through the bureaucratic safeguards installed in universities. Further, Cerych (1984) has pointed out that implementation of a new higher education policy, especially if the policy is equated with reform, involves change, and therefore several questions with a certain prescriptive connotation automatically arise: Can the change only be gradual? At what level of organization does change occur most easily, what are the conditions under which policies implying radical departures from existing patterns have a chance of being carried through successfully? In what areas of higher education (admission, curriculum, teaching methods, internal structures, management) is change most difficult? (Cerych 1984 p. 24).

Nevertheless, an analysis of changes in European higher education provided Cerych (1982 p. 7) with three perspectives of policy change in higher education. These were depth, breadth and level of change.

Depth of change indicates the degree to which a particular new policy goal implies a departure from existing values and rules of higher education. In other words, how congruent — or incongruent — is this goal with traditional patterns? *The breadth of change* refers to the number of areas in which a given policy is expected to introduce more or less profound modifications. Narrow breadth means one or a very limited number of

areas to be directly affected by the new policy (possibly implying a change of great depth), whereas great depth means change in several or many areas. *The level of change* indicates the target of the reform: the system as a whole, a particular category of higher education institutions (a sector or segment of the system), a single individual institution or even the sub−unit of an institution.

Any policy reform involves a combination of the three dimensions defined here, and all kinds of combinations occur in practice. However, one key to understanding the general willingness of Nigerian universities to change was that the change itself does not involve too much departure from their established practices — situations also creating barriers to change (Prange, Jowett and Fogel 1982). For the most part, and in the early stages, the changes in Nigerian university curricular structure involved merely adding suffixes to courses, breaking down existing courses to provide more choices to students, but most significantly, adopting a new evaluative mechanism to reflect a grade point average system of educational measurement.

University units that do not wish to encourage such structural reforms in their programs merely refrained from allowing such development in their units (e.g. Bayero University, Kano, established 1976). In other, older and more traditional universities, such as University of Ibadan (established 1948), there was spirited resistance to prevent any changes in the existing structure of the curricula, especially in trenchantly traditional faculties of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine. In yet other newer universities (e.g. the University of Port Harcourt, established 1977) the hostility to the *older*, British systems was quite open and the move to newer decidedly American structure, totally encouraged.

The willingness of the individual academic units to sustain the change and its side−effects was significant in getting them the permission of their Senates to go ahead with the change. The universities were happy to allow any experimentation so long as it does not incur extra expense from the central votes. And in the early stages of the reforms, the individual departments that wanted to change were allowed to bear the financial costs from their own departmental votes.

But while many Nigerian universities (according to NUC statistics, as much as 90%) were using the American framework in the structure and organization of their curricula, especially at the undergraduate level, they *all* retained a vital feature in the conduct of their examination: the *external examiner* system. This was brought about by overriding considerations to *standards*. The Nigerian educational system has come to perceive standards in the form of excellent examination results, the conduct of which is highly centralized. Any deviation from the solemnity of the learning process, the climax of which is the examination is seen as *cheapening* of knowledge. It was assumed that dispensing of the external examiner tradition, as in the United States, would seriously erode the quality of Nigerian education.

This explained why the individual units and departments that adopted the American framework retained the entire external examiner system — a process which a bewildered American expatriate at Obafemi Awolowo University (University of Ife) termed *mixing of traditions* (Hector 1983). The external examiner system was retained to provide a measure of accountability and ensure quality control in the system through the maintenance of the much cherished *gold standard* of knowledge as coined by Lord Ashby of Brandon, an extremely influential commentator on Nigerian education. Eventually however, some universities (e.g. the University of Lagos) came to criticize the external examiner process as being inhibitory to the principle of diversity, choice and academic freedom characteristic of the course unit system. Further, the external examiner system was increasing perceived as an instrument of state control over educational affairs in an increasingly democratized educational climate.

The reforms continued uninterrupted from about 1965 to 1985 as *internal* processes; and not imposed on the universities by the central National Universities Commission. And all along, the NUC has not attempted to participate in this individualistic development of Nigerian universities. Competition, variety and diversity

became the key concepts that characterize Nigerian university education in this era. Programs in Medicine, Engineering, and Agriculture all became fine−tuned to the immediate communities of the universities. The agricultural program at the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria for instance developed what Prange, Jowett and Fogel (1982 p.160) refer as “formidable work on the development of irrigated and dry crops, for both cash and food. In this regard, it has been a centre of truly international repute.” The University of Maiduguri, Usman Danfodiyo University (University of Sokoto) and the University of Jos also developed medical programs diversified to reflect their existing community health care system. The Usmanu Danfodiyo University stepped up research in solar energy by establishing a Center for Solar Research with a main focus on harnessing and providing an alternative power source.

However, this relative freedom, which acted as a catalyst for reform and diversification was called to question in 1985 when the then Federal Military Government released the *Education (National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions)* Decree No 16. The Decree provided for the National Universities Commission, hitherto mainly a financial co−ordinator between the universities and the government, to “lay down minimum standards for all universities and other institutions of higher learning in the Federation” The decree also vested the NUC with the power to accredit the degree programs (especially undergraduate) of all the universities.

One of the first steps taken towards the harmonization of Nigerian university undergraduate education suggested by this decree was the establishment in January 1987 by the NUC of a series of subject panels to determine the academic contents of all programs in Nigerian universities. These panels created what, in their estimation, should consist of a minimum academic subject matter coverage in thirteen disciplines for all Nigerian universities and submitted their reports to the NUC at various times in 1987.

The submissions of the panels were sent to the universities by the NUC for comments, after which the final versions of what later came to be known as *Minimum Academic Standards* (MACS) guidelines were finally produced by the NUC and became operative in all Nigerian universities in 1989.

However, what also emerged from the survey of Nigerian university curricula by the NUC panels was the observation that Nigerian universities seemed to be evolving gradually towards the American educational framework in their adoption of the similar evaluative mechanisms particularly the course unit system, although there were still many faculties and units operating the inherited British academic structures. Indeed in some universities (e.g. Bayero University Kano), the modular approach to the course unit system favored in Britain in the early 1970s seemed to have found its way in academic organization of various faculties.

The National Universities Commission felt that such differences in interpretation of common structural elements to the same system needed to be harmonized and given a common national approach. To this end, another independent panel was set up in June 1988 by the NUC to create a common national framework around which structural elements of the Nigerian university curricula could have the same currency in all the universities. This was in addition to the specifications of the MACS guidelines.

And since the universities themselves clearly preferred an American style curricular structure, the panel simply recommended a system−wide adoption of this style of curricular organization in all Nigerian universities with effect from 1989, blending the terms and providing guidelines on the measurement of learning under the new system. What emerged was a new harmonized curricula for all Nigerian universities that not only defined the minimum academic standards in the universities accepted to the government, but also provided the curricula with a new delivery and evaluative structure. It is of course significant that the panel did not attempt to determine the conditions under which the individual university units operated what came to be known as the *course credit system* before making a system−wide recommendation for its adoption in all Nigerian universities.

This actually represented the first stage of the mandate given to the NUC by Decree No 16 of 1985. The second stage consisted of accrediting the programs newly created by the NUC in all Nigerian universities starting from March 1990. The accreditation was mainly to ensure that the universities comply with the Minimum Academic Standards specifications produced by the NUC.

It is this system−wide policy decision by the National Universities Commission on Nigerian universities that forms the focus of this book. For while the individual faculties readily managed the reforms they initiated, all sorts of alternative perceptions to the reform process become possible when such reforms are perceived as being imposed by a central authority. Resourcing and expertise, for instance, all converge on the *management* of such system reforms as vital issues to understanding the mechanisms of institutional transfer of educational structures and the parameters needed to make them more effective to their expected outcomes. A vital step in understanding the mechanism of this transfer involves an awareness of the nature of what was being transferred and circumstances under which it operates in its natural environment.

Further, by trying to evaluate the degree of achievement of policy objectives and to explain the frequent gaps between original aims and outcomes, implementation analysis has a twofold function: first, to provide information which throws light on factors and forces which favor or inhibit the success of particular reforms and policies. Secondly, by identifying factors of achievement and failure, implementation analysis offers an insight into the functioning of sub−systems that form the focus of its attention and the relationships between their various components and external forces. Thus implementation analysis, as attempted at in this book, aimed at providing tools for better understanding and more effective control of contemporary higher education systems in Nigeria.

The analytical approach taken in this book therefore focuses considerable attention on select features of US. education (both pre−university, and undergraduate) that were ported to Nigerian universities, paying particular attention to the sociological features that shaped the development of education in the United States. This is to provide a framework around which convergence and divergence to the base rationale of the course unit system can be determined in its Nigerian variant, and consequently the degree of adjustments needed to ensure a successful transplant.

To systematize and structure the collection of data, a series of research questions were generated. The structure of the book follows the directions of these questions. These are:

How did the reforms occurred? This concerns itself with the *antecedent conditions* that led to the reforms, the *patterns* of the reforms, and the *institutional mechanisms* for the initiation of the reforms.

How are the reforms *managed* in the universities? This deals with the *parameters* needed for the success of the reforms, the amount of *resourcing* required.

What are the *emergent* lessons of the reforms?

The answers to these questions may provide further insights into not only the mechanisms of the reform process in university education, especially in developing countries, but also the feasibility of institutional

transfer process.

CHAPTER 2

EDUCATION AND SOCIETY: NIGERIAN AND AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES

EDUCATION AND SOCIETY: NIGERIAN PERSPECTIVES

The British pattern of colonial rule in Nigeria succeeded in creating, for Britain, a community structured in its image as to reflect its own expectations of colonial administrative efficiency. The effects were to last well beyond Nigerian independence in 1960.

Early British merchant units in Nigeria, operating from the Nigerian coastal regions paved the way through their penetration of the hinterland for eventual establishment of economic and commercial system that dictated their pattern of operations. In 1879 Goldie Taubman, an officer of the British Royal Engineers seeing a vast marketing potential along the river Niger, united the motley crew of individual British merchants along its banks and formed the United Africa Company, subsequently reformed as National African Company by a royal charter of the British Government in 1882, thus making it an official representation of the British government in Nigeria (Orr 1911).

When the British colonial government took over the company's operations in 1899, the machinery already established was sustained. The end product was that Nigeria first acquired a British oriented commercial system, later supplemented by another progeny, the British civil service which commenced virtually with the declaration of the colonial rule in 1900 in what was then called the Lagos Colony. In 1906 the colony was amalgamated to the Southern Nigeria to create the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, with its capital at Lagos. The commercial system, more than the civil service succeeded in ruthlessly stifling any vestiges of entrepreneurial enterprise the natives might have had, supplanting it with its ethos. Subsequently, they had to conform to new market forces requiring newer marketing skills. This was to provide the first stimulus for a more modern system of commercial trade through systematic training.

The British administrative machinery established bureaucratic processes and procedures that mirror the metropolitan society. The Nigerian civil service therefore became modeled on the British civil service with all its attendant quirks. As Adu (1969) stated,

The service was essentially one which was constructed to prosecute the imperial policies in Africa, and its orientation and personnel were, therefore, suited to this purpose (Adu 1969 p. 17).

At the early stages of the colonial occupation this service was more concerned with revenue generation and collection and keeping law and order among the natives, a structure which gave evolutionary prominence to District Commissioners, the Police and Treasury Officials. Other facets of the embryonic service became modular add−ons as needs arose. For instance, the colonial civil service was not initially concerned with economic development as a forceful strategy of administration, a fact reflected by the virtual absence of any form of industrialization in African colonies even after it has become feasible to establish industries (after all, the labor would be extremely cheap). This was even though commercial activities provided a convenient vehicle for the British occupation of Nigeria.

Neither was the colonial civil service concerned initially with social services such as health and education on a mass scale. These were relegated to the various Christian missionary groups who took it upon themselves to provide what they consider humanitarian services. However, as the colonial machinery expanded, the government had no alternative but to make health and education its concerns through the creation of Medical and Education departments in the civil service.

The distinctly British character of the colonial civil service in Africa generally was consolidated by the recruitment of senior posts from Britain and other older Commonwealth countries of Australia, New Zealand and Canada up to the 1950s and 1960s, and “the legacy of this structural system is still with us and has had a disquieting effect on the service which will take a long time to straighten out” (Adu 1969 p. 21). Thus the outcome of this is that by independence in 1960, Nigeria had inherited a distinctly British civil service structure which had not been re−structured to take account of contemporary African perceptions of its purpose and directions despite the independence, and notwithstanding the numerous civil service reforms characteristic of subsequent Nigerian governments.

And although commercial activities had been thriving long before the coming of the British in most African communities, the colonial arrival provided its contemporary hue and character. In the Northern Nigerian Caliphate, subjugated by the British in 1903, the trans−Saharan trade between northern parts of the country and North African countries had been a centuries old affair, which often went beyond trade and often included racial intermixture between North African Arab traders with their Northern Nigerian trade partners (Staudinger 1886).

However, perhaps the most durable legacy of the colonial interregnum in Nigeria was the educational system. In what was a prelude to the rationalization of colonial implantation of education in developing countries, it was argued that

It is perhaps easier to be critical of policies in certain countries, rather than in others, and it is all too easy to blame current educational problems on to the policies of colonial powers. However, what is frequently overlooked and ignored in the criticisms is that many colonial administrators, in many different parts of the world, acted from the highest motives according to their own educational experience and upbringing and acted according to the conventional educational wisdom at the time (Watson (1982 p. 3).

Good intentions and educational wisdom notwithstanding, nothing can acquit the total discard of the colonized world view in the conception of what constitutes learning principles created by the colonial administration. The facts of colonial educational policies definitely suggested that far from being jewels of wisdom of educational heroes wishing to emancipate the native from dark caves of ignorance, they were designed to perpetuate the colonial dogma of racial superiority and economic exploitation. And the contemporary educational problems, in Nigeria at least *can be* blamed on such colonial policies essentially because they succeeded in creating historical disparities between what society ought to have, and what the schools set out to provide. The educational drama was laid out first by the English Christian missionaries in 1890s who

confused Christianity with Western civilization or even with English social habits, and there was little in the educational theories the teachers brought from home to show how education should be adapted to environment and especially to the civic duties of the recipients (Perham 1960 p. 280).

This can be appreciated when it was realized that the missionaries were not necessarily educationists. Further, the function of missionary education was not general enlightenment even within the framework of English conceptions of education in the nineteenth century. The major function of missionary education was to enable the convert gain enough literary proficiency to read the Christian Bible. It was within this frame that elementary schools were established in southern provinces of Nigeria in mission stations. The first of such schools were established by Christian Methodists in Badagry in 1842 by the Wesleyan Methodist Mission. Subsequently, the Church of Scotland Mission set up another school in what would be eastern Nigeria in 1846; followed by the Church Missionary Society establishing its own in 1852 at Abeokuta in what would metamorphose into western Nigeria. The main emphasis of these early missionary primary schools was self supporting, combining literary with industrial or artisan education. And although between 1848 to 1890 more elementary schools were established, they always “remained modest attempts and did little more than produce masons and carpenters to build missionary houses and coffins” (Ajayi 1963 p. 519).

Further, these schools with their emphasis on technical training, albeit of a rudimentary type, did not flourish because they were expensive for the missionaries to maintain, even though later they had some assistance from the colonial government in form of grants−in−aid. Nevertheless they provided the early foundations on which Nigerian education was built and would subsequently provide it with its metropolitan flavor. Education beyond these elementary schools was provided in well established predominantly grammar secondary schools in Freetown in Sierra Leone, and leading to possible admission to study for degree programs at the Fourah Bay College which was at that time affiliated to the University of Durham and was awarding the university’s degrees from 1878.

Nigeria at the beginning of the twentieth century was being rapidly transformed into a modern economy, with railroad links between Lagos and Kano up in the North already started. New government offices to maintain the colonial machinery were created; commerce and the budding of industry were just starting (Talbot 1966). But of most significance was the Civil Service which tied up all these activities together to enable the effective administration of the colony. However, the colonial government faced a problem in the lack of Nigerians who would perform low level clerical functions in the rapidly growing civil service. Education having been well established earlier in Ghana, Sierra Leone and West Indies, the colonial government had to rely on manpower from these colonies for local support services in Nigeria. But this was a situation quite unagreeable. The Government felt it was uneconomical to rely on *foreigners* who had to be induced to serve in Nigeria with higher pay and a guarantee of annual extended leaves. Nigerians were also resentful of these foreigners, with the same skin hue as themselves, taking up jobs which they feel could be theirs if they had

the appropriate educational institutions.

It was not long before educated Nigerians — the Lagos *elite* — educated in other British colonies started demanding for a grammar type of education from both the missionaries and the colonial government in Nigeria. The growing market economy and the bustling civil service have combined to create greater job opportunities and facilitated the demands for more knowledgeable manpower beyond what the then elementary missionary schools provided. While the artisan education, as then designed, provided the learner with sufficient skills for immediate labor market absorption, literary (grammar school) education began to be seen by educated Nigerians as the only long−term solution to effective integration into the modern market economy.

It was under these circumstances that Herbert Macaulay, a Nigerian, received a reluctant permission to start the first grammar school in Lagos in 1859 while a reverend to the Church Missionary Society. This saw a slow start in these type of schools because by 1885 there were only five other grammar schools created by the missionaries who reluctantly followed Macaulay's suit.

In 1905 the government established the Education Code, a Board of Education that included Nigerians, and an Advisory Committee on Education in Tropical Africa. In response to the growing pressure for government involvement in a more literary form of education, the government requested the Board to present a scheme for a model school to be established by the government in Lagos. In 1906 the Board came up with a detailed scheme for such school which was envisaged to have a broad curriculum "catering for a sound literary foundation, but equally providing opportunities for those with scientific and vocational orientation" (Ogunlade 1974 p. 332). Students to the model school, to be called King's College, were to be admitted after passing the Standard VI examination to be conducted by the proposed college. The students would also be taught up to the level of the London University Intermediate Examinations which were the preliminary and first year examinations. The reference in the scheme to the

London Matriculation an the Intermediate Examinations, the size of its academic staff, the marked distinction between categories of staff, the size of the student population, and the range of subjects in the curriculum of the proposed institution — all are comprehensible within the University system of contemporary Britain (Ogunlade 1974 p. 333).

The proposed curriculum of the school was certainly the standard British fare in the education of a gentleman, comprising of: English composition, Literature, History, Geography, Mathematics and Latin which were all compulsory. Students would have electives chosen from French, German or Arabic, Chemistry, Physics, Botany; and there were plans to include, at a later stage, Electricity, Geometrical Drawing and Survey, Pure and Applied Mathematics.

The Colonial Office in London balked at the university pretensions of the proposed college as well as its literary slant when the proposals were presented for approval in 1907. A long dialogue ensured between the Colonial Office and officers of the Lagos Board, with each presenting and defending contrasting views. The Lagos Board naturally insisted on the literary predisposition of the college, while the Colonial office wanted a less pretentious institutions which bias towards agriculture and vocational education. In the end some sort of compromise was reached and in 1908 the picture of the approved college that emerged was that it would consist of "a model primary department, a well−equipped secondary department and a post−secondary department" (Ogunlade 1974 p. 342). With this approval, the King's College Lagos was opened on September 20, 1909. Significantly, its upper science forms provided the nucleus for the

Yaba Higher College in 1934.

The years after the establishment of the King's College were followed with significant issue of adapting curricula to the needs of the country. But by 1916 it was getting clear to the colonial administration that the products of the King's College, and similar institutions maintained through government, were not going to be the docile clerics it had hoped. T R Batten, a colonial teacher, noted in his unpublished *Lectures on Education in Colonial Society* that 'the present picture is one of ferment and conflict in which the individual much more than in the past, sees himself and his private interests more clearly, an society and his duties to it as something outside himself, demanding and frustrating...The ranks of criminals, delinquents and other social misfits appear to be most largely recruited, not from illiterate persons, or from the best educated, but from products of the schools.' (in Omolewa 1976 p. 94). Lord Lugard, the first governor of Nigeria was more trenchant in his observations when he noted that the products of these early schools in Nigeria were "unreliable, lacking in integrity, self−control, and discipline and without respect for authority of any kind...Education has brought to such men only discontent, suspicion of others and bitterness, which masquerades as racial patriotism...As citizens they are unfitted to hold posts of trust and responsibility where integrity and loyalty are essential" (Lugard 1923 p. 428).

Observations such as these led to the search for a more accommodating curriculum, even though it was not clear whether these behaviors exhibited by the products of the schools were the result of mere exposure to a more radical schooling climate which facilitated the acquisition of sense of purpose and consequently created a desire for uncharacteristically non−traditional mode of self−expression; or due to the contents of the curriculum which in any event was regulated by the colonial administration.

The calls for adaptation of the schooling program in the colonies — from both colonial and Nigerian officers — came from far afield. In 1919 the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society channeled a request through the Committee of Reference and Consul of the Foreign Mission Conference of North America for an African education survey, and suggested that the Phelps−Stokes Fund of the United States sponsor a study of the educational needs and resources of Africa shortly after World War I (Berman 1971). The Fund was believed best suited for this due to its concerns and interests in the education of African Americans in early parts of the century (Dillard 1932). This led to a first visit to Nigeria, among other nations, by a team of six led by Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones of the Fund between August 1920 to March 1921. The report of the Commission, *Education in Africa: A study of West, South and Equatorial Africa, by the African Education Commission* was published in 1922. As Berman (1971) noted,

The report was written exclusively by Jones, the chairman of the Commission, and reads like the report on Negro education with a different locale. His general recommendations deal with the adaptations of education to meet local conditions, the incorporation of his four "essentials" [sic] of education (health, appreciation and use of the environment, effective development of the home, and recreation) into the curricula at all levels....the overriding importance of agricultural and simple industrial training (Berman 1971 p. 135).

The views in the report echoed not only the conviction of the Commission about the education of the African, but also reflected the then current philosophy behind the education of African Americans in the United States. After the American civil war, one of the pressing issues was the re−settlement of African Americans and their integration into the mainstream American social affairs. One of the most common educational strategies advocated for achieving this was the industrial education approach. Thus with regards to the recommendations of the Phelps−Stokes Fund, Spivey (1986), for instance argued that

Jones believed that industrial schooling could strengthen America's foreign alliances by helping the colonial powers stabilize the African situation (Spivey 1986 p. 5; see also Spivey 1978).

The Fund's report, being the most comprehensive and specific document on African education at that time, and echoing the convictions of the British colonial administration of the directions of the education for Africans — simple agricultural and artisan or 'industrial' training — acted as a catalyst for the policies of the Advisory Committee on Native Education set up in 1923 by the British colonial administration. The Fund's Report also prompted the government to request for another, second, commission to be undertaken, this time incorporating the members of its own Advisory Committee, to survey educational developments in East and Central Africa. The report of this second mission, *Education in East Africa: A study of East, Central and Southern Africa by the Second African Education Commission* was published in 1925. Its findings echoed the first report, and as Berman (1971 p. 141) quoted,

The most essential requisite of all is a genuine belief in agriculture, a recognition of its vital contribution to the life of the community, a realization of its value in the physical, mental, and even the moral welfare of the Native people.

These views had a further catalytic influence on British colonial education policy and culminated in the government's publication of *Education Policy in British Tropical Africa* in 1925, whose central theme was that,

Education should be adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupations and traditions of the various peoples covering as far as possible all sound and healthy elements in the fabric of their social life; adapting where necessary to changed circumstances and progressive ideas, as an agent of natural growth and evolution. Its aim should be to render the individual more efficient in his or her conditions of life, whatever it may be, and to promote the advancement of the community as a whole through the improvement of agriculture, the development of native industries, the improvement of health, the training of people in the management of their own affairs, and the inculcation of the ideals of citizenship and service (*in* Scanlon 1964 p. 94).

The ideas outlined in all these documents about the education of the African turned out to be more anthropological than educational, professing as they did, welfare of the natives, but lacking in real strategies of how such goals can be attained. The ideas and strategies for emphasizing agricultural/artisan education also would seem to echo a belief that the African was incapable of acquiring education beyond a basic sustenance level knowledge. It was also interesting that agricultural education was being promoted as the best form of education for a people who had been subsistence agriculturists for the whole of their history.

Perhaps not surprisingly, attempts at adapting education to local needs, already ambiguous as they stood at that time, were not entirely seen as favorable development by Nigerian officials. This could be because of the artisan−agriculture tones of the adaptation movement. As Brown (1964 p. 373) pointed out,

In West Africa under British rule what most articulate Africans wanted was a European−type secondary education designed to equip them for white−collar jobs. Although attempts were made to promote agricultural education...they were not very successful for the simple reason that West Africans did not appreciate them.

The early schools in Nigeria which set the pattern for the rest of the country therefore established precedents of being *training* institutions, rather than *learning* institutions. The absence of university or other tertiary training in the colonies forced the small but growing number of Nigerians who aspired to such education to seek it in England and the United States. For this reason, qualifications acceptable to British institutions were required. And because of the prestige attached to such form of achievement in the British examinations, many Nigerians scorned indigenous, i.e. artisan−agricultural type of education and vigorously embraced the English universities' examinations. Nigerian youths began to consider the successful acquisition of the certificate of such examinations as the ultimate process of their education, especially since

the dictates of the colonial situation in Nigeria demanded a thorough grounding in English education and internationally recognized certificates to enable the holders proceed to further studies. It seems very doubtful if an adapted education, suitable as it could perhaps been to local conditions, could have provided adequate international recognition in the period, and lead to the making of new elite who became advocates of the country's independence and piloted the ship of the country's destiny during the early phases of the country's independence (Omolewa 1976 p. 116).

All these developments took place in the southern regions of the country. In the predominantly Muslim Northern Nigeria, declared a protectorate of Britain in 1900, and subjugated through an armed conflict in 1903, the pattern of development of education was quite different. The conquest of Northern Nigeria was followed by a declaration from the then High Commissioner to Northern Nigeria, Lugard, that "Government will in no way interfere with the Mohammedan religion. All men are free to worship God as they please." (Graham 1966 p. 17). This was to placate the leaders of the subjugated Sokoto Caliphate who up to that time ruled Northern Nigeria, and to prevent missionary incursion into the area since the Muslim Emirates saw the missionary and colonial administrator as one. The consequences of their interpretation of the British presence among them could then be quite unpleasant. The colonial government then proceeded to provide considerable obstacles to hamper missionary advance into the Muslim stronghold (Ubah 1976). And since it was the missions who set up schools, elementary education was not even started in the North at the time when southern Nigeria was demanding higher education.

Eventually, however, the same problems that led to the establishment of the King's College in Lagos, namely scarcity of junior administrative workers, manifested themselves in the North, forcing the government to establish a series of primary schools in Kano in 1909. The various reasons given for starting the schools was to "instill the spirit of the English public school...The belief was that this form of character training would enable the next generation of Native Administrative officials to co−operate with the British officials easily" (Graham 1966 p. 80). Thus in the North as in the South of Nigeria, amalgamated on 1st January 1914 into one Nigerian nation, the British created educational services in their own image.

By the time the first products of the King's College started seeking admission to tertiary institutions, the development of education in Nigeria was linked to the civil service and consequently modern sector job markets in that the purpose of education was seen as producing employment for these sectors. With

government controlling most aspects of economic activities, it was hardly surprising that a precedent was laid where the government became the largest employer of educated manpower. And even in this aspect, it is significant to note that the British colonial administration was not altogether too keen on developing educational services for its sake, but to serve an irritating, but desperate need for cheaper clerics. Because of this, it is hardly surprising that the British did not make any attempt to encourage the development of curricular programs with relevance to the learners, and provide some mechanism of international recognition of these curricula. Instead, a strong bondage was created between the educational provisions in the African colonies and the metropolitan institutions of higher learning. This, of course, ensured not only a sustenance of such linkages, but also undermined any local efforts at creating more preferred educational programs as needs expand.

Therefore by the end of the first phase of the development of education in Nigeria, from 1848 to 1930, educational values had taken on similar tinge as in other colonized third world countries. As Altbach (1977 p. 191) noted,

The purpose of education in Third World societies was altered by colonialism, changing in some cases from a largely religious and cultural mission to a certifying institution with a role in social mobility and access to power in the new colonial political and economic system. Western institutions and, to a degree, values became synonymous with power. Even nations not under direct colonial rule, such as Thailand and China, came under the influence of Western educational institutions and ideas.

Thus western education facilitated the emergence of new elite class, and enabled such class acquire skills and capabilities to challenge the colonial government and ultimately to wrest control over the central political power from it (Coleman 1955). This led to the early formation of a new elite in the Nigerian social structure (Smythe and Smythe 1960), for as Blakemore and Cooksey (1981) noted, the aim of the educational curricula in colonial Africa was

largely to socialize a privileged minority into an elite culture. Students lucky enough to have this sort of schooling were not just taught the formal curriculum but also followed a hidden curriculum — that of European manners, values, aesthetics preferences in art and literature and beliefs in the superiority of British or French political institutions (Blakemore and Cooksey 1981 p. 150).

The structure of the Nigerian secondary school curriculum retained more or less its colonial flavor from its formal inception in the CMS Grammar School in 1859 all through to the Nigerian independence in 1960. After the 1960s, calls were made for making the curriculum more tuned to Nigeria's cultural and economic realities. Persistent themes in this era were a rediscovery of the dignity of manual labor, evoked by the apparent disdain which with the average Nigerian secondary school pupil regarded any form of education not leading to elite integration upon graduation. Parents as well children have seen the power of education — it is the only commodity, which if obtained in the right quantities and right places, could enable rapid social mobilization (through improved chances of lucrative job acquisition) and political leadership.

The Search for an Educational Policy

Consistent correlation between education and manpower development, the developmental thrusts of a new Nigerian nation, and the development of firm geopolitical views, created effective grounds for a formalized policy on education for the country that would direct the future of educational services after independence.

The Nigerian education system at the time allowed for three tracks after pupils have successfully negotiated the eleven plus examination at the end of the elementary schools: secondary grammar schooling for the more able, secondary technical schools for those identified as being more technically oriented (or, more likely, fulfilling the government's perception of required technical schooling), and the teacher training colleges where students were trained for the Grade II teachers' certificate which would enable them to teach in primary schools.

By far the grammar school tracking was the most popular since it enables rapid movement towards acquisition of a university degree and consequently enabled more effective social mobility. At the end of the secondary grammar schooling, students take the School Certificate examinations conducted by the West African Examinations Council. Alternatively, students can also take the General Certificate of Education (Ordinary level), although this was more open to those who did not have a chance at regular schooling and wishing to take the GCE as private candidates.

The secondary school was then followed by a two year advanced level work, the sixth form, being preparatory to university education. At the end of the two years students take the Higher School Certificate (HSC) examination, or its alternative, the General Certificate of Education (Advanced level). Students who obtained good grades in the School Certificate (normally five credit grades, which *must* include English and Mathematics), and the Higher School Certificate (normally three pass grades; although two were often accepted) can then be admitted for an average three year degree program in the university of their choice. The admission was directly controlled by the universities themselves, and they set the admission requirements.

Students who had only the School Certificate (that is, the ordinary level), or obtained poor grades in the Higher School Certificate, were able to take concessional entrance examinations conducted by individual universities. Students who passed these examinations were able to proceed to a one year preliminary course, before embarking on a degree program. The preliminary course was often provided in a separate school within the university, although integral to it. The first preliminary program in Arts and Science was introduced in 1955 at the University College Ibadan, although there were plans to abandon it in the 1960s when the university college had enough direct entrants to its London degree programs. According to Ojo (1983),

> In many quarters, the university−run preliminary courses were viewed as temporary measures to alleviate the shortage of qualified sixth formers and were to be discontinued immediately there were enough direct entrants (p. 33)

This structure closely sustained the British educational heritage in Nigeria. At every stage of the educational ladder therefore examinations controlled access to the next stage. Failure to move along this purely academic progression, however, does not necessary mean an end to education. A whole variety of alternative routes

existed to enable students acquire basic skills necessary for survival in a rapidly transformed society. For instance, after the secondary education stage, students can always apply to the numerous polytechnics that existed, and follow a three year technically oriented program leading to the award of the Ordinary National Diploma (OND). After a work−related break of a year, students can return to the polytechnic and work toward acquiring the Higher National Diploma (HND). Students with highly exceptional OND results can sometimes be absorbed into a regular university where they study for a standard degree. The HND, however, does not enable its holders to commence immediate graduate studies, leading to a series of crises in the 1970s where the HND, despite the advanced maturity of its holders, was often derisively considered less than the equivalent of a university degree; whereas HND holders felt they were prepared enough for graduate studies. The purely academic track was therefore more favored by both parents and students, as it would enable not only a faster progression through the academic ladder, but would also lead to a white collar job in the labor market.

The emphasis of the Nigerian education on purely academic lines of educational pursuit was a source of concern for Nigerian educational planners. For instance, in a sponsored survey of the system in 1967, it was observed that

Criticism, other than that of a purely political or social nature, of Nigeria's educational and training system, may be placed under two major headings. *First*, the system is not geared effectively enough to the realities and needs of the labor market; it is not adequately *employment−oriented*. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that the system’s educational and training institutions have operational inadequacies impairing equitable access to opportunities and the quality of instruction. *Second*, there is insufficient application of the system’s facilities and manpower toward solution of the country’s most pressing development problems: it is not adequately *service−oriented* (USAID, 1967 p. 49, including *emphasis*).

The mid 1960s therefore saw the beginnings of low−level reforms and experiments in education in Nigeria aimed at making the system more accountable to a rapidly changing society where there were very limited opportunities for the white collar job market. These were intensified when it was realized that an appreciable proportion of the school population terminate their education progressively at primary and secondary schools, with very few actually making the transition to the university. For instance, of the 56,155 secondary school leavers in Nigeria in 1965, only 5,199 actually passed the School Certificate Examinations at the *minimum* level (i.e. Division I and II of the School Certificate Examination) that would enable them to proceed to the university. The sixth form — first introduced in the King’s College Lagos in 1951 — the main bridge between the secondary schools and the universities, did not fare too well either. Only 56.6% of the 1,874 HSC students in 1965 achieved examination passes in two or more subjects necessary for university admission (WAEC, 1966). Thus as the USAID report further noted in 1967,

At the present time the Nigerian educational system continues to suffer from the evils of too heavy an academic orientation, when the need is for a greater employment orientation. The person who terminates his education prior to graduation from the university often views himself as a failure who has been forced to settle for something that is second best, even though he is among the majority of the students (USAID 1967 p. 53).

The first move away from this educational stalemate was attempted in the Western Region of Nigeria by the recommendations of an obscure, yet most potential educational committee established by the Western Nigerian Regional Government. Although the proposals of the Committee were not fully implemented (partly due to the radical departure from the accepted norms suggested in the report, as well as the funding implications of the suggestions), the findings of this committee were to resurface later and form the central engine of the future Nigerian educational structure. The Committee was chaired by Archdeacon S. A. Banjo, with Chief J. O. Ojo, Reverend I. Edeki, Femi Oyewole, S. O. Leshi, Mrs. F. A. Ogunsheve and Professor C. H. Dobinson as members.

The Banjo Commission (as it was known) stressed the importance of technical and commercial courses in secondary schools. However, the Commission did not merely recommend that new courses or new programs be introduced in the schools. Rather, it presented a proposal for a new system of secondary education which was to be developed from the existing one and in which the programs of study represented a departure from traditional patterns. This itself was a brave gesture from a regional stronghold with fierce alliance to British values in every respect. The plan proposed by the Banjo Commission called

for the conversion of the existing dual structure into a single−track, but two−level, system of secondary education. The first level was to be the junior secondary school which would offer a three−year course of study and be open to all children who passed the primary school leaving examinations [the second was to be senior secondary school of four years duration]...While a wide range of prevocational courses was to be provided in the junior secondary schools, it was proposed that these kinds of studies should vary from school to school be related to the employment opportunities in the vicinity...After completion of the junior secondary school course, it was anticipated that approximately 30 percent of the graduates would proceed to *Senior Secondary Schools* while the remainder of the youth would enter trade centers, teacher training colleges, technical colleges, or take jobs (Muckenhirn 1968 p. 216).

The Senior Secondary School was to be a four year course of study with extreme academic bias providing, in the final stages, preparation for sixth form work, although the curriculum was sprinkled with the notions of enabling the learner to acquire some vocational skills. These proposals, especially the attempted vocationaliziation of the grammar oriented Senior Secondary School was rejected by many educators in the Western region, for as Muckenhirn further observed,

While not expressed explicitly, it was this writer’s impression from conversations with grammar school teachers that there was a feeling that the introduction of vocational and technical education into the curriculum of senior secondary schools would not only weaken the academic standards but also would create an institution which could not be accorded the prestige of traditional grammar school (Muckenhirn, 1968 p. 222).

Thus the recommendations of the Banjo Commission report were not really fully accepted and implemented in the Western Region at the time. However, the central philosophy of the report itself (published in 1961) — echoing the puritanical belief of its members on utilitarianism in education — was taken up by the recommendations contained in the Ashby Commission Report which suggested that

the content of secondary school education is of particular interest to the government. Obligatory manual subjects must be introduced. Vocational training must be increased. Agricultural education must be expanded in all secondary schools (Nigeria 1960 p. 3).

And while this idea was not wholly implemented immediately at the national level, early experiments with comprehensive schooling in the Western Region of Nigeria led to the establishment of *junior* secondary schools with a common academic core curriculum, and a set of introductory pre−technical, pre−vocational courses for all students. Upon completion of the junior secondary school, and on the basis of a thorough selection and guidance procedure, students would either terminate their education or complete their secondary education in the grammar school wing or another specialized wing of the institution (for further details, see *The Development of Technical Education and its Relation to the Educational System in Western Nigeria*, 1962−1970. Ibadan: Government Printer). But

the stubborn adherence to the traditional grammar school type of education made it difficult for the junior high school to spread and eventually accounted for its eclipse (Adesina 1984 p. 13).

Indeed, the first explicit attempt at the comprehensive school planning in Nigeria was with the establishment of Aiyetoro school in Abeokuta, near Ibadan, initiated as part of the Ashby Report recommendations (another, similar school was also established in Port Harcourt), as well as the recommendations of the Banjo Committee. The Aiyetoro school opened in February 1963, with a gathering of teachers from Nigeria, U.S., Britain, and Scandinavian countries. Harvard University Graduate School of Education provided the overall guidance to the school's philosophy (Hinkle 1969 p. 81). The political overtones of this American aid gesture is not lost on some observers. For instance, Karl Bigelow (1965) observed that

The United States government can support a Harvard−sponsored comprehensive secondary school in Western Nigeria; it could not invest American public funds in a school modeled on Eton — to say nothing of whatever the Russian equivalent may be! (p.47).

The Aiyetoro school was considered innovatory in many ways.[1] First it departed from the then British tradition of the eleven plus terminal elementary school examination as prerequisite for admission. Students were admitted directly from primary schools in the catchment area of the school. Secondly, the school offered a core curriculum in all subjects which students must take within their first two years — thus simulating an American educational philosophy of providing broad general education in the junior years. Success at the end of these two years determined the subsequent tracking of the student. The first track was for the academically more able but who took electives in technical courses. The second track was for the less able and was vocationally oriented (Skapski and Somode 1962). And yet despite these strategies at providing liberal education in a less confining manner,

...the drop out and survival rates at Aiyetoro in its early years were unparalleled in the history of government sponsored secondary level education in Nigeria. On a cumulative level, only 33 of the original 143 who entered in 1963 survived up to Form V, representing a cumulative drop out rate of 76.6%. For the second cohort the cumulative drop out rate was 43.40% while the annual drop out rate ranged from 8% between Form I and Form II and 23.97% between Form III and Form IV (Adesina 1984 p. 8).

Adesina attributed this failure to a possibility that the Aiyetoro school was attempting to operate an American system of education in a British−oriented examination system, for

whereas the education at Aiyetoro was essentially American in its form, content and methods, the examinations that finally judged the students requirements were essentially Britain [sic] in form, content and requirements while the background of those executing the project was diverse...The picture might have been different if Aiyetoro based its final assessment of its students on its own aims and practices. To have spent five years in a system that appears revolutionary in its aims and practices, and be subsequently exposed to an examination system that does not reflect that revolution was one of the several misfortunes of Aiyetoro students (Adesina 1984 p. 9).

This was, of course, quite different from the American system of high school education which does not have a final examination in the same sense as operated and understood by Nigerian parents and employers, and any assessment and certification of students' ability is spread across the years of high schooling. Further, an arrangement existed between American high schools and both the labor market and the universities through which students are effectively absorbed. Such arrangements did not exist in the case of Aiyetoro. But significantly for development aid agencies,

The very high level of funding necessary to make Aiyetoro serve as a prototype or centre of excellence could not be sustained by the Ministry of Education when external grants dried up (Fagbulu 1985 p. 125).

A classic lesson of innovation in education would seem therefore that all segments of the educational continuum must share the same sense of vision if a lower level strategy is to mature effective to its intended outcomes. Also aid agencies prescribing educational cures must ensure that there would be continuity in the process after their departure.[2]

The Emergence of a National Policy on Education

Still in search for a more effective solution to the issue of relevance of the Nigerian education in a post−independence era, in 1964 Professor Aliu Babatunde Fafunwa (New York University, Graduate Class of 1955) who was later to become a central icon in Nigerian educational planning and subsequently a Federal

Minister of Education (1990) conducted a survey in

an attempt to “sound out” the opinions of 2000 parents randomly sampled over a wide geographical and representative area of the country on the primary and secondary education systems...Ninety−eight percent of all the parents were dissatisfied with the “present system of primary education”, while opinion was equally divided on the same question relating to secondary education (Fafunwa 1989 p. 43).

As a result of this survey, in that a same year a proposal was made during one of the meetings of the national advisory committee on education, the Joint Consultative Committee for a *National Curriculum Conference* principally to look at the issue of relevance and future directions of Nigerian education. It took a whole year (to 1965) for the proposal to be accepted. The Nigerian civil crisis which began in 1966 halted any further planning for the conference, and it was not until September 1969 that the conference was finally held in Lagos. The Conference lasted from 8−12 September and was sponsored by a government agency, the Nigerian Education Research Council (NERC), now Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERD), with additional funding from The Ford Foundation. The main aim of the conference was to “review the old and identify new *national* goals for education in Nigeria at all levels and provide guidelines on what the system should be doing.” (Balogun 1970 p. 5).

These views were also echoed by the then Federal Commissioner of Education during his opening address at the 1969 National Curriculum Conference at which he underscored government’s views about education in Nigeria which was:

No doubt that the educational system we inherited was a good one. Good, that is, for the country and society for which it was planned; good for England and English society. But it was not good for us, because it neglected to take into consideration our cultural and social background; because it has tended to produce an educated class of pen−pushers and because it failed to lay the foundations of economic freedom by providing the manual skills and expertise necessary for successful industrial and agricultural development (*in* Adaralegbe 1969 *Opening Address*).

It is of course, a paradox that these recommendations were made — and accepted — to the Nigerian government in 1960s at the height of independence, when, earlier on in the 1920s, the Phelps−Stokes Fund commission had recommended precisely the same strategies (emphasis on agricultural and manual type of education for immediate absorption into the labor market); which were found unacceptable by Nigerian nationalists. Similarly, the Banjo Commission Report to the Western Nigerian Government in 1961 had the same anthem, and ended up with the same time−tested opposition.

The 1969 National Conference on Curriculum in Nigeria was the first of three conferences to deal with the objectives of education, the content of the curriculum, and the methods required for implementing the curriculum. During the conference, it was felt that the grammar school orientation of the secondary schooling systems was unfavorable to a vast majority of students who had neither the abilities nor the inclination for pursuing a purely academic career.

What emerged out of the conference was a new framework for Nigerian education. And although its direct inspiration was not made clear, nevertheless there was a lot of similarity between the new structure suggested and the recommendations of the earlier Banjo Commission Report on the re−organization of the education in the schools of Western Nigeria.

The new framework recommended that Nigerian education should be composed of six years for primary schools, followed by three years of junior secondary schools, and three years of senior secondary schools. The university education was recommended at four years for a standard university degree. This educational pattern came to be known as 6−3−3−4 system of education.

This was a radical departure from the then existing structure, and the third in the development of education in Nigeria. Before the Nigerian political independence in 1960, the educational pattern was 8−6−2−3, in which a student spent eight years in the primary school, followed by a six year secondary schooling, a two year "A" level education, terminated by a standard three year university education. In 1955 this pattern was changed to 6−5−2−3, a structure which Nigeria retained until the National Curriculum Conference in 1969 which recommended a 6−3−3−4 formation, breaking the monolithic structure secondary education for the first time at a national level.

At the same time, the idea of multilateral, or comprehensive schools was also finally recommended to be an official educational policy for the nation. The comprehensive schools would not only have a greater number of students, but also greater number of courses than the hitherto standard curricula fare which prepared students only for examinations. The examination itself was not abolished entirely, however, but a series of continuous assessment procedures were recommended, particularly for the junior school which would cumulatively be used as a basis for transition the senior secondary school. The School Certificate examination, used as a basis for terminal evaluation of secondary schooling, would be replaced by Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE), which would also be conducted by WAEC.

Based on these recommendations of the national conference on curriculum, the Federal Ministry of Education created a draft national policy on education and the nation was introduced to it by the then Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon during a speech at Barewa College on April 26, 1972.

The National Council on Education — one of the highest consultative educational bodies in Nigeria — deliberated on the draft national policy in December 1972. This further led to a seminar on the proposals which was held at the Institute of International Affairs, Lagos from June 4−8, 1973. The seminar submitted its report to the Federal Ministry of Education on June 26, 1973. This report was deliberated at various state and federal levels, and the end product was a government White Paper, *National Policy on Education* first published in March 1977. This was the first official framework for Nigerian education since independence.

Next, the government appointed an *Implementation Committee for the National Policy on Education* in 1977. This operated at a federal level while in each state, a Task Force Committee was also established to advise each State government on the logistics of the implementation of the policy. A series of workshops and consultative committee meetings constituted the main mechanism of the Implementation Committee between December 1977 to December 1978. The report of the committee, which was the blue−print for the implementation of the national policy, was submitted to the Federal Government on December 21, 1979. This was followed immediately by government's white paper titled *Government Views on the Implementation Committee's Blue−print of the Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education.* In this white paper the government accepted virtually all the recommendations of the implementation committee,

however, the Federal Government totally rejected recommendations of the Committee that were not in line with the government's laid down procedures (Osokoya 1987 p. 48).

In 1981, and based on the various recommendations of the education committees established and amendments made to their reports, a revised *National Policy on Education* was published by the government, and stands as the definitive framework for Nigerian education. As the National Policy on Education document stated in summarizing the new educational structure:

The school system will be on the 6−3−3−4 plan. The system will be flexible enough to accommodate both formal and non−formal education and will allow leaving and re−entry at certain points in the system...The first six years will be for general basic education followed by three years of general education with pre−vocational subjects like woodwork, metal work, shorthand and typewriting, book−keeping and technical drawing so that the students who wish to leave the system at this stage will be employable. The next three years will be for general education leading to some marketable skills apart from training in the science and humanities so that the students graduating at this stage will be employable. Every student will be made to learn a skill (Nigeria 1981 p. 47).

Prior to this, the implementation of the primary school stage had already been started nation wide on September 6, 1976 in the first nation−wide educational reform in Nigeria through the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme (Bray 1981). The three year Junior Secondary School (or Junior *High* School as it was referred in the National Policy on Education) portion of the national policy started in September 1982, while the students of this same system entered their three year Senior Secondary Schools in October 1985. In September 1988 the first products of the system entered Nigerian universities.

Under the new policy, the curriculum of the Junior High Schools would consist of:

Core Subject (Compulsory)	**Pre−Vocational (Select Two)**	**Electives (Select One)**
Mathematics	Metal Work	Arabic Studies
English	Electronics	French
Nigerian Languages (2)	Mechanics	
Science	Local Crafts	
Social Studies	Home Economics	

Art and Music Business Studies

Practical Agriculture

Physical Education

Religious and Moral Instruction

The core subjects are compulsory for the whole three years of junior schooling, while the pre−vocational and electives are to be offered to students based on their abilities and interests. And because of its work−oriented nature, it was expected that students who did not pass the core subjects will to be absorbed into the senior secondary school and would find useful employment in the labor market. However this was a goal that created considerable confusion regarding the purposes of the new policy in its primary stages of implementation (Nwakoby 1987).

The Senior Secondary School curricular offering was also oriented towards serving two purposes, work and further education, although its predominantly academic nature made it more a tool for higher education progress than the labor market, because as noted in the National Policy on Education,

The senior secondary school will be for those able and willing to have a complete six−year secondary education. It will be comprehensive but will have a core curriculum designed to broaden pupils' knowledge and outlook. The core−curriculum is the group of subjects which every pupil must take in addition to his or her specialties (Nigeria 1981 p. 17).

The full range of the subjects offered to be offered in the senior secondary school is:

CORE SUBJECTS	**ELECTIVES**	
English Language	Biology	Home Economics
One Nigerian Language	Physics	Bible Studies
Mathematics	Chemistry	Islamic Studies
Agricultural Science, *or*	Additional Mathematics	Arabic Studies
A Vocational Subject	Commerce	Metal Work
One of:	Economics	Electronics

Physics	Book−Keeping	Technical Drawing
Chemistry	Typewriting	Woodwork
Biology	Shorthand	Auto−Mechanics
One of:	History	Music
English Literature	English Literature	Art
History	Geography	French
Geography	Agricultural Science	Physical Education
	Health Science	Government

It must not be assumed, of course, that presence of these recommended subjects (and the list for the senior secondary school curriculum ended with an “etc”) would mean that they would all be offered for students at any given time. In the first instance, there were simply no teachers to do that. Secondly facilities were not available, as studies of the implementation of both the junior (Nwakoby 1987), and the senior (Osokoya 1986) secondary schooling shows. Moreover, it is interesting that Professor Aliu Babatunde Fafunwa, one of the main architects of the Nigerian National Policy on Education in 1964, and who was to become a Federal Minister of Education in 1990 was quoted to have stated that

The policy had not met expected objectives because of poor implementation. Although some progress had been made, the 6−3−3−4 education policy is not working as planned. (“Progress To Nowhere”, *Newswatch* Magazine (Nigeria), May 13, 1991 p. 48).

However, most States in Nigeria in implementing the original 6−3−3−4 pattern of education simply adapted the curricular guidelines to fit in with their current realities in order to implement the new policy. In Kano State, for instance, the Technical Committee set up to work out the modalities for the implementation of the Policy simply suggested the conversion of all the secondary schools in Kano along the previous tracking systems. Thus the new lexicon for the schools became Senior Secondary School (Grammar), Senior Secondary School (Technical), Senior Secondary School (Teacher Education), and Senior Secondary School (Commercial). The subjects recommended in the National Policy on Education for the senior secondary school were then shunted into these four types of schools. The core subjects of the Senior Secondary School (Grammar), for instance, does not include *any* commercial or technical subjects. In addition, Home Economics (for girls) and Islamic Studies and Hausa Language were included in the Kano State core curricula, and removed from their elective status. Interestingly enough, virtually all the other States in the federal followed suit, so that by the end of 1988, the same compartmentalization of schooling in Nigeria, which was the basis for the reform, had been reverted to!

EDUCATION AND SOCIETY: AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES

A nation that is borne out of diversity inherently reflects that diversity in all its social institutions. The diversity of American education starts with instruction in the high school. The American high school is divided into two broad types; with each depending on the school district, the community, its population and other planning parameters. The first formation is a 6−3−3 system in which a junior high school of three years plays an intermediary role between the elementary school (6) and the senior high school of three years. In the second, and older pattern, 8−4, an eight year elementary education is followed by a four year high school.

Even within these groups are further categorizations. In one category are the specialized high schools found in certain large cities and, in the other, the comprehensive high school. The specialized high school offers a program adapted to a special group of students and usually requires evidence of certain aptitudes on the part of the candidates for admission; as such they are invariably university preparatory schools. Examples include the Bronx High School of Science in New York, the Lowell High School in San Francisco, and the South Carolina Governors' School for Science and Mathematics. The comprehensive high school provides programs for all kinds of learners regardless of ability. The educational program offered also is diverse to serve the needs of the heterogeneous student body. Its emphases are on provision of general education, marketable vocational skills as well as advanced academic electives for those students who wish to continue their education beyond the high school.

The courses required for graduation from high school, often mandated by the state, constitute *general education* and are what the society feels students ought to acquire by way of minimum skills, values and knowledge. About 50% of high school time is spent on the subjects embodied in the general education requirement, while the rest of the time is spent on a fare consisting of elective courses and/or vocational courses. Elective courses enables students to chart out a reasonable goal for their future and promotes their personal interests (Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, 1973).

Most American high schools are divided into four years categorized into Freshman (first year), Sophomore (second), Junior (third) and Senior (final), although while the first year is counted as a vital part of educational experiences of the student, its academic gradings are often not counted for the purposes of university admission. This taxonomy is also carried right through to the university. It is also common to think of the four years in the high school in terms of *grades*. The first year is therefore the 9th grade, the second is 10th, the third is 11th while the final year is 12th grade. The traditional American high school curriculum however developed as being aimed at 9−12th grade students.

Right from the primary school all the way up to the end of secondary education, the educational experiences provided for the American youth was aimed at both sensitizing them to the vital social issues around them, as well as preparing them for advanced work in universities. In California, for instance, the high school curriculum is determined at the local, not the State level. The State Education Code merely states that courses should be offered in the following subjects in grades 7−12: Driver Education, English, Fine Arts, Foreign Language, Mathematics, Physical Education, Social Science, Vocational/Technical Education. The Code also specifies that students must be taught about personal and public health and safety, alcohol and drug abuse, early California history, and ethnic groups.

School districts establish their own high school graduation requirements and usually allow individual high schools to design their own curricula. Thus there may be little comparability between course lists or courses in the same subject among high schools within one district. The State Department of Education reported in 1977−78 that the typical school district required its graduates to have three years of English, 1 year of American history, 1 semester of American government, 1 year of Math, and 1 year of science

(California 1979).

Although there is no centrally controlled exit examination from the high school, many school districts insist that students would not be given a graduation diploma until they pass an internal proficiency examination which certifies that they have acquired a basic literacy level necessary for functional living in an advanced industrial society. The proficiency, or competency examination tests three basic skills: reading, writing and computing. Each district, with community input, has developed its own examinations and established its own standards. Students are allowed to take the examinations beginning in the 9th grade and to repeat until they pass. The schools often provide preparatory or remedial classes in order to help the students pass the examination.

Social Pressures and School Reform

The public high school in the United States serves as an effective mirror of social events through the years. For instance, when the Russians launched the Sputnik in 1957, schools were accused of providing inadequate science education for the students. This led to a flurry of science education reform activities in all subjects for most of the 1960s to 1970s. When African Americans steeped up their demands for equal opportunities, the schools became the focal point for desegregation efforts, leading to civil rights issues in the 1960s. The U.S. involvement in the Vietnam war in the 1960s evoked a wave of protests from principally college and high school students who constitute the largest section of the population. As Tyack (1991) noted,

Repeatedly, Americans have followed a common pattern in devising educational prescriptions for social ills. Once they discovered a problem, they labeled it and taught a course on the subject: temperance instruction to fight demon rum; home economics to lower the divorce rate; driver education to banish carnage on the highway; computer literacy to keep the United States economically competitive. Americans find it easier to instruct the young than to coerce the adult. Indeed, if the child were properly educated, the adult needed no coercion (Tyack 1991 p. 2).

To combat some of these social issues, electives were offered in virtually all high schools. For instance, in as early as 6th Grade, in Shaker Heights, Ohio, students are required to take an elective in *Racial Sensitivity* where they learn about such things as racial polarization and the dynamics of prejudice. In the senior high school in the same community another elective course, *Oppression*, a course that deals with issues of slavery and the holocaust, was also offered. These two electives reflected community attempts at bring out the pressing social issues affecting the community, which in this case was the integration of the different races in Shaker Heights (*The New York Times*, December 30, 1991 p. 1).

In recent decades, the high school curriculum has become more diverse and enriched with the proliferation of courses such as driver training, drug abuse and safety education. There is no “core” curriculum which all students in the country have to take. Courses are added or deleted because of State or federal legislation, without necessarily referring it to a cross−linked national educational process.

Despite these efforts, there were mounting criticisms of the high school curriculum from all sectors of the American society — reflecting not only a deep concern with the issues of education, but also a close

community involvement. For instance, in 1983, the U.S. Department of Education set up the National Commission on Risk in Education aimed among others, with the responsibility to study the quality of teaching and learning in the United States, compare U.S. education with that of other nations, examine the relationship between college admission requirements and student achievement, and asses how much major social and educational changes have affected student achievement.

The findings of the commission reflected the view that the nation was at "risk" because the U.S. was no longer a nation of unquestionable preeminence, in part because of the quality of its education. The commission also believed that the poor educational system affects not only the industry and commerce, but also saps the intellectual, moral, and spiritual strengths which build a strong nation (National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983). The Commission's views on setting the U.S. education back on road to excellence consisted of recommending more emphasis on science teaching, which, rather paradoxically, echo the same strategies provided by commentators of American education in 1957 after the Sputnik incidence. More curiously, the Commission also suggested raising higher admission standards by colleges to require more specific courses and high levels of prior achievement.

Subsequent reports on the status of high school education in America reflect a growing concern of the public with the apparent lagging of American students behind their counterparts in developed countries, particularly in science and technology disciplines. A vivid example is the report written by Ernest L. Boyer for Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, *High School: A Report of Secondary Education in America*. What makes this report particularly different was its ethnographic bases, drawing upon banks of empirical data to support the more general and theoretical observations of later commentaries on the crisis facing American high school education.

Ernest L. Boyer suggests that in order to be effective, the high school universe encompassing students, teachers, administrators, school board members, parents, and the entire community need to share a common sense of purpose. The major thrust of Boyer's curriculum recommendations focus on science programs, again with similar teaching strategies as advocated by the curriculum intentions of the National Science Foundation of the early 1960s. What further aggravates the situation is that every few years, for example, according to *The New York Times,*

a new study rolls out announcing once again that American students know less mathematics and science than even students in the poorest countries. The latest comparison conducted by the Educational Testing Service of Princeton, N.J., and involving 20 countries will be reported on Feb 3 (1992). The betting is that the United States will, as always, rank at or near the bottom ("Are U.S. Students The Worst? Comparisons Seen As Flawed", *The New York Times,* December 24, 1991 p. 1).

And as usual, there were series of comments from various observers that either agree with the findings or accuse the methodology of the comparisons. The international comparisons began in the 1960s at the beginning of the cold war with the Soviet Union and were conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement in The Netherlands. These tests compared the 80% of Americans who attended high school with 9% of West Germans, 13% of students in The Netherlands and 45% in Sweden who attended the highly academic and selective final years of high school in the 1960's, and "it is not surprising that U.S. students did not do well in these comparisons." (*The New York Times,* December 24, 1991 p. B6). Further commentators interviewed by *The New York Times* reflected the view that:

Low test scores are not just a measure of schools. They are a measure of the entire society. The environment in the home and kinds of social and medical services available to kids are extremely important in affecting the kinds of lives these children are able to lead and the kinds of scores they get. The main problem with the school reform movement in the United States is that we have the basic assumption that we can fix the kids, no matter what is wrong with the family and the community.

These comments prompted a high school student (a Senior at Brookline High School, Boston) to write to *The Times*, expressing her suggestion of the possible solution to the problem:

I believe that although our nation's school systems need reform badly, our society's view and interest in education is what really needs reforming. There is no way the American system can "fix the kids, no matter what is wrong with the family and the community." We should not be aiming for top test scores to outdo our international competition, but to raise the number of kids who have a great interest in education, who will come out of school with hope for the future, with inspiration to work toward bettering our country. I believe this change needs to come from both the family and the society (Lila Place, Boston, January 3, 1992; *The New York Times*, Letters Page, *School Reform Should Begin With Society and the Family*, Friday January 17, 1992).

From all indications, therefore, there has been a recurrent crisis in American education. The most recently notable commentary on the crisis was made by President George Bush who described himself as the "education president." In a move seen as a political strategy at tackling a very serious problem that could cost a re−election in 1992 (he *did* lost the election to Bill Clinton in 1992), the President launched a bold new plan aimed providing varieties of solutions to American education. In a 34 page document launched on April 18, 1991, the government outlined a series of far reaching strategies, the most radical being the proposal for the introduction of voluntary national tests, to be called American Achievement Tests, in mathematics, science, English, history and geography, so that students and schools can see whether they meet new national standards in these fields. These tests would be offered in fourth, eighth and twelfth grades (*The New York Times*, April 19, 1991 p. 1).

In its commentary, *The Times* noted that many groups objected to the proposal to offer voluntary national tests, arguing that it would be unfair to rate schools primarily by how well their students do on national tests, and whether schools have large groups of poor children, the quality of their teaching techniques and the quality of the curriculum (*The New York Times*, April 19, 1991 p. B5, 6). These doubts and uncertainties are expected in an educational situation where the concepts of liberty, freedom and accountability are strongly cherished. The calls of national examinations reflect a move towards a uniformity of standards, a situation which the American education has resolutely maintained an independence. This is because there is no central body in the U.S. to ensure that educational institutions maintain high academic standards. This work is carried out by the six regional accrediting associations: The Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, and similar associations covering New England, the North−Central, the North−West, Southern, and Western United States.

However, increasing talk of the need for some type of national examination system for the high schools is an outgrowth of the movement that began with the publication of *A Nation At Risk* in 1983. As Gladieux (1991) reported,

the new debate clearly springs from deep concerns about the state of education in the United States and the country's future. During these past two years (1989−1991) key political and business leaders have brought a bottom−line orientation and top−down management style to the task of figuring out how the country should measure educational achievement and progress...Moreover many of these leaders believe a new national assessment system is essential not just to produce indicators of what is going on, but to use as leverage to drive the reform process (p. S2)

The concerns for a possible national examination in the U.S. of course have to overcome the hurdle of a *national curriculum*, which is absent. With each state creating its own curricular agenda, creation of a nationally orchestrated curriculum is likely to be interpreted even as a breach of individual liberty and freedom — the central icons of American constitution. There is also the possibility that a national examination would end up determining the national curriculum, rather than the other way round. As Gladieux (1991) argued,

Curricular control is such a sensitive matter in the politics of the U.S. education that some advocates of national testing may be reluctant to acknowledge this inevitable influence (p. S5).

Even earlier on in the debate about national standards and curriculum for the U.S. high schools, doubts were expressed as to the viability of such strategy. For instance, in comparing the structure and control of the Japanese educational system with that of the U.S., Rohlen (1985) noted that

the very thought of national educational standards in the United States is a political hot potato, and most certainly we will not accept federal government control over textbooks or curriculum. But, in a country that sets national standards for food and building products, for industrial safety and pollution, and for thousands of other categories (including pet food), it seems sensible and within the realm of political possibility to establish minimum national educational standards for eighth−grade and high school graduation (Rohlen 1985 p. 39).

Absence of such nationally controlled learning circumstances with specified evaluative mechanism, it has been argued, might have led to significantly lower high school to college transition rates of American students. For instance, Rosenbaum (1989) has pointed out that lack of specific curricula and examinations governing exit from American high schools have contributed to create a lack of motivation on the part of the American high school pupil to get excellent grades especially as a basis for employment after immediate graduation,

Since employers ignore grades, it is not surprising that many work−bound students lack motivation to improve them. While some students work hard in school because of personal standards or parental pressure or

real interest in a particular subject, students who lack these motivations have little incentive since schoolwork does not affect the jobs they will get after they graduate (Rosenbaum 1989 p. 13).

Thus by the opening of the decade of the 1990s, the American education system throughout its entire spectrum from the high school to the university, has found itself in another cycle of continuous reforms for which there does not seem to be clearly discernible solutions to its more explicit problems. If anything, this at least proves the dynamic nature of the educational process and its linkages to social and political contexts of its operation. It is this feature that must be contended with in any attempt to export this system of education to other countries that do not share the same social and political structures.

The two educational systems, Nigerian and American, were clearly derivatives of their respective social circumstances. They differ in the incremental nature of the effects of social decision making process on them and how such social pressures influence educational development. However a further very profound difference can also be clearly established. While American educational system tended to be flexible and accommodative, Nigerian system tended to be highly centralized and traditionally structured. These two characteristics, reflective of the inherent nature of the social systems in which the educational structures evolved, will certainly reflect themselves in any attempt at cross−national transplantation of educational ideas between the two countries.

CHAPTER 3

THE EMERGENCE OF THE NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY

Introduction

Three distinct stages can be traced in the development of higher education in Nigeria. The **first** stage was from 1930 to 1947 when the Yaba Higher College was established as a means of producing middle level manpower for the colonial civil service. The **second** stage was from 1945 to 1960, when the University College, Ibadan was established as a means of producing high level manpower, while the **third** was from 1960 to 1980, when the distinct modern foundations of Nigerian universities were laid down. A fourth stage, 1980 to 1990 reflected a new period and a new direction emphasizing a break with not only

with the past, but with tradition and serves as a period in which Nigerian universities developed their distinct contemporary characteristics.

Rise and Decline of the Yaba Higher College

Perhaps the tangible starting point for the analysis of the development of higher education in Nigeria was the proposal by the colonial Director of Education, Hussey, in 1930 outlining his views on general government involvement in education in Nigeria. These views were published in *Memorandum on Educational Policy in Nigeria.* The document proposed comprehensive government involvement in education by establishing a series of elementary and middle schools whose products would feed an envisaged Higher College to be established at Yaba, Lagos, a site close to the seat of government. Another Higher College was also proposed in Zaria, Northern Nigeria. The motive behind the founding of the Higher College was manpower development, for according to Hussey in the *Memorandum,*

I have dwelt upon the vital necessity of providing an institution in Nigeria which can train men in the country to play an honourable part in its development...A comparable study of staff lists for Nigeria and such countries as the Sudan, where higher training of the type contemplated at Yaba and Zaria has been in operation for many years, will show that a considerable reduction in European personnel is possible by this means, with a consequent savings of large sums of money on European salaries (*in* Okafor 1971 p. 70)

Despite these expectations, it was interesting to note that the Higher College was not intended to be a degree awarding situation in the same way the Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone awarded University of Durham degrees. The Higher College was expected to provide vocational courses, teacher, medical and agricultural training at an intermediate stage.

These proposals were accepted by the colonial government on May 29, 1930 and provided the first official basis for higher education planning in Nigeria. It was agreed by the government that the products of the college could provide well trained assistants for various department of government and companies, and the standard of the college would gradually rise, although it was not expected to attain a British university status for sometime. The College would award its own certification and was not to be affiliated to any British university (Okafor 1971).

The Yaba Higher College was officially opened in January 1934. The main emphasis of the college was on its medical program which was to last for five years, leading to the appointment of a graduate of the program in government service as an Assistant Medical Officer for five years, after which he would be eligible to return to Yaba for another year to get a College diploma and could upon successful graduation, become a medical practitioner. The teacher training course was to last three years, while agricultural training would last for a total of four years. The medical program was started at King's College on a temporary basis in 1930, followed by the other courses in 1932.

There were protests from Nigerians at the college at the manner of its establishment, but mainly at its programs. According to Okafor (1971 p. 72) "the heat generated by public discussion [about the College] was momentous that it prompted events which have profoundly affected not only the educational but also the

Nigerian political situation for a long time." There were three main reasons for the protests against the Yaba Higher College. First was the apparently non−involvement of Nigerian opinion in its design. By the time it was created Nigerians emboldened with liberal conceptions of democracy had started agitation for participation in all affairs of their lives. Second was the lack of affiliation of the college to any *standard guard* which will ensure that the programs offered would be acceptable as a basis for further education, especially in England. Third, its vocational orientation would seem to be a rehash of the industrial−agricultural educational strategy suggested by the Phelps Stokes Fund Commission [see Chapter 2], and favored by the colonial government. It may be recalled that Nigerians were chafed at the suggestion that industrial form of education would be best for them because it was considered appropriate for African Americans in Southern United States at the turn of the century.

These protests reached to head on Saturday March 17, 1934 when a group "representing the intelligentsia of Lagos" held a meeting and issued a press release which stated, in part,

While it may be expedient and desirable that opportunity should be provided locally whereby a certain number of youths may be trained to acquire some measure of skill in the different professions to meet the immediate needs of certain services, it is considered inimical to the highest interest of Nigeria to flood the country with a class of mass−produced men whose standard of qualifications must necessarily be deficient owing to the limited facilities available locally both as regards material and staff (*Daily Times*, March 18, 1934).

The protest meeting was organized by what later became the Nigerian Youth Movement, one of the pioneer nationalist political parties in Nigeria. Significantly, according to the *Lagos Daily News* of April 21, 1934, most of those who attended the meeting and became incorporated in the Movement were products of the King's College, Lagos. Thus in this way education and politics became entwined.

These protests did little to change the government's stand regarding the Yaba Higher College, and it was left to function as originally intended, mainly as a training ground for middle level manpower for government service, until December 1947 when, overtaken by more pressing events, the College was closed down.

The Emergence of the University College, Ibadan, 1945−1962

The second World War shifted the colonial focus to maintaining international peace and order. Under these conditions recruitment of local staff for the government colonial civil service was getting increasingly difficult. For instance, according to Olusanya (1975, p. 29), "in 1948, only 172 out of the total of 2,207 senior service officials were Nigerians." Thus Africanization of the civil service — as an ideal that created an impetus for the provision of advanced training facilities — became a stronger theme since the coming to power of the British Labour Party in 1945. This amplified demands for indiginization of the colonial territories. Earlier, in 1942, the colonial office in London observed that

The educated African is moving towards the front stage, and must be recruited and trained to share responsibilities with the British in the services...There is no doubt that where we promise self−government to the colonial peoples the first criterion that many of them will apply in judging our intentions is the extent to which we admit them to our administrative services. Here in their view is the substance of power, and it appeals to them — and in particular to the educated class — as of more importance than the slow evolution of popular institutions (*in* Symonds 1966 p. 151).

Another factor that complicated the situation was the small representation of Nigerians in the civil service which was a cause of friction between Nigerian nationalists and the colonial government. The new government officials also noticed that

If progressive advancement along the road to self−government within the framework of the British Commonwealth of Nations is to be a reality, the public services of the Colonies must be adapted to local conditions and must to the greatest extent be staffed by local people...The first objective of post−war organization will be to provide necessary conditions to enable colonial people to staff their own services (*in* Symonds 1966 p. 152).

Based on these opinions and stronger agitation for such training facilities in the colonies, the Nigerian colonial university therefore developed as training ground for future political leaders. Subsequent government policies gave it its intellectual validity.

The machinery for the establishment of the colonial university started as far back as 1924 when in *Memorandum on Education of the African Communities*, the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies noted that

provision must be made for the training of those who are required to fill posts in the administrative and technical services as well as those who as Chiefs will occupy position of exceptional trust and responsibility...As resources permit, the door of advancement through higher education in Africa must be increasingly opened for those who by character, ability and temperament show themselves fitted to profit by such education (*in* Ashby 1966 p. 191).

Various developments unfolded until 1933 when the Currie Report was written, though never published. This report was the archetypal strategy for university education not only in Nigeria but in British African colonies. The report, written under the auspices of the Report of the Conference of Directors of Education of Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda and Zanzibar initially held in June 1932, called for an immediate and publicly assumed university development by the colonial government. As stated in the Report,

The present position, as we see it, is that, while the Colleges at Achimota, Makerere, Yaba and Khartoum do not yet as a whole approach a real University standard, inevitably and of their own momentum they tend

towards this final point. At the same time the African thirst for higher education remains unabated; if this is not satisfied at home it can only lead to an increasing efflux of undergraduate African students towards the Universities of Europe and America (*in* Ashby 1966 p. 477).

The findings of this report were not totally acceptable to the government, although in East Africa it led to yet another committee — in the classic traditions of the civil service strategies of solving problems — which, under De La Warr produced a report in 1937 which, while concerned with the establishment of a university in East Africa, was, according to Ashby, "a seminal document; it is the first published exposition of British policy for university education in Tropical Africa." (Ashby 1966 p. 197). It would appear revolutionary, for not only does it reiterate the needs for universities in the colonial territories, it also was prepared to accept ideas from America — hitherto considered a rather questionable educational influence on the colonies by the British.

By 1942 the ideas, motives and demands necessary to establish colonial universities were supplied by the disparate bureaucratic commissions set up at various years by the government since 1923. In 1943, the colonial government took the first step by forming two commissions to study the issue of higher education in the colonies. The first, *Commission on Higher Education in West Africa*, under Justice Walter Elliot was to report on the organization and facilities of existing centers of higher education in British West Africa, and to make recommendations regarding future university development in that area. The second, *Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies*, under Justice Cyril Asquith, was given a wider term of reference which was

To consider the principles which should guide the promotion of higher education, learning and research and the development of universities in the colonies, and to explore means whereby universities and other appropriate bodies in the United Kingdom may be able to co−operate with institutions of higher education in the colonies in order to give effect to these principles (*in* Ashby 1966 p. 212).

The Asquith Commission began working in close consultation with the University of London and indicated its intentions to actually suggest adapting the London university external degree format to suit African educational expectations. The University of London in turn was quite willing to provide the role model and welcomed the opportunity of replicating itself, in a fashion, in Africa. In October 1944, the university went a step further to work out the modalities for creating the now famous *special relationship* bondage with any proposed higher institutions in British colonial Africa in which all degrees awarded under this relationship were University of London degrees. This arrangement was made even *before* the Asquith Report was even submitted. As Ashby perceived,

the beneficial effect of this foresight cannot be exaggerated. It ensured that when the Commission's recommendations were made public in the following July [1945], all the tortuous and time−consuming motions of academic diplomacy which are essential before a university can be persuaded to agree to anything had already been completed (Ashby 1966 p. 214).

The Asquith Commission report was published in 1945 and became the first British policy on higher education in African colonies. A central recommendation of the commission was the establishment of an Inter−Universities Council (IUC) for Higher Education in the colonies to assist the development of new higher educational institutions. The IUC was to be advisory with no executive powers, but would work in tandem with British universities and the colonial office in discharging its duties.

The Asquith Commission report was, on the whole, less anthropological than say, Phelps−Stokes Fund report of 1922, although its conception of higher education in Africa was almost evangelical. Not only does it build upon the expected framework of the University of London as a model for African universities, it amplified the export of British higher educational philosophy to Africa. The Commission recommended, for instance, that

in the interest of higher education in the colonies, it is essential that universities should be established at as early a date as possible in those areas which are not now served by an existing university. The immediate objective is to produce men and women who have the standards of public service and the capacity for leadership which the progress of self government demands and to assist in satisfying the need for persons with professional qualifications required for the economic and social development of the colonies (*in* Thomson 1956 p. 362).

Thus education and political power became fused in the Asquith vision of higher education in the colonies. And this was a vision readily acceptable to nationalist Africans because it provided them with a path to freedom from colonialism by giving them the potentials to polish their elite status. This particular strategy was strongly criticized by Ashby which he called *Asquith Doctrine* because it recommended what he considered inappropriate educational framework for the colonies. The *doctrine*, to him

was a vivid expression of British cultural parochialism: its basic assumption was that a university system appropriate for Europeans brought up in London and Manchester and Hull was also appropriate for Africans brought up in Lagos and Kumasi and Kampala. There is no sign that the [Asquith] Commission considered whether the university systems to be found in Minneapolis or Manila or Tokyo might be more appropriate (Ashby 1964 p. 19).

Other critical observations of the Asquith Commission's report, although in different directions, dealt with not just the structure of the proposed institutions, but also with their curricula, for as Thomson (1956 p. 365) argued,

The problem...is whether it is wise to develop universities like Oxford and Cambridge for primitive and impoverished people and to try to do it quickly...Should there be, for instance, deliberate encouragement of medicine, agriculture, veterinary science and all types of engineering in the immediate future, with some sacrifice of the humanities?

This view of course did not take into consideration whether the Africans would *prefer* these disciplines to humanities for development purposes. Further, in the genesis of university education, at least in Nigeria, there were colonially expressed views that the Asquith *doctrine* would not be unwelcome in African intellectual circles. For instance, according to Mellanby (1963 p. 141), in the considerations of the establishment of the University College, Ibadan,

There was intense feeling that more Nigerians should be given the opportunity to qualify for 'senior service' posts which meant that they must be able to obtain degrees of a standard equal to those in London. There was little political pressure for any integration of the university with anything specifically African; in fact there was considerable suspicion lest we might be fobbing off Nigeria with a second−rate university which made radical experiments very difficult to conduct.

There were nevertheless other caustic critics of the Asquith doctrine. Balogh (1955, 1962) for instance was critical of the *doctrine*'s "misconceived educational programmes in Africa" and advocated "rural renascence" as the only possible educational strategy for Africa with literally back to the roots approach. And because of its emphasis as a colonial African elite training ground, little attempts were made at adapting the curricula of the proposed universities to African realities.

The report of the Elliot Commission, *Higher Education in West Africa,* also submitted to the colonial government in London in 1945 provided the definitive framework for actually creating the first universities in British West African territories. The report was submitted in two parts: the *majority* and the *minority* reports.

The majority report supported the view that Achimota (Ghana), Fourah Bay (Sierra Leone), and an additional college at Ibadan (Nigeria) should be developed into university colleges offering courses leading to external degrees of the University of London.

The minority report did not accept this view of three university colleges, and instead recommended Ibadan to be the site of a West African University College to serve as a unitary institution with an autonomous governing body (Kolinsky 1985).

The British colonial government accepted the minority report of building a single university college in West Africa at Ibadan, Nigeria, although due to protests from Ghana, eventually approval was also given for the development of a university college at Achimota "providing most of the finance was supplied by the colony itself" (Kolinsky 1985 p. 33). The University College Ibadan was opened in January 1948 and incorporated by the government in September of the same year; at the same time integrating the Yaba medical school which closed down in December 1947.

As originally proposed in the Asquith Commission report and approved by the colonial government, the academic programs of the university college Ibadan reflected, through their *special relationship* those of the University of London. Under this arrangement, it was intended that courses of study and examinations in the new university college should receive the joint approval of local and University of London authorities with local conditions being taken into account. Students whom London was satisfied had properly completed the work leading to a degree were granted that degree by the University of London. In this way, the quality of educational programs were guaranteed, for as the first Principal of the College, Kenneth Mellanby argued,

It was essential that any graduate from Ibadan should obtain a qualification which ensured that he received the same treatment if employed by the Nigerian government as either a Nigerian who had gone to a British university or an expatriate graduate entering the country (Mellanby 1963 p. 141).

Thus the link with the University of London ensured that the degrees obtained in Nigeria would be on the same *gold standard* footing with those of the University of London. This would shape any attempts at reforming the Nigerian university curricula.

American Aid Agencies and Nigerian Educational Development

But while the British *gold standard* was entrenched as an essential value in the premier Nigerian university, there were dissenting voices as far back as 1955 advocating for an alternative, decidedly American, framework for higher education at least for Nigeria. As Philip Coombs (1964) noted,

Nigeria, like several other new African nations, has turned to the United States for help. Even more than money they want imaginative ideas and access to talent. While valuing highly the considerable good that came to them — and is still coming to them — from British education, they want to fashion a more relevant curriculum and more efficient and effective teaching methods (including very unconventional ones if necessary) which will serve far more students, better and sooner (p. 109).

The new advocacy was aimed at harnessing American experiences in *higher* education for African situations, for as Ashby (1966 p. 263) observed “a period of study in America frequently nurtures a dissatisfaction with the British system.” Early advocates, at least in giving some consideration to American educational ideas to Nigeria, included Ojike (1944), Okeke (1955), Ukpaby (1956) and Okongwu (1964). This was to have far reaching consequences in Nigeria, for as van den Berghe (1973 p. 64) noted,

The international orientation of Nigerian scholars is strikingly evident in the fact that in a number of academic issues such as reforms in the curriculum or in the structure of department, the place where a person received his higher education is often a much better predictor of alignments than nationality, ethnicity or any other factor...Thus we frequently see an alignment between Britons and British trained Nigerians versus Americans and American−trained Nigerians. Since [the University of Ibadan] was modelled after British universities, the first group tends to be conservative, while the latter tends to be reformist.

The American approach to education — lack of centralized bureaucratic control, universal access to mass higher education (provided one can pay for it), relevant and flexible curriculum, modularity which encourages mobility — had certain appeals to a nation in a hurry to throw off the yokes of imposed colonialism. Further, in describing African approaches to higher education, Howe (1964 p. 172) had noted that

whereas the preference of those African academics who had not been exposed to more than the British system in Africa or elsewhere was for no basic change, those who had studied under both American and British systems — including those in Africa — favored change.

Certainly, figures available seemed to indicate a growing American influence on choices of places to study among Nigerian students, and this may have a bearing on the reform process that took place in Nigerian education from mid 1960s to the 1980s. Table 3.1 indicates a sample of the trend in the mid 1970s.

TABLE 3.1

Nigerian Students in American and British Universities, 1975−89

YEAR	U.S.A.	U.K.
1975	11440	2762
1976	11870	3690
1977	13510	4312
1978	16220	4192
1979	16360	3875
1980	N/A	4136
1981	15651	4306
1982	N/A	N/A
1983	N/A	3999
1984	15703	2868
1985	11770	2704
1986	10324	N/A
1987	8340	N/A

1988	5337	1169
1989	4040	N/A

(Source: *UNESCO Statistical Year Books 1976−1991*)

This trend in American preference by Nigerian students prompted the editors of *West Africa* Magazine (London) to comment, as late as 1980,

That Britain is in second place to the United States could be attributed to the stagnating British technology, [and] dwindling influence in world affairs (West Africa, February 11, 1980 p. 276).

Thus although American tendencies appearing in the early American educated Nigerians has shown preference for American education for Nigeria, it was of course expected that the British colonial government would treat such development with extreme caution. A typical reaction was given by de Kiewiet (1959 p. 140) who warned against "a brash and unwanted intrusiveness on the part of American education" in making inroads in Africa by cautioning that

The American educational system is the costliest in the world. We are told that it is also the most wasteful...Not all the technical aid, loans and investments that are realistically in sight can do more than correct a proportion of the grim facts of poverty. A doctrinaire offer of even the very best and most superior achievements and discoveries of American education would be no more than a mirage unless there is a balance with trade and taxes, industry and investment, profit and progress (p. 135).

Again admittedly not all Nigerian students in the 1950s and 1960s studied at the "proper" American universities, thus giving further leeway to a belief that American education was inferior to British. For instance, the earliest African students in America were confronted with the double standard of segregation, and

the American−educated African leaders who emerged during the struggles for independence attended [these] segregated colleges. Dr. Nmandi Azikwe, former President of the Republic of Nigeria, was one of the first, and he was followed by many fellow−Ibos. There was a greater wealth among the Yorubas of Western Nigeria, which enabled Yoruba students to journey to the more prestigious institutions in England. Being also more involved with the colonial government at Lagos in the West, they received more encouragement and financial assistance from the British (Henderson 1967 p. 49).

Consequently the admission pattern of Nigerian students in the American universities indicated that from 1928 to 1958, about 56% of the 171 located students attended historically black colleges, 26% went to “third rate teachers colleges and similar institutions, and 18% studied at Ivy League schools” (Henderson 1979 p. 50). It is the products of these systems collectively that eventually molded the destiny of Nigerian nation as a whole.

The end of the Second World War made it clear that colonialism has also ended. The new international agenda was shifted to curbing the tide of Soviet communism, especially in African countries with the United States at the forefront of the attack with the major assistance of the big three foundations: Carnegie Corporation, Rockefeller Foundation and Ford Foundation. As Berman (1979 p. 146) argued,

the foundations accomplished this primarily by funding programs linking the educational systems of the new African nations to the values, *modus operandi*, and institutions of the United States.

Closely connected with avowed non−political and technocratic involvement in African education by the foundations was the more explicit objective of increasing the United States economic expansion, continued access to raw materials abroad and control of markets for American exports. “These themes mark the prologue to the African programs of the Carnegie Corporation, the Ford and Rockefeller foundations since 1945” (Berman 1979 p. 149).

To all intents and purposes, therefore, a new colonial path was being carved out in African countries even as the old one was dying. In Nigeria, for instance, the process of bonding the country to British structural framework started with the United Africa Company which was a purely commercial venture later taken over by the British government and provided a convenient vehicle for colonization. It would seem the new American strategy would follow different patterns, but achieve the same goals: loyalty to the interests of the United States, for as Berman (1979 p. 151) further analyzed,

it should come as no surprise that the foundations whose boards of trustees and administrative ranks were dominated by men sharing this common ideology, sought to create circumstances in the developing world that would ensure change that was predictable, manageable, and consonant with the perceived economic and strategic interests of the United States.

While the foundations representatives themselves have denied these motives (see “Responses to Edward H. Berman” in *Harvard Educational Review* Volume 49 Number 2 1979 p. 180) nevertheless the mere presence of the facilities made available by the foundations — training in the U.S., establishment of projects, setting up linkages between Nigerian and American universities — all have contributed to make the elements of American education distinct features on the Nigerian educational landscape in the two decades after Nigerian political independence. And as Gruhn and Anthony (1980 p. 13) noted,

the dominant type of assistance was the rural development project funded by the U.S. government carried out by a land grant institution, providing U.S. technical expertise and opportunities for study in the United States.

In Nigeria, the first of such elements was the establishment of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in the Eastern Region of Nigeria patterned on the American land grant philosophy with the Michigan State University as the model.

On May 5, 1954 the Eastern regional government in Nigeria sponsored a mission led by Dr. Nmandi Azikwe who was then the Premier of the Region to seek the cooperation of Europe and America in the training and recruitment of technicians, and provide training for Nigerians in vocational higher education. This was necessitated by the inability of the University College, Ibadan to admit as many students as were qualified due to restrictive admission policies. The basic purpose of the mission was to attract investors to accelerate the economic development of the Eastern region. One significant result of the mission was a recommendation that the Eastern region should set up a full autonomous university which would emphasize not only the cultural values of the nation, but also vocational inspirations.

The Eastern Regional government accepted this key recommendation of the mission and on May 18, 1955 the University of Nigeria law was passed by the Eastern Nigeria House of Assembly, and later it received Royal Assent (Ijoma 1986 p. 4). The university was to be funded by the Eastern Nigeria Marketing Board. In 1958 technical assistance in respect to the new University was sought from Inter−Universities Council, the International Cooperation Administration (which later became the United States Agency for International Development), the latter contracting the Michigan State University into the process. As a result of these efforts, the University of Nigeria Nsukka was established, and opened on October 17, 1960 — just a few weeks after Nigerian political independence from Britain. It started with as closely American undergraduate degree structure as possible — complete with courses split up into credits, a general studies curriculum and in a sharp departure from the British degree patterns, did not create separate "honours" or "general" degrees for the students. Courses were offered in as many disciplines as possible and students make up their degree requirements by selecting those courses they want up a maximum number of 129 credit units before graduation, depending on the final degree.

The Ashby Paradigm and Nigerian Higher Education, 1960−1980

Thus by the 1950s a new scramble for Africa in the wake of the Cold War had begun, this time by the major American aid agencies, as well as some U.S. institutions. In Nigeria, they were literally falling over themselves, as a Nigerian government official complained;

There are six separate foreign teams attempting to project Nigeria's need for university graduates with various degree qualifications and each one is going about it differently. The burden on our ministries which attempt to comply with their requests for information is unbearable. Although they all want basically the same information, Unesco wants it in one form, USAID in another, the British High Commission in still another, and several foundations have their own ideas on the subject. Worse still, these agencies fight each other for control instead of co−operating (*in* Butler 1966 p. 3).

However, if one individual could be identified as being the central catalyst in American, most especially Carnegie Corporation's involvement with Nigerian higher education, then it was Alan Pifer. Pifer served as an officer of the Fulbright program in Britain up to 1953, and therefore had an opportunity to acquaint himself with British educational system in the colonies, although always with the view for the role the United States will play in African education (Rhoades, 1959). His transfer to the Carnegie Corporation as Staff Assistant in 1954 made it easier for him to begin to marshal his grand design of American involvement in African education. At a meeting held in May 1954 at the Carnegie Corporation headquarters in New York at which the Inter−University Council was included, the British were informed that the Carnegie Corporation would provide more focus on higher education in British colonies. Further, the idea of undertaking a broad study of higher education in Nigeria was also suggested by Alan Pifer, which was actually presented as an attempt to review the Asquith and Elliot Reports on education in the colonies. Nigerian was chosen by Pifer because of its size and population — even by then the most populous country among the colonial dominions in Africa.

The British were, however, not entirely pleased with this apparent concern with African education by the Americans. This was more as the Asquith and Elliot Reports have assumed cult status in colonial education. Further, the University of London buoyed by the *special relationship* engine which saw its degrees *successfully* (at least there were no immediately *measured* adverse effects) transplanted in Africa would hardly welcome any challenge to its orthodoxy which had the full backing of the British colonial office. To "review" the Asquith and Elliot Reports, especially by Americans, would be to challenge an established dogma. Indeed the Inter−University Council went as far as to reassert its confidence of these two Reports in June 1955. Ironically, in the same month, the principals of the six African Asquith Colleges met informally in Jamaica and reached a consensus that the Asquith principle needed re−evaluation, with the meeting considering, rather favorably, the American pattern of education. However, as a starting point, the meeting considered a review of the post−secondary school provisions in the colonies on a broad basis, rather than just university education. Interestingly, Pifer was also present at this meeting.

However, to prevent rivalry developing between 'friendly nations' — particularly the Americans and the British over education (and ultimately political and economic influence) in the African countries,

it became evident that if the Americans and British did not co−operate over education in Africa — particularly if they became rivals peddling competing patterns of education — great damage might be done (Ashby 1966 p. 268).

Ashby did not make it clear who will be the victim of such 'great damage' — African education or Euro−American political and economic long term interests. To work out a more effective strategy for Anglo−American cooperation in African education, the Carnegie Corporation engaged Vernon McKay, professor of political science and a specialist in African affairs at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies to organize and convene a "small off−the−record" meeting at the Greenbier Hotel in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, May 21−25, 1958 attended by about twenty three participants who

represented the most relevant American foundations, the key U.S. government aid agencies, and important American business and individual interests, as well as a number of key Britons concerned with Africa (Murphy 1976 p. 60).

The conference was held under the title of *Conference on Problems of Assistance to Tropical African Countries*. And in contrast to later held such meetings, the Greenbrier Conference had neither African participants nor any first−hand information on African assessments of African needs and priorities. According to the historian of the Greenbrier Conference,

This was not unusual for the time; it was commonly felt in American and British circles that Africans had not yet become sophisticated in this area, that they were inexperienced, and that their identification of needs might be either uninformed or politically biased, or both. A major concern at Greenbier, in fact, was on the best ways to train more Africans for high−level positions and help them gain experience and judgment (Murphy 1976 p. 60).

An interesting argument, since only Africans can speak for themselves, their needs and the needs of their communities in the era of independence. To augment this view, Ashby (1965) further argued that

A common comment about adaptation in African universities...is that it ought to be left to the Africans. I disagree. The British designed the African universities. Universities are very intricate organisms. What is needed therefore, before it is too late, is partnership in adaptation between designer and user (p. 81).

The decisions taken at the Greenbrier Conference were to provide the basis for such partnership, especially where it was concluded that the Conference was to explore ways of conducting

a review of Nigeria's requirements for higher education, carried out by Nigerians, Britons, and Americans; this proposal was the first tangible fruit of the idea of re−examining the character and principles of African universities...It was suggested that Carnegie Corporation and the Nuffield Foundation [England] might jointly sponsor and finance such a review, if the Nigerian Government welcomed the idea (Murphy 1976 p. 61).

In addition, there should be a study of African students trained overseas, factors affecting their employment upon return to Africa, and the relevance of their overseas education to employment and development needs;

Nigeria was felt to be one country in which such a study could be especially useful, and it was hoped that it might be carried out by the Nigerian Government with the help of Carnegie Corporation or Ford Foundation (Murphy 1976 p. 61).

A further outcome of the Conference was the establishment of an African Liaison Committee, “designed to serve as coordinating body of American educators through whom all proposals for work in higher education in Africa would be processed” (Berman 1977 p. 79). The Committee was also to serve as the American liaison with the British Inter−Universities Council, which was actually represented at the Greenbier conference. The liaison committee eventually became the Overseas Liaison Committee of the American Council on Education.

Consequently, Alan Pifer now Executive Associate, British Dominions and Colonies of the Carnegie Corporation approached the British in mid 1958 with the proposal for a full study of Nigerian higher educational needs. While the British supported such move, especially as it was to be paid by someone else, the Inter−Universities Council nevertheless declined *official* participation. The Nigerians, however, were more receptive. In talks with the Federal Government of Nigeria, Alan Pifer

was able to elicit a request for the study from the Prime Minister and other Nigerian leaders, who saw it as an opportunity and treated it as their own initiative (Murphy 1976 p. 73).

Consequently, the Nigerian government was invited by the Carnegie Corporation to request the establishment of the *Commission on Post−School Certificate and Higher Education in Nigeria*. Sir Eric Ashby (later Lord Ashby of Brandon) was nominated as the Chairman by the Corporation, although he was a bit cautious and insisted on being satisfied about Nigerian receptivity before agreeing to serve. His acceptance, near the end of December 1958 was therefore tentative, further caused by his own commitments to Clare College, Cambridge to which he had just been elected the Master. Moreover, he insisted on a formal request from the Nigerian Federal Government to chair the proposed commission, rather than from the Carnegie Corporation. However, in January 1959 he accepted the Chairmanship of the Commission — thus it became *The Ashby Commission* — on the condition that its work be delayed until after Nigeria had become a sovereign independent nation in 1960. This was not acceptable to the Carnegie Corporation, and eventually Ashby was persuaded to accept the task without postponement.

By March 1959 the idea of conducting the study had become a firm item on an agenda, and on March 19, the Corporation’s trustees approved a grant of $100,000 to the Federal Government of Nigeria for the study (Murphy 1976). Thus, according to Berman (1977),

The subsidization of the [commission] by the Carnegie Corporation ensured a future role for American concepts in African education (p. 80)

Other motives, besides purely philanthropic, had been consistently attributed to the activities of the American aid agencies in African education. Berman (1977) continued to further analyze that

Carnegie Corporation’s African programs...were designed to ensure that Africans were, at the very least, not overtly antagonistic to the United States and western concepts of democracy...This should come as no surprise. It would be unreasonable to expect an American institution to do anything antithetical to its

perceived best interests (p. 81).

Indeed this very motive seemed to have been acknowledged by some of the foundations themselves. For instance, during his tour of Nigeria in getting the idea of the study survey of Nigerian higher education accepted, Alan Pifer addressed the Ibadan Philosophical Society on Sunday November 16, 1958 where he acknowledged,

Obviously the United States has a strategic interest in the African continent...a continent which occupies a fifth of the earth's surface cannot be without interest to us and of course to the whole western world. This does not mean that we can and should necessarily expect new African states to throw in their lot with the West. They may well prefer a neutralist position. But we do want their friendship. An unfriendly Africa would be a direct threat to our security. It is only since World War II that this has begun to be appreciated in America, but the recognition of it is now quite widespread (Pifer 1958 p. 9).

This interpretation was not restricted to the activities of the Carnegie Corporation alone. Long after the Nigerian universities had become independent institutions, the Rockefeller Foundation also became involved with higher education in Nigeria and allocated $9 million to the University of Ibadan between 1963 to 1972. As Berman (1979 p. 159) concludes about this,

the concentration of Rockefeller money in the University of Ibadan....meant, in the words of a prominent Foundation official, that 'our dollars will...be able to exert an extraordinary leverage.'

However, the focus of this book is *not* the political significance of the American aid activities in relation to Nigerian (or other third word countries) government and economy. This perspective had been covered ably by very numerous studies (Arnove 1980, Emerson 1967, Khoi 1976, Kitchen 1983, Mende 1973, Newsom 1973, Ogene 1974, Rotberg 1988, Smith 1972, and Whitaker 1978 to mention a few).

The focus here is on the mechanism of reform process especially if the reform catalyst is from another different social structure to the adopting unit, its management, and what lessons could be derived from this. Any other undertones would obviously interweave themselves within this matrix.

Subsequently, the *official* purpose of the Ashby Commission which was launched on May 4, 1959 was "to conduct an investigation into Nigeria's needs in the field of post−School Certificate and Higher Education over the next twenty years" (Nigeria 1960 p. 2). The Commission was made up of three Americans, three Englishmen and three Nigerians (one each from North, East and Western regions). The Commission submitted its report — *The Ashby Report* — on September 2, 1960. As Ashby (1965 p. 74) said of the report,

one purpose of the report was to release Nigerian universities as painlessly as possible from some of the rigidities of the Asquith plan without jettisoning its virtues.

The Ashby Report made a series of recommendations which provided the basis for Nigerian higher education in the decade of independence. Although it was an American sponsored commission, and although in the Report it was advocated that Nigeria should consider the usefulness of the American land grant universities in the future planning of its universities, nevertheless the Report remained true to the British leanings of its Chairman who drafted most of the report himself (Ashby 1965 p. 74; 1966 p. 269; Murphy 1976 p. 77). It confirmed the English pattern of education — complete with a sixth form — and urged the sustenance of that format of education. The binary system of post secondary education inherited from Britain was also to be retained: "universities should limit their responsibilities to work of degree standard and leave to other institutions responsibility of awarding sub−degree qualifications" (Ashby 1966 p. 270).

The Report was also against open competition among Nigerian universities, and opposed a federal university system with all the institutions of higher education in the country taking a common degree which was safeguarded by teams of external examiners. It did, however accept the notion of independent universities each offering its own degrees but each new university sponsored by some overseas university (Ashby 1966 p. 272). Again it was not clear why any future Nigerian universities would have to be bonded to any overseas institution in an era of independence.

This was more as the Report recommended four *independent* universities in Nigeria, one in the Eastern region (The University of Nigeria, Nsukka, which already existed totally independent of the recommendations of the Report), one in the West (University College, Ibadan, which later became the University of Ibadan), another university in Lagos (which was later established as the University of Lagos) and a university in the north, which became the Ahmadu Bello University located at Zaria. Significantly enough, the Report also recommended the establishment of a coordinating agency for all the universities in the country in the form of a National Universities Commission (NUC) loosely modeled on the British University Grants Committee (UCG).

Partly in the mood of confidence and the feeling of autonomy generated by the Report, the *special relationship* link between the University of London and the University College Ibadan was severed in October 1962 giving total independence in the award of degrees to the now University of Ibadan, an act which was accomplished in 1965 when the first graduates of University of Ibadan were produced.

But in releasing the Nigerian university system from the rigidities of the Asquith *doctrine*, the Ashby Report gave rise to the *Ashby paradigm*, which saw the use of higher education for economic development, especially through the production of scientific and technological university graduates. As Ahmed (1989 p. 6) pointed out,

one of the main goals since 1960 has been that higher education should produce qualified persons able to promote national economic development. This was interpreted to mean that the system of higher education should lay emphasis on the production of engineers, technologists, agriculturalists, veterinarians, architects, and other categories of the skilled persons who should be actively engaged in economic production (for a more intensive analysis of the Ashby paradigm, see also Ahmed, 1987).

As a result of the recommendations in the Ashby report, the paradigm of *investment in education* was accepted by the Nigerian government with particular emphasis on the production of scientific and technical manpower to aid in rapid social transformation, and this became the subsequent post independence theme of

Nigerian higher education. Indeed the National Policy on Education (1981) went as far as to advocated that

the ratio of Science to Liberal Arts students in our universities has been fixed at 60:40 during the Third National Development period. This ratio will continue to be reviewed in accordance with the manpower needs of the country (Nigeria 1981 p. 25).

The Ashby Report also made an appeal for foreign aid to Nigerian education (Nigeria 1960 p. 15, 17) and subsequently recommended the establishment of a *Bureau for External Aid to Education* as part of the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Education. This started off in 1961 with an initial grant of $225,000 from the Carnegie Corporation (Murphy 1976). Over the years the *Bureau* had made it possible for thousands of Nigerian students to get mainly middle−level training and occasionally high level training in over twenty countries spread all over the world. The predominant provisions in scholarship aid, however, were made by the former communist block countries of Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and the Soviet Union (now Commonwealth of Independent States).

Another significant aftermath of the Ashby Report was the granting of $102,000 by the Carnegie Corporation to support the Nigerian Committee of Vice−Chancellors, a body which, in the spirit of the Ashby Report, helped to maintain communication and cooperation among the country's autonomous federal universities (Murphy 1976).

However, by early to 1970s, most of the recommendations of the Ashy Report were either abandoned or over−taken by events. Indeed, there seemed to have been a withering of American aid agency interests in Nigeria (see, for instance, Howe and Hunter 1972). Essentially, the British elements were discarded, and there was movement towards a more American educational framework. For instance, the sixth form which arose so much sentiments was abolished entirely (see Chapter 5). The inherited British educational configuration of 7−5−2−3 (seven years in primary school, five in a single tier secondary school, two years in an Advanced level school, and three for a university degree) was abandoned and a more American 6−3−3−4 system adopted (six years for primary school, a three year junior secondary school, followed by another three year senior secondary school and a standard four year university degree). This, however, was possibly coincidental and the outcome of other factors acting on the Nigerian educational structures, rather than specific response to foreign aid agency initiatives or directives. As we will subsequently see, however, the moves to transform Nigerian education from its British roots and provide it with more American outlook was made essentially by American trained Nigerian educational policy makers in the years immediately after political independence from Britain in 1960.

Continuous creation of states in the 1970s and 1980s has led to the creation of more universities, far beyond the original four recommended by the Ashby Report; (these were Lagos, Ibadan, Nsukka and Ahmadu Bello; the Report did not support the establishment of University of Ife) and that was only *after* some 28 *known* private universities were abolished in 1984 (see Chapter 6). For instance, the Ashby Report projected about 7500 university intake by 1970. But by 1970 the *actual* enrollment figure was 15,272 (Baikie 1974 p. 3); in 1989 it had jumped to 138,004 (divided into 36,563 females and 103,191 males)(NUC 1990 p. T1). Thus while the output of graduates from Ibadan, ABU and Nsukka universities in 1964 was 747, by 1974 when more universities were established the total number of students who graduated from Nigerian universities that year was 5,500 (Ojo 1986 p. 65). This was in addition to the number of Nigerians trained in overseas universities. In 1966, for instance, 2,418 Nigerians obtained their degrees outside Nigeria (Ojo 1979 p. 176).

However, by August 1991 when the total number of states in Nigeria was 30, there were about 36 universities in the country (see Chapter 6), with many states having two universities (a Federal as well as a state owned university), while ironically enough, some states do not have any university at all (e.g. Katsina, Jigawa, Kogi, Yobe, Kebbi; all located in the North) although it would be only a matter of time before they also include a university on their agenda. Clearly, therefore, Nigerian higher education has become more than an *investment*, as envisaged by the Ashby paradigm; it has become a full industry.

The Structure and Evaluation of the University Curricula, 1948−1988

Perhaps not surprisingly, the founding and sustaining structure of Nigerian university undergraduate curriculum was patterned along the lines of the University of London external degree, with modifications in contents as deemed necessary. This was considered a severely limiting factor by Fafunwa and Hanson (1974) who argued against

the nearly inflexible nature of academic programs that permit students few choices of subjects and, in some cases, no choices at all...Such professional courses as Agriculture, Law and Medicine have no prerequisites for admission other than the fact that the students has received “appropriate” examination grades in “appropriate” subjects (Fafunwa and Hanson 1974 p. 109).

This rigidity extended also to the admission process. Prior to 1988, the secondary schools and the universities shared common timeline mechanisms — virtually opening and closing at the same time. The traditional division of the academic year, starting in October and ending in June was maintained, and was split into three terms in both the schools and the universities. University faculties with school cross−overs, such as the Faculties of Education where undergraduate students needed to go on teaching practice in secondary schools, usually worked out an arrangement for the teaching practice to be held during the “long vacation” (usually June to September) where some secondary school students were often engaged in extra classes.

Prior to 1978, admission was controlled by the individual universities in a process that usually started in March and ended in June. By October the universities had finished their admission processes and started their lectures. Because each university conducted its admissions directly, there was relatively little timelag between application, processing and admission. Registration, due to the nature of the subject system offered in the university, was an affair that usually lasted about a week.

Similarly, prior to 1988, the Nigerian university curricula structure followed a rigid pattern based on the subject system where students enrolled in the same program study the same subjects and graduate — after passing the necessary examinations — at the same time. In many ways, it was the quintessential classical university degree of the European middle ages. The degree itself was divided into three parts: Part I, Part II, and Part III; each part corresponding to an academic year.

The emphasis of the curriculum was definitely on depth, rather than breadth. Two main degree formations emerged out of post−independence degree structures in Nigeria, leading to either an honors degree or a

general degree. The first was a 3−2−1 pattern in which a student took three subjects in the first year, two in the second year and one, leading to specialization (the honors degree), in the final year. The second pattern was a 3−2−2 pattern where a student took three subjects in the first year, and dropped one in the second year and continued with the remaining two all the way to graduation in the third year leading to, in most cases, the award of the combined honors degree.

Each subject in turn was broken into individual *courses*. There was no fixed number of courses per subject as this varied with the subjects. However, the undergraduate degree examination was patterned on the subjects, with students sitting for papers that normally cluster the courses into subjects. In all cases, the three subjects studied by each student need *not* be related, although for administrative convenience, students were often made to study subjects that can easily be fitted together in the time−table. Further, cross−disciplinary transitions were rarely allowed; for instance, students studying humanities have to choose all their subjects from the humanities faculties. There was also no common core of subjects to be studied. In addition to depth, this made the Nigerian undergraduate degree rather specialized.

Students were examined at the end of the session of nine months duration split into three *terms*, starting in October and finishing in the following June, although a series of tests, for the purposes of continuous assessment may be given during the session. Since courses were clustered together in the subjects, and in examination, each subject can have as many sections as possible each devoted to a specific course. In some universities failure in a *section* of a paper meant failure in the *courses* covered by that section, and was often considered failure in the *paper*. Thus even if a student has passed the other sections (often other courses) in a paper, failure in one section may lead to resitting the *entire* paper.

Failure in any paper at the sessional examination led to *resit* in the subject, normally in September. Failure below certain minimum acceptable marks in the mean achievement of the student in all the subjects offered may lead to either the student being asked to repeat the year, or to withdraw from the university.

Whatever the route, the final classification was as important as the entire educational process itself to the student. The degree classification not only reflects the quality of the degree obtained, but also determines the sort of future the individual could negotiate for himself. First Class and Second Class (Upper) degrees provide excellent employment opportunities as well as improved chances of being admitted for graduate studies in all Nigerian universities. Second Class (lower) tended to be the average degree result, while Third Class is the lowest acceptable outcome. While many students get excellent jobs with Second (lower) qualifications and often also get admitted to graduate schools, students with third class degrees are normally informed that they “need not apply” for all graduate studies or some jobs in most advertisements.

Nigerian Higher Education After the Ashby Commission

The recommendations of the Ashby Commission remained the basic guidelines around which higher education, especially the universities, was set up, managed and controlled in Nigeria for about three decades. The first official attempt to review this paradigm was made on December 5, 1990 when the Nigerian Federal Military Government inaugurated a Commission on the Review of Higher Education in Nigeria, under the chairmanship of Chief Gray Longe (thus the Commission was referred to as the *Longe Commission*). Of the 15 terms of reference of the Commission, four have direct bearing on the themes covered in this book. These were

1. Re−examine the developmental role of higher education in a developing country such as Nigeria.

2. Review the development of Post−Secondary and Higher education in Nigeria since the last comprehensive report of the 1960 Commission on Post−Secondary and Higher Education in Nigeria.

3. Review the admissions requirements for post−secondary and higher education institutions and advise changes where necessary.

4. Propose eligibility criteria for the establishment of future universities in Nigeria (Nigeria 1991 p. 15−16).

It is interesting that the main report of the Commission which included its core recommendations merely re−affirmed faith in the Ashby paradigm as it affected the academic programs of Nigerian universities, producing as it did, an array of recommendations which either stated the obvious (such as emphasis on science in university programs, which is already enshrined in the National Policy on Education) or noting that

In re−examining the developmental role of higher education, the Commission identified education as the most powerful instrument for social reform which developed in the individual knowledge, skill and character training, teaching, study or experience. The Commission viewed development as a growth process by which any human society sought to achieve, with the resources available to it, change with progress and improvement in its standard of living and quality of life. The Commission discussed the role of higher education as enumerated in the National Policy on Education and the Philosophy of Nigerian education in details (Nigeria, 1992 p. 10).

The Longe Commission provided many Nigerians with an official platform to express their dissatisfaction with the current school to university transition process in Nigerian universities, especially the “quota” system which acknowledges educational disparity in various sections of the country and therefore worked out a formula to ensure a balanced representation and opportunity to higher education for all Nigerians. The recommendations of the Commission, and the government’s reaction will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

Its point of departure with the Ashy Commission report were only in the politically correct areas of women’s access to higher education, of which the Longe Commission report spent considerable time. The Longe Commission report would probably be more noteworthy for the improved conditions of service (including a higher pay) it negotiated for the higher education staff in Nigeria than for any innovatory insights and strategies for a more effective structuring of Nigerian higher educational programs.

CHAPTER 4

THE EMERGENCE OF THE AMERICAN UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM

In attempts to break away from the British educational tradition, the Nigerian university started taking on an American tinge, principally because of the larger number of Nigerian university academics trained in the U.S. than in the U.K. in the mid 1970s (thanks to Nigerian prosperity as a result of natural resources in the form of oil), and the occupation of strategic policy positions in Nigerian educational development by these U.S. trained academics. Therefore in attempting to understand the attractions of U.S. university system of education that was gradually introduced in the Nigerian university system, first on a voluntary basis, and from 1988 as an official Federal Government educational policy, I would like to briefly analyze the character and development of select features American university curricular structure.

While it is true enough that there is no monolithic American educational system — in the same way as the European educational system can easily be more classified — nevertheless the diversity of the American system of university education has an inherent and consistent structure which yields a pattern through common denominators. Analysis of this structure can provide an insight into the organizational rationale of the system, and ultimately provide analytical anchors in its characterization.

In my analysis of the key elements of the structure of the American university undergraduate curriculum, I would wish to select only those features that made themselves amenable to adoption or adaptation in Nigeria. My discussion in this chapter will therefore center on *general education* which encapsulated the main essence of American undergraduate experience, *the major*, or concentration, and *the credit system*. Although these concepts developed contiguously over time, my treatment of each of these divisions will be on an individual basis to emphasize how each developed historically, politically and its structural characteristics.

The Curriculum That Came From The Old: General Education in American Universities

While the conservative early American undergraduate curriculum of 1636 at Harvard served the puritanical purpose of imparting classical medieval knowledge to students, when the population of the early settlement began to change — and their occupations also began to change — the curriculum too had to change. Merchants, traders, shippers and other professionals had begun to send their children to the university, not to get trained for the Church, but for real life careers in business, law and other professions. Eventually a shifting pattern occurred and the ministry−bound graduates became a minority. By the end of the 18th century, 80% of all university graduates in the early universities were going into other vocations (Hofstadter

1961).

The pressure to diversify their curricula to suit both vocational and social accountability became greater as more universities became established. This was resisted by the universities for the best part of two hundred years, and the American undergraduate curriculum retained its conservative and medieval European heritage.

The American Revolution and the Industrial Revolution occurring in the 1770s to 1780s ignited an Academic Revolution on the American university campus. More power was invested in people and the two revolutions sounded a fanfare for the common man. The industrial revolution paved the way to massive process of industrialization. Thus democracy and free market economy led the way to an academic transformation of the undergraduate landscape. Thomas Jefferson's University of Virginia served as the testing ground. Its 1824 curriculum reflected revolutionary ideas such as availability of *choice* in the offering, and its insistence on the study of law and politics became the two important concerns that became icons in American higher education and were the acorns of the oak that eventually became *general education*.

At the other stage in the theater, the German university system of *electives* became a new approach grafted at Harvard first in 1872 only to seniors, but extended to other students in 1884, and signaled the first broadside attack on the monolithic medieval undergraduate curriculum, and led to the emergence of a system that would guarantee the students' freedom to select courses of study, rather than following a prescribed curriculum. But although the German influence worked deeply into American higher education, it did not produce copies of the German university; under the influence of the American society it produced a variant of the German university. Further, there were two fundamental differences between the American and German universities;

First, higher education is a consumer commodity in America and in an egalitarian society, there must be enough available for all who want it. Second, there is no minimum common level of achievement for degrees among American universities, such as is guaranteed by...degree examinations conducted by external examiners in Britain (Ashby 1974 p. 6).

Thus with its roots in a consumer conscious society, the higher education system in America right after the Revolutions became committed to serve almost any organized interest that asks for it, and can pay for it. Therefore the

transformation from an elite to a mass education involves not merely the expansion of small institutions into bigger ones, or the creation of many new colleges and universities. It involves profound changes in attitudes towards higher education on the part of the students and teachers; in its organization, finance and governance; in the structure of secondary education, in the criteria for admission to higher education, in the recruitment and education of faculty; in curriculum, physical planning, and much else (Trow, 1991 p. 165).

Mass higher education, of course, was not done at the expense of *standards*; for as Ashby (1974 p. 7) further pointed out,

Not all qualifications are on the gold standard of learning but there is a legitimate market for cheap diplomas...This market does not in any way debase the quality of the good institution. Indeed, by siphoning off students with modest aspirations into universities with modest standards, this system protects high standards in the universities which do have international standing.

Therefore democratic approaches to education, laced with freely borrowed German elective techniques combined to shape a more utilitarian curriculum philosophy at Virginia and Harvard. From 1829, the theme and impetus of democratic education gathered greater momentum with the land grant philosophy that enhanced the mass education appeal of the university. The elitist aura of higher education was rapidly diminishing, and technology had started to become the criteria by which the functions of a university can be effectively determined.

There were, expectedly enough, resistance to this development — diversity, more vocational orientation in the curriculum — seen as undermining the sanctity of the classical heritage in the curriculum. Notably, Yale University disdainfully noted in 1828 that

It is said that the public demand that the doors should be thrown open to all; that education ought to be modified, and varied, to adapt to the exigencies of the country, and the prospects of different individuals, that the instruction given to those who are destined to be merchants, manufacturers, or agriculturists should have special reference to their prospective professional pursuits (*in* Miller 1988 p. 12).

Yale's resistance was a reaction to preserve the *gold standard* of the classical curriculum, and it argued for a common curriculum that gave the *same* education to *all* the students; clearly not acknowledging that different interests have different destinations. But as the century marched on,

higher education would be called upon to prepare growing numbers of citizens for an increasingly greater variety of tasks in an industrial society. The relationship between higher education and the rest of the American society was beginning to change (Miller 1988 p. 13).

The Morrill (Land Grant) Act of 1852 provided a legislative legitimacy to this development and emphasized the practical nature of undergraduate education, particularly agriculture, since in the absence of a science of agriculture geared towards American needs and the American landscape, agricultural education was a concept in search of some concrete validation (Rudolph 1977). The Act provided money though the sale of federal lands for the establishment of at least one college in every state

where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies, and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as related to agriculture and the mechanic arts...in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life (Hofstadter and Smith 1961 p. 568).

What greeted the American society after the civil war of 1861−1865 was the mantle of global industrial leadership and even greater diversification in its social structures. Rapid changes and competitions put a metallic sheen on old vocations and created new ones. A new age has arrived, and only the higher education could adequately equip Americans to confront it. Charles Eliot, the President of Harvard to the turn of the century had the answer when he declared in 1869 that,

With good methods we may confidently hope to give young men of twenty to twenty−five an accurate general knowledge of all the main subjects of human interest, beside a minute and thorough knowledge of one subject which each may select as his principal occupation in life...For unless a general acquaintance with the many branches of knowledge, good so far as it goes, be attainable by great numbers of men, there can be no such thing as an intelligent public opinion; and in the modern world the intelligence of public opinion is the one indispensable condition of social progress (*in* Miller 1988 p. 15).

This good method metamorphosed into a substantial backing for the elective system, which allowed the student to define his own course of study under guidance, thus giving him the opportunity to prepare himself freely for an individually designed destiny. This reaffirmed freedom of a person to discover for himself — goals consistent with a free society. Internal safeguards, of course, were introduced to ensure some measure of rationality; thus course prerequisites ensured that most students got a balanced education from their electives.

Cornell immediately translated this “good method” into a reality and created a curriculum based on *divisions* and *departments*. A division of special sciences and arts offered nine departmental programs in agriculture, mechanical arts, civil engineering, commerce and trade, mining, medicine, law, education, and public service. A second division of science, literature and the arts offered five general courses of study that did not lead to a vocation (Rudolph 1977).

By the beginning of the 20th century, the American undergraduate curriculum had acquired a full utilitarian persona, shaped further by the scientific research ethos that emerged in the American university at the beginning of the century. Diversified curriculum, free elective choices suited to the learners structured and guided interests reflecting social functions of knowledge further shaped the undergraduate curriculum.

However, as the research ethos became more pronounced some institutions paid more attention to graduate education at the expense of undergraduate instruction. Eventually the knowledge pool became so vast that it was stretching the elective system, and hampering its efficiency. Clearly new reforms were needed, and these came in the form of the *major* or concentration, introduced first at the Johns Hopkins in 1877 (Payton 1961). When it was introduced, it was required of students to choose major and minor courses from among the subjects in six different departments, two of them with “marked efficiency”;

the major course must be followed in any subject which the candidate offers as one of his two chief departments of work; the minor courses must be followed in [each of] those subjects taken as subsidiary (*in* Payton 1961 p. 58).

Payton also suggests that the concept of the major and minor was derived from German doctorate program structure. But while Johns Hopkins may have been the first university to ascribe *major* and *minor* to selections of its courses in the senior years of the degree program, Levin (1978) argues that the modern major evolved from the group system which involved broad−based fields of study such as science, philosophy and history/political science. The earliest form of this organization was possibly at the University of Virginia which introduced it in 1825, followed by Cornell in 1868, and Indiana in 1881 where it gained national visibility. In 1901 Yale introduced a system of concentration and distribution which combined a major field of study with courses chosen from groups that were defined by their intellectual style. This was followed by Cornell which, in 1905 abandoned the free electives and insisted that 20% of the students' work should be distributed across four subject areas. Thus by 1905 the concept of major−minor has become another entry in American higher educational lexicon. And

as majors became increasingly specialized, the character of the group system changed. It became the basis for general education distribution requirements (Levin 1978 p. 29).

The main attempt to collectivize the undergraduate curriculum, however, was at Harvard where in 1909 to restore some notions of common learning, a general education component of the undergraduate program, based also on a distribution system was adopted. Students in the first two years were required to choose courses in each of the major divisions of knowledge: the humanities, social sciences and the natural sciences. Thus

without either the presence of the major or the rise of universities, the elective principle by itself might have created a totally formless college curriculum. But the major served to control the use of the new curricular freedoms, and as universities were created, it provided a link of curricular specialization to ease the transition students were to make from old colleges to the advanced levels of education that became available in new institutions (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching 1977 p. 187).

However this distribution system soon staggered and could not satisfy those critics who argued that the abuses of the elective system were only partially eliminated through a system of distribution requirements which did not adequately embrace or define liberal arts education (Conrad 1978 p. 52). This disenchantment soon gave a basis for another reform of the undergraduate curriculum, leading to the emergence of a survey course. It also heralded the arrival of the *General Education Movement* in many institutions, particularly Colombia, Chicago and Michigan State. As Conrad (1978) pointed out,

Each, in its own way, attempted to provide an integrated approach to general education. There was a shared concern for the broad outlines of knowledge, particularly the cultivation and transmission of the philosophical and intellectual inheritance of the western world. These goals were usually achieved by developing inter−disciplinary survey courses and a core curriculum in which all the students participated (Conrad 1978 p. 52).

The survey courses were intended to provide students with a more comprehensive view of the world. The first of such courses was offered at Amherts College in 1914, where

the freshman course, entitled “Social and Economic Institutions,” was designed to serve as an introduction to the arts and sciences; to provide students with “the facts of the human situation” and “a showing of intellectual method;” and to offer instruction in ethics, logic, history, economics, law, and government (Thomas, 1962 p. 67).

Over the years, the survey course became expanded to include overview and introductory courses in academic departments or disciplines such as sociology, biology, and art. In gathering momentum for its spread into American universities, the survey course became a second reincarnation of the general education program, and adapted itself to whatever peculiar circumstances existed on each university campus.

However, it was not until 1946 that the idea of general education as a *core* curriculum appeared with the publication of *General Education in a Free Society*, which came to be known as *The Redbook*, by Harvard. Thus before the 1960s, three characteristics of general education emerged: core curricula, distribution requirements, and free electives.

Core general education programs are common, tightly knit and yet broad and often interdisciplinary series of courses usually required of all students. An example is the one prescribed in the Harvard Redbook. Originally three common general education courses were to be required of all Harvard students — one each in the humanities and social sciences and one of two alternatives in the sciences. According to Levin (1978), about 10% of American colleges have the core curriculum arrangement in the 1970s.

Distribution requirements are designed to ensure that each student takes a minimum number of courses or credits in specified academic areas. For instance, at the University of California, each student is required to take a total of six courses: two each in the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences.

In a free elective curriculum, no general education program is specified by the college. The student can create a general education based on whatever courses he selects. The student may also neglect general education. Amherts College and Brown University operated this system at one stage of their development.

The general education movement seemed to have lost its mettle in the early 1960s when most general education programs in some universities — such as Columbia — were dismantled and given new directions. By the end of the 1960s, the notion of a common core had largely been abandoned (Conrad 1978).

A situation such as this is the raw material from which reforms — again — can be initiated; a testimony to the cyclic nature of the American undergraduate curriculum. The decline of general education is reflected in a study of the undergraduate curricular requirements in 322 institutions which revealed, among others, that

basic and general requirements remain at approximately 37% of the degree requirements, and are roughly divided into 17% humanities and 10% for each of the social and natural sciences (Dressel and DeLisle 1969 p. 30).

By 1974 the decline in general education had set in. When the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education examined 210 four−year colleges and universities between 1967−1974, they discovered that

Most dramatically the proportion of a student's undergraduate program actually devoted to general education was about 22% less in 1974 than in 1967, a drop of about 12 semester credit hours. Of the institutions surveyed, 72% showed this trend and the average decline was approximately 14%, with a range of 1 to 54% (*in* Conrad 1978 p. 55).

The decline in the emphasis of general education was tip of the iceberg of the criticisms labeled against the program, of which there are many, for as Ashby (1971 p. 34) noted,

it was a courageous concept: to introduce the undergraduate to the rudiments of the whole of man's intellectual heritage through surveys or selected episodes of thought. But it does not appear to have succeeded...Even at its best, general education has disappointed its creators; and at its less than best...it may be counterproductive, for it provides information without understanding, and this is liable to destroy a student's intellectual self−confidence. It is better to be ignorant than to have undigested knowledge lumbering one's mind.

Thus the first main criticism against general education was the different ways in which the same term can be subjected to different interpretations making it a

meaningless term since people define it in almost any way their fancies dictate. At Michigan State it means the program and courses of the Basic College, which differs in important respects from the General college at the University of Minnesota...At one institution the full process of stating objectives and constructing a new curriculum of courses specifically geared to those objectives has been followed. In another institution, older courses are simply renamed and thus emerge as a new program of general education. Boston University, Michigan State, and to a lesser extent, the University of Florida operate required courses...At Harvard the requirement may be satisfied by taking some of a variety of courses offered (Mayhew 1960 p. 9).

A second criticism was that general education is superficial and watered−down, dealing as it does, with generalities, rather than the real substance of the subject matter. The development of the survey course is seen as an example of this insipidity, as clearly the vast amount of information under the survey course could not be penetratingly covered in the two years of general education. The sciences were even more vulnerable to this criticism because of the compromises made in their contents for the non−science oriented student.

A third criticism, related to the second one, is that general education does not provide students with information substantive enough to become part of their intellectual equipment, especially as such courses do not prepare students for advanced work in a specialized field. In this respect, science students, for instance, may find it a waste of time since they are going to take more science; with the same applying to humanities

students.

A fourth criticism relates to those who would teach general education. Most faculty who teach it lack the proper training to teach it from the interdisciplinary perspective required, thus forcing them into extra efforts in their attempts to understand the nature of what they are teaching.

Nevertheless, general education still remained a strong element of American undergraduate experience and its reincarnation seemed to be getting stronger, constituting about 39.5% of the curriculum in the late 1980s (Gaff 1991 p. 171) which suggested its reformation in 1980s.

The reformed general education curriculum had the following components: two courses in writing, one course in mathematics, four courses in the humanities, one course in fine arts, two courses in natural science (four credit courses with a laboratory) and three courses in social science (Gaff 1991 p. 72). Also, rather than require a course on some specific topic, universities often teach the topic in several courses across the curriculum. These are common parts of new general education curricula, but they do not often show up in surveys or curriculum transcript studies because the content is infused into existing courses. Certain skills, such as writing, critical thinking and computer literacy, are treated in this manner.

Further, the new general education programs tend to include special features that attempt to capture the distinctive qualities of the particular college, its heritage, or its students.

Organization of Knowledge

As varied as the interpretation given to general education are also the modes of delivery of the system to students — which, interestingly enough, adjusts some of the criticisms against general education. Various universities adopted different methods and approaches. At Michigan State University, general education was introduced in 1944 under the responsibility of an administrative unit called the Basic College whose purpose was to provide a series of comprehensive courses which would provide a broad basic education for freshmen and sophomores in all the divisions of the college. These courses were to be taught by a separate faculty. Seven courses were planned, of which each student was required to take five, subsequently reduced to four totaling 45 credits: communication skills, social science, humanities, and natural sciences and students were required to take all the four. Each course was to extend throughout the year (Dunbar 1963).

Columbia University, which started its program in 1919 operated it entirely within the College. Included in the program are both departmental and divisional courses. The members of the social science staff are drawn from the Departments of Anthropology, Economics, Government, History, Philosophy, Religion, and Sociology. Similarly, other staff for other sections of the program are recruited from other departments in the university. The entire general education program is administered by the Committee on Instruction, headed by a Dean who is also the Chairman (Stickler 1960).

At Harvard, where the program was introduced in 1946, it is simply administered, with the program being operated through the regular departments. The responsible body is the Committee on General Education which includes twelve permanent members of the faculty chosen from a representative group of contributing departments. According to Stickler (1960 p. 28),

No member of the teaching staff gives his time exclusively to general education [at Harvard]; some work is always done in the department of his specialization. No regular appointment is made without the concurrence of the department in which the appointee's principal interest lies.

Other patterns of conducting general education therefore showed two main traits in the organization of its delivery system: either it is taught by a separate unit, or exists as part of a larger College and draws its material from the various departments of the entire university.

The Credit As A Unit of Measuring Undergraduate Learning

The quantification of the American undergraduate curriculum on a *credit* basis occurred almost at the same time as the concept of choice by electives was being introduced at around 1870. Gerhard (1955 p. 650) distinguishes two phases at this stage of the introduction of the credit system, comprising of

an earlier one in which the colleges start to measure teaching of subject matter in hour units, and a later one in which the credit system is further reflected and becomes consolidated; the value of each course both in high school and in college is now listed in units of credit and it is definitely stated how many units of credit are required for receiving the respected degrees. The first phase can be dated as of the 1870s and the 1880s; the second as of the next two decades, around the turn of the century.

But it was only after the elective system has been widely adopted by most universities at the turn of the century that the quantitative measure in units of credit as a form of nation wide standardization, emerged.

Prior to this development, the increase in the number of high schools after 1874 led to new subjects being taught in the schools. This had a consequence of increasing the number of potential university entrants, and created a need to standardize high school instruction with university requirements. It was up the Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies, sponsored by the National Educational Association under the Chairmanship of Charles Eliot of Harvard to emphasize, in 1899

the importance of a certain number of constants in all secondary schools and in all requirements for admission to college and recommends that a number of constants be recognized in the following proportion: namely 4 units in foreign languages (no language accepted in less than 2 units), 2 units in mathematics, 2 in English, 1 in history and 1 in science (*in* Gerhard 1955 p. 657).

In another development, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching was established in 1905 to provide retirement benefits for college professors in the United States, Canada, and Newfoundland. It became involved in the first year of its existence with the problem of defining a college and distinguishing

such an institution from a high school. According to Howard (1965 p. 136),

considerable confusion existed in finding where a high school stopped and college began. This was aggravated by those colleges which contained one or more grades normally considered as belonging in a high school, and also by those high schools, and there were many, which called themselves colleges. Since the retirement allowances were to be paid to the institutions rather than the person, it became imperative to distinguish between these schools.

This means that right from the beginning, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching acquired an equally important function of determining, and in a way, compelling an acceptance of educational standards through the use of what it coined the *Carnegie Unit* by insisting that colleges must accept the unit plan in their admissions for their professors to be eligible for the Foundation's retiring allowances. To aid in this, the Foundation defined the unit as course of *five* periods weekly.

The *unit* evolved into a full year's work and became acceptable currency for gaining admission from the high school into the university by entrance boards. The Carnegie Unit also makes it extremely convenient in academic booking by overcoming the lack of a common denominator for college admission requirements, college preparatory courses, and time allotments of subject matter fields in the secondary schools.

Thus the recommendations of the Committee of Ten on Secondary Education which standardized university admission by suggesting the coverage of a fixed number of high school units, and the Carnegie Foundation which provided a greater legitimacy to this standardization led to the emergence of the five hour Carnegie unit requirement for college entrance being established.

Earlier the University of Michigan had, in 1892, listed *credit hours* after its courses. By 1901 the university had perfected this system and listed its graduation requirements as 120 credits, the credit itself being described in the following terms:

an hour of credit is given for the satisfactory completion of work requiring one exercise a week for one semester in recitation, laboratory work, or lecture (Gerhard 1955 p. 659).

But although the credit system and electives are often referred in the same vein, it must be appreciated that they are different and evolved separately. The elective system refers to the choice of a student regarding the courses he wants to study. The credit system refers to the *measurement* of that study (Burn 1973). When the credit system became introduced in Harvard, it was twined to the elective system; it was only when the credit system became more clearly articulated in the first decade of the 20th century that it was used in conjunction with the elective philosophy.

A distinguishing assumption of the credit and elective system relate to the aims of higher education which

both implicitly admit that the notion of precisely defining the curriculum for a degree recipient in any given field is obsolete and futile. There is no longer any wisdom from on high — or from academe — which authoritatively prescribes what students ought to learn. Lacking this, and with no clear guidance on the kinds of educational experiences which the future employment situation will require of college and university graduates, both the elective and credit systems put a premium on flexibility (Burn 1973 p. 124).

The credit concept leapfrogged its way across American colleges subsequently, appearing at Stanford (1899), Yale (1900), Washington, St. Louis (1903). The credit system thus moved a step further from being a currency of standardizing high school instruction for university admission purposes to a central icon of American undergraduate curriculum structure and measurement.

The credit system is a further reflection of the powerful effect of social development on American life over its educational services. Administrative decentralization, aversion to control by bureaucratic machinery, flexible and increasingly mobile society leading to the establishment of new communities — all have a bearing on the need to create a more uniform certainty in the quantity (although quality is another thing altogether) of education across the land. By coming up with the credit unit, the Committee of Ten and Carnegie Foundation have provided that certainty.

The credit system has survived the ravages of American educational flexibility far more effectively than general education breadth component of the curriculum which had been under increasing attack. As Heffernan (1973 p. 65) argued, this was because the credits are

widely used and easily understood, and are considered to be meaningfully related to other measurements. Credits serve as the coin of the realm not only because “they are all we’ve got” but also because they are commonly regarded as central to the activities of each participant in the educational enterprise.

Thus the credit hour results as a natural convergence in the needs of students and teachers. And according to Schellenberg (1965),

It provides a unit for measuring the service given in teacher output and also for measuring the units of educational status taken on by the student. And it makes for an especially neat package to assume that the costs to teachers of their services and the value to students of their learning are both alike in direct proportion to the number of hours spent in the classroom (p. 164).

By 1968, not only is the credit truly an American tradition, it has also been refined and defined by the National Center for Educational Statistics as

the unit by which an institution may measure its course work. The number of credit hours assigned to a course is usually defined by the number of hours per week in class and the number of weeks in the session.

One credit hour is usually assigned to a class that meets fifty minutes a week over a period of a semester, quarter or term; in laboratory, field work, drawing, music, practical arts, physical education or similar type of instruction (*in* Burn 1973 p. 117).

Other advantages of the credit system, as synthesized by Barbara Burn (1973) include:

Because a student's performance is judged in the credit system on a course by course basis, if he fails one of his courses in a given year, this failure is not treated as failing the full year, thus requiring him to repeat the full year's work.

The credit system makes it possible to offer high education in a variety of units by assigning varying amounts of credit to different courses, for example, year, semester, three week or even one week courses, thus eliminating the myth that regardless of subject matter all courses have equal weight.

By the same token, the credit system offers more variety in the academic calendar as it can be broken up into a range of segments corresponding to the different amounts of academic credit offered.

The credit system provides mechanism to enable students to work towards a degree at their own pace by pursuing higher education on a part time basis, alternating periods of work and study, and stopping in and out of higher education as this fits their personal and professional goals and life situations.

The credit system offers greater flexibility to students to change their major field in mid−stream; instead of requiring the student to begin his program anew, it counts his previous work towards his degree, requiring only such additional work as is necessary to fulfill major and related requirements.

Assuming that course rather than comprehensive examinations are characteristic of the credit system, it gives considerable independence to teachers in determining what they teach and how.

It permits inter−institutional transfer of students, enabling each individual to develop to the limit of his capabilities by permitting him to move from one institution to another in accordance with his aspirations and ability.

Credit Criticisms

Like everything else in American education, the credit as a unit of measurement of university instruction has been under criticism almost from its inception. For instance, one of the earliest attacks was by Lowell, President of Harvard who succeed Eliot and who, in a collection of essays published in 1934 noted that

One of the most serious evils of American education in school and college is counting by courses — the habit of regarding the school or college as an educational savings bank where credits are deposited to make up the balance required for graduation, or for admission to more advanced study; whereas the only place where education can be stored to be drawn upon when needed is the student's own brain (Lowell 1934 p. 275)

Other critical observations of the role of the credit system in American education were based on similar lines of argument. Thus Nutting (1949 p. 383) perceives the American university as an assembly line and argues that

the scheme of evaluating intellectual attainment by the course−with−credit method is valid only if two assumption are true: (1) that having taken and passed a course is evidence that a certain body of knowledge is possessed, and (2) that not having taken this course is evidence that this body of knowledge is not possessed. Anyone who has taught in college knows that neither of these assumptions is true. It is therefore difficult to see how the validity of the method can be maintained.

Yet still other observations of the role of the credit system in the learning process compared it to accounting purposes for university administration, rather than as a force in learning. For instance, according to Lorimer (1962 p. 302),

Necessary and convenient as the credit hour system is for book keeping purposes, however it is essentially meaningless except as a measure of progress towards the total credit hour degree requirements. What is required in one course or in one department for an hour of credit may differ so greatly from what is required in another course or department that the credit hour as a standard of measurement is...confusing.

Thus according to the arguments, by placing emphasis on the credit, not enough attention is given to the *depth* of coverage of the material being taught. Under the credit emphasis, students look at the attainment of a degree as the accumulation of academic credits rather than the mastery of knowledge; earning a degree becomes an arithmetic exercise rather than a means of learning (Burn 1973). Also knowledge becomes fragmented under both the elective and credit systems — loosing its coherence and subsequently its value and impact. Consequently the main criticism against the credit system is that it equates contact hours between students and lecturers with learning; which could be misleading, for as Cross (1973 p. 33) argued,

No one can put forth a very strong argument that four years, chopped into 120 credit hours delivered to people who can present themselves physically in a room set aside for “classes”, makes much sense as the major strategy of education...We need new measures of competency that acknowledge that what is learned rather than how it is learned is the true measure of education.

One of the less obvious advantages of the credit system is that it enabled easier recording of students’ progress. But it becomes a measure of *quality* only when used with a system of weights, such as grades. And even in this, there are doubts about its values, as for instance, forwarded by Grose (1970 p. 26) who observed that

Still another attack comes from our multiplicative friends, the grades. We are asked to take these ratings by faculty and multiply them by credit hours to achieve arithmetic products which we, in turn add together as if they were equal in value. In several recent discussions about Pass/Fail grading systems, I have wondered whether the current rating system might be the only thing at fault. Is there perhaps some contribution to our confusion in the credit hour itself? We really prefer not to examine the assumption that one course measured in credit hours is the real equivalent of another within the semester or across semesters. Moreover, we might seriously question whether the *work* per week or the *learning* per week is constant from the beginning of the term to the end.

Barbara Burn (1973) has also gathered together a whole list of disadvantages of the credit system in American universities, some of which include:

Depending on how small the pieces are into which higher education is broken down, the credit system may produce a fragmentation of knowledge.

The primary responsibility for integrating what is learned rests with the student and many students are incapable of handling this responsibility.

The assumption that learning experiences are interchangeable and that different learning experiences offering the same number of credits have equal validity denigrates the value of serious scholarly work.

Measuring a higher education by a formula which in principle focuses on time spent in the classroom or laboratory gives an undue emphasis to form over content.

The credit system distorts student motivation in the learning process; students tend to look at higher education as the accumulation of course credits and not at learning as an end in itself.

The credit system is unnecessarily expensive in time and energy. Higher education is defined only in terms of numbers of classroom hours over a predetermined number of semesters and years to meet degree requirements.

A remedy to the fragmentation of knowledge caused by the credit system was the creation of large credit blocks. Initially the credit system was used also to enable students to sample as many courses available to them, leading to the proliferation of two and three credit courses. However,

occasional "horror stories" of students carrying seven or eight courses at a time resulted from excessive use of two credit−courses (Dressel 1965 p. 382).

The solution, according to Dressel was replacement of the semester with a quarter which offers the same courses for shorter period of weeks and in large blocks of credit. For example, instead of offering a course for two credits for a semester, it might be offered as three credits for a quarter. However

concrete evidence as to the educational superiority of the large credit blocks and the resulting smaller number of courses is not easily come by because institutions that have made this move tended to make it in one step. There is therefore no basis for the collection of any comparative data as to the effectiveness of different approaches (Dressel 1965 p. 383).

As a consequence, it is difficult for such strategy to spread and correct some of the organizational deficiencies of the credit system. However, one college that tried out this strategy of larger credit blocks to ameliorate the fragmentation of knowledge was Goshen College, Indiana, which in 1968 made all courses of uniform size, through "depth credit" which was

a one hour addition to a course that will require the student to do further independent work on a course in which he is enrolled. Rather than fragmenting his curriculum further, this will add depth to subjects he is already studying...No student will be allowed to register for more than two depth credits per trimester. In this way a student taking four courses which normally carry three hours of credit in each, for example, can register for depth credits in two of these courses and thus receive fourteen hours of credit (Kreider and Weaver 1968 p. 157).

Ironically a detailed analysis of the large credit block strategies shows that if it is actually implemented, it takes the educational process back to its monolithic bases. Dressel (1965) suggests that instead of fifteen full load credits, a student can take three five credit courses — giving greater depth in the courses; and less wandering between courses. This, of course, negates the principle of democratic education by restricting choices.

In some cases, comprehensive examinations are given by institutions that recognize the inadequacy of class credit in individual courses as a measure of overall student achievement (see, for example, Jones and Ortner's (1954) account of such experiment at the University of Buffalo). The influence of these examinations on the credit system has been limited because they measure the end product, rather than stages of progress (Lewis 1961), another outcome that negates democratic education. Other universities which experimented with examinations as a solution to the credit system at one stage or other include Chicago, Louisville, Minnesota and Ohio State.

The recent years saw efforts by some other colleges to reform the credit system and in some cases abandon it altogether. Hampshire College (1970) was an example where a student was examined based on his readiness as attested by both himself and his tutors. Each student was therefore examined individually. Another college with a difference was Manhattanville College in New York where a student's work was recorded in a "portfolio" which includes all measure of students' progress. At the University of Massachusetts, a variation of the credit was introduced in the form of a modular credit whose purpose was to

break down the tradition that learning should be compartmentalized into a given number of separate courses, each requiring a fixed number of student−faculty contact hours per week in a classroom or laboratory for a pre−determined number of weeks (Burn 1973 p. 133).

Under the modular credit system a credit hour was broken down into 100 modules; a two credit course thus requiring 200 modules. A credit module was earned for a learning experience requiring at least one hour. Modular credit can be offered for a single day class, or for a single course lasting several semesters, or lasting for only one hour per month for several months.

But these experiments to reform the credit system in American universities were few and in minority. For unless some of the more established icons like Harvard, Michigan, Yale, Johns Hopkins, who started it all could re−negotiate a new way of measuring undergraduate education, the credit system, like general education, despite any of its shortcomings, remains a firm fixture of American education.

Thus credit unit in the U.S. developed as a result of two events: first the need to standardize instruction in high schools with admission requirements in universities; and second the creation of a unit of evaluating the pension entitlements of the Carnegie Foundation. The latter rationale was eventually adopted in a system that makes American university education extremely mobile and modular, enabling cross−institutional transfer of students all over the country. These conditions of course do not have to exist in every circumstance giving rise to the credit, since it is what it stands for that is important.

Trends in American Undergraduate Education in the 1980s

A review of the general education was undertaken in many universities in the light of the many criticisms against the program. For instance, at the University of California, a Task Force on Lower Division Education was set up in 1986 to review the university's "mission to teach lower division students; the nature and quality of the lower division curriculum; the quality of teaching and learning; and the quality of academic support services" (The Smelser Report 1986 p. 1).

The writers of the report argued that from the beginning, the University of California has included a two year lower division experience as part of its undergraduate education, meant to bring students into the collegiate world and to preoccupy them from approximately age 18 to approximately age 20. Thus the first two years of University of California education have enabled development of a number of skills among the students, including contributing to the understanding of the fundamental ideas and concepts on which society is founded, as part of preparation for responsible citizenship, as well as increasing students tolerance for ambiguity and diversity. It has also contributed to a liberal education which exposed students from diverse economic and cultural backgrounds to the ideas, concepts and events that have shaped the Western cultural heritage as preparation for life−long discourse in a literate society.

The two lower division years therefore provide students with some exposure to a range of traditions of knowledge, often seen as *intellectual breadth* before more specialized studies could begin in the junior (i.e. third) year. The rationale behind providing such breadth education at this stage is tied with the belief that these years, 17 or 18 to 20 or 21 present a period of transition from adolescence to adulthood. The Smelser Report identified several issues that are crucial for this age range. The main issue is coming to terms with the increase in independence, autonomy, choice, and greater freedom from authority that comes with moving from the parental home and taking greater responsibility for dealing with one's life. Within this freedom however is the pressure for commitment and preparation for life. The academic programs of the undergraduate curriculum at the lower division are planned to enable effective resolution of these conflicts. The main recommendation made include suggestion that the University of California campuses should

develop and extend general education courses of an integrative or synthetic character in both their lower and upper divisions..Campuses should also develop curricular change and other policies that enhance the international, multicultural, and global learning experiences of students (The Smelser Report 1986 p. 38).

By mid 1980s other universities had followed suit and a new wave of reform has engulfed American university undergraduate curriculum. As Mayhew, Ford and Hubbard (1990 p. 50) pointed out,

Philosophically, the general education movement was based on the intellectual hegemony of the Western tradition. During the 1950s, other traditions and cultures such as the Oriental civilizations began to intrude, and it was found that those new influences could not be accommodated in any over−riding synthesis.

Under pressure from legislators, students and critics to make undergraduate education more culturally responsible, many institutions began to scrutinize their general education requirements. The University of Minnesota, for example, reflected most of these variant currents when it approved a new diversified core curriculum which requires all undergraduate students to take three courses in physical and biological sciences (two of which must include laboratories), three in history and the social sciences, three in the humanities, and

one in mathematics. They must also take four writing−intensive courses, and six courses that address the themes of cultural diversity, international perspectives, citizenship and public ethics, and environmental issues. A third of the required courses must be taken at the upper level, and students must complete a senior project in their major. The President of the University of Minnesota in a interview believed that the new curriculum "strikes a good balance between a fairly traditional core that presents knowledge of different disciplines and an orientation that is appropriate to the 1990s" (Mooney 1992)

Interest in exploring issues relating to race — and, increasingly, gender — became more intense than ever. More and more colleges developed courses that examine issues of race in a critical and comparative way. That is the approach being taken by Berkeley which in August 1991 put into effect an *American Cultures* breadth requirement with two unique characteristics even among American universities. First, and replete with all the elements of New Age *political correctness*, the American cultures course must deal with at least three of the following five groups: African Americans, American Indians, Asian Americans, Chicano and Latino Americans. Second, the courses cannot look at ethnic groups in isolation from each other. They must be comparative, placing groups in the context of American history. For instance, in *Music and American Culture* course, students listen to and study the music of different ethnic groups from American Indians to Latinos. They also study the emergence of such American forms of music such as theater music, jazz and rock; sprinkled with any other the course tutor might drum up. One of the main purposes of the *American Cultures* requirement at Berkeley was to examine how American history, society, and identity have been shaped by the nation's diverse cultural make up.

Similarly, in 1991 Hunter College of the City University of New York introduced a course, *AIDS and Society*, which covers science, history, sociology, and politics of the disease to present a more rational look of a contemporary social and medical phenomena.

The teaching of Western culture became more comparative. In 1988, Stanford University enlarged its reestablished *Western Culture* requirement to ensure that women and third world cultures were represented. At a professional level, the Association of American Colleges whose 1992 annual meeting was titled *Recentering* focused on cultural pluralism, and coordinated a national project in which 63 colleges reshaped their humanities core courses to reflect the theme of *cultural legacies*.

More campuses were designing special first year courses. Some center on specific themes, such as human identity, which might be used in different courses, e.g. University of Colorado, Boulder. Yet still other campuses are looking for ways to make the end of a student's undergraduate career more meaningful through the introduction of *capstone courses* — senior year offerings aimed at *capping* students' academic work. They may take the form of a senior project or an interdisciplinary course taken by all students. Mount Saint Mary's College in Maryland offers both options.

Some institutions are strengthening the general education requirements in mathematics and science, but are also looking for ways to make introductory courses in those fields less threatening to majors and non−majors alike. New Mexico State University developed a general education course in which students study mathematical principles by reading the original source material, such as Archimede's *Measurement of a Circle*. Similarly, Berkeley developed a program which advertised itself as:

A computer course designed for the liberal arts major with little or no computer experience. Learn word processing, programming in PASCAL! All the skills you learn can be applied to your own field! (an advertisement in *The Daily Californian*, Tuesday August, 27 1991 p. 16 for course IDS 101).

This program was aimed at creating greater awareness of the role of information technology on the American society among the students at Berkeley.

Accompanying the diversity of great number of the courses is their flexibility in addressing modern issues. At Berkeley in Spring 1992, Japanese trade policy, sexual harassment in the workplace, the prospects for peace in the Middle East, water conservation, African Americans producing drama about their culture, were all new courses introduced to reflect current happenings. The Japanese trade policy section came up at a time when intense discussions were going on between the U.S. and Japan over trading polices. Sexual harassment as a course of study was initiated as a result of the intensity of Judge Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings at the U.S. Congress in October 1991 which had all the trappings of a classic Hollywood studio soap opera. A breakthrough in settlements for the often violent politics of the Middle East leading to the first Arab−Israeli Peace Conference in Madrid, Spain in November 1991 provided a good source of material for presentation in an undergraduate curriculum dealing with a contemporary issue with classical origins.

Efforts undertaken in recent years to improve specific skills — particularly writing and critical thinking — continue. Some universities are revising courses in virtually every discipline to require students to write, give oral presentations, or use other skills regularly. Some have also identified themes that must be addressed across the curriculum. At Berkeley, for instance, there is a strong emphasis on developing high levels of ability in critical thinking and communication among its undergraduates. Hundreds of courses require long papers and a number of courses provide training in writing or speaking.

Community linkages are increasingly encouraged by some universities. At Berkeley students can earn 1 to 4 units of credit for some education course sections by simply teaching at Washington Primary School in Berkeley in as diverse areas as math, computers, swimming, and ice skating. In this way both the community and the students benefit.

From this brief account, we can see that higher education in America, just like in any other society, evolved as a result of a series of events and pressures to its presently unique status. There is therefore no clearly unified system of higher education in America, for as Gardner (1988 p. 231) pointed out,

American colleges and universities are marked by wide variations in curriculum, character, capability, resources and purpose...Put in its starkest terms, the United States has no system of higher education; it has instead a remarkably diverse collection of colleges and universities which largely function independently of one another.

Thus while there is no unified scheme for the description of the typical American higher education curricula, nevertheless there are many common features of American university curricular structures. And going through the broad sketches given, it is possible to extract skeletal features that provide supportive internal framework which could be used to describe American higher education curricula. This in turn should provide a scheme around which transformations in other educational systems towards what is perceived as American structure for higher education curricula can be compared.

To begin with, American higher education curricula is a *modular* system of instruction. The degree itself is little more than a container for collecting modules from different parts of the study list, such as the ‘major’, free electives and choices from a range of breadth and proficiency requirements (Rothblatt, 1991 p. 130). Further, Martin Trow (1991) has identified some of the distinguishing “exceptionalism” of American higher education. These include:

Literacy Drive. This aspect sees education for its own sake and reflects a broad national commitment to education for everybody as long as people can be persuaded to attend formal institutions of education. This belief is backed by a provision of post−secondary schooling somewhere for everyone who wants an education beyond high school, most notably in a broad system of community colleges which admit students without reference to their high school diploma. Thus the United States made its commitment to mass higher education and created the structures that would permit its grown to its present size, long before large numbers were enrolled.

Public and Private Sector Contributions. America's colleges and universities are a mixture of public and private institutions with the privately sponsored institutions present at every level of excellence and in very category of function. At all levels, there is easy movement of students and faculty, and ideas about teaching and learning, between the public and private institutions. This is further made possible by the existence of multiple and diverse funding sources for both private and leading public institutions.

Academic Currency. The phenomenon of the modular course with its attached 'credits' and the definition of requirements for a degree in terms of the accumulation of course credits rather than through success on an examination or the presentation of a thesis.

Governance Structures. Whereas in most countries the administrative staffs for higher education are typically located in the ministry rather than in the institution itself, in the United Sates there is no federal ministry of education. The Department of Education plays a very small role in relation to higher education, apart from administering substantial programs of student grants and loans. In American private colleges and universities, the whole of the administrative apparatus is located within the institution and is an arm of the university president.

Academic Leadership. In the United States, the president of a college or university is both the head of 'the administration' and also the academic leader. He serves by appointment of a lay board of trustees and is responsible only to them. So long as he has their confidence and support, the American college president has a very high degree of power and authority within his own institution. This significantly reduces central government interference in the governance of the universities and colleges.

The Lay Board. The American college or university invariably has a lay board, which at once ensures its ultimate accountability to its local, regional or national constituencies in the broader society, but also insulates it from the direct management and intervention of the government of the day. Such boards ordinarily have the ultimate legal authority over the institution, and come to identify with it and its interests even though appointed in the case of most public institutions, by the Governor of the State for a period of twelve years.

Service to the Society, as well as the State. The organizational structure of mass higher education in the United States was already in place 100 years ago.

Thus the issue of American exceptionalism can be looked at in a number of different ways: the nature and extent of differences between America and other countries, institution by institution, or as societies; the sources of those differences in history, geography, demography, culture and values, and trends towards the convergence or divergence of America and other nations in specific or general respects (Trow 1991 p. 166). These issues would have to be deciding factors in any country in which attempts are made to graft this system of education.

CHAPTER 5

THE SCHOOL AND THE UNIVERSITY: NIGERIAN AND AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES

THE SCHOOL AND THE UNIVERSITY: NIGERIAN PERSPECTIVES

The relationship between the schools and the universities in Nigeria, which greatly affects how the universities handle their curricular organization and delivery, is quite formal. The school−university interface is negotiated purely on the basis of the centrally controlled examination performances of the individual students. Such examinations must of course be in the subjects the student want to study in the university — giving little room for explorations of other subject disciplines. This situation closely replicated the tracking mechanism of British secondary school students, which as noted by Phillips (1969 p. 29) suggests that

A glance at university faculty entry requirements reveals the general necessity for students to follow their school subject course at degree level. Science faculties especially tend to specify three particular ‘A’ level passes for a degree course with similar subject content. Arts faculties usually require a minimum of two Advanced levels and specify one or two of these from a group of arts subjects. Social science courses are exceptional and do not usually carry requirements for any particular subjects. This might lead one to expect a wide variety of ‘A’ level subject combinations of different students in this faculty.

Entry requirements into Nigerian universities before 1978 were initially dictated by the pattern of requirements into British universities. When the first set of students were admitted into the University College, Ibadan in January 1948, the London Matriculation Certificate, obtained after passing the London Matriculation Examination was used as a basis for determining entry qualifications. However candidates who had passed the Cambridge School Certificate Examinations taken at the end of secondary schooling could also be admitted directly into the university college. Students with excellent results at the Cambridge examination can then skip the two year intermediate sixth form and begin undergraduate work immediately. The degree program itself was divided into first a two year intermediate stage, and a final two year (for general degrees) or three year (for honors degrees) stages. In 1951 the British universities changed their admission requirements to reflect the acquisition of at least two subjects at the advanced level of the General Certificate of Education (GCE) or the Higher School Certificate (HSC) examinations. This led to the shortening of the years in the undergraduate curriculum by the removal of the intermediate stage — which was shunted to the secondary schools to be done now in sixth forms.

The problem in Nigeria at that time of course was that sixth forms do not exist, and since there were very few people who actually passed the intermediate examinations of the University of London through private studies, the University of London continued to allow the University College Ibadan to admit students still holding the School Certificate, insisting that the two year intermediate stage work must be done within the University College Ibadan in order to raise the level of students to the new entry requirements in Britain before the students could begin undergraduate work.

This arrangement was sustained until 1956 when Ibadan introduced preliminary examinations in arts and science which replaced the intermediate examination as the basis for starting undergraduate studies. The period of study was also reduced from two to one year, apparently because it was felt that students do not have to spend two years to get ready for undergraduate studies. Students so admitted into the university were given *concessional entry* and subjected to a university entrance examination. However, students with advanced level papers in the GCE or the HSC were offered *direct entry* into the degree programs without any entrance examination.

The rationale behind the concessional entry was to enable Nigeria to develop sixth form schools, and Ibadan actually announced its intention to discontinue the concessional entry mode into the university by 1962, when it was generally hoped that there would be enough candidates from the sixth forms with the appropriate advanced level qualifications for entry into degree programs. By then, there were 42 schools offering the sixth form studies in the southern Nigeria, and 12 in the north with the combined total of 2,927 students (Gentle 1965).

The decision to discontinue the concessional entry mode to universities was further reinforced in the Ashby Report which not only supported the continued existence of the sixth form schools, but also provided strategies for their expansion, especially as “Ibadan would soon have abandoned the preliminary courses...since already the number of applicants for admission holding the full minimum entrance qualifications exceeds by a considerable margin the number of places for new entrants to the College” (Nigeria 1960 p. 73). The only problem with this strategy was that gradually

the sixth forms failed to supply the required numbers of candidates particularly in the sciences. In the circumstances, the Nigerian universities had no alternative but to continue the practice Ibadan had followed under similar circumstances — to admit two levels of students: the concessional entry group and the direct entry group (Ike 1976 p. 146).

This was a situation that left the Principals of many secondary schools in Nigeria uncomfortable, and at *The Conference on the Development of the Sixth Forms in Nigeria* held in Ibadan on December 15−22, 1961, many secondary school principals urged the universities to discontinue concessional entry, thus giving support to the sixth form, especially as the continued admission of the two levels of students would eventually eliminate the sixth form. The reasons for this had more to do with assembly line production of manpower for the labor market, rather than educational considerations; for as Ike (1976 p. 147).) argued,

The boy who opts for the sixth form work spends two years at school beyond the School Certificate. If all goes well with him he proceeds to a university where he may graduate after studying for three more years, making a total of five. His classmate who decides to proceed straight to the university without going through the sixth form can graduate after four years at the university, thus gaining a university degree and moving into the labor market a year before his former colleague. This alone is sufficient to discourage students from going in for sixth form work, or to make the lower sixth form students sneak out to sit university entrance examinations without the knowledge and approval of their schools.

It is this competitive atmosphere to move through the university mill so rapidly that generated the sixth form controversy in the mid 1960s in Nigeria (see Davis 1962, Gentle 1965, Jellings 1962, Ojo 1969, Sawyerr 1963, and Taylor 1962 for more arguments for and against the sixth form). To create sufficient pool of entrants to the university, the federal government established sixth form classes in newly created Federal Government Colleges throughout the federation. These were in addition to Federal Colleges of Arts and Science also established. In some older secondary schools, sixth form classes were also created. Thus the sixth form, with its training towards the Higher School Certificate examination was the main, but by no means exclusive, entrance to the university in Nigeria to mid 1970s.

The criticism against the sixth form, however, continued — essentially because it was seen as a too circuitous route to the university. Further, the sixth form was seen as inhibitory to students with high grades at the School Certificate examination, especially if they had to follow the sixth form before embarking on undergraduate studies.

School of Preliminary Studies

The mid 1970s saw a new transition mode for secondary school students to the university. Championed by the Ahmadu Bello University, which had already established a School of Basic Studies, many northern States started to open a series of *preparatory* colleges for students who finish their secondary schools. These colleges operated on the same principle as the initial preliminary section of the University College Ibadan in that they provided a two year preparation to students in the Higher School Certificate examination and eventual admission to Ahmadu Bello University.

In addition, some of the colleges developed *remedial* programs for weaker students who were then given another chance to retake the examinations they failed at the initial School Certificate. In Kano State, for instance, the College of Advanced Studies was opened in September 1973 immediately after the State abolished the sixth form in June 1973, and offered concurrent programs for both remedial and advanced level students. Students with weaker school certificate results therefore spent three years (one year remedial,

followed by two year university preparatory). At the end of the preliminary studies, students register to take the Higher School Certificate examination which will then enable them to gain entry into any university of their choice.

However, in 1974 the Ahmadu Bello University decided to extend its Interim Joint Matriculation Examination privileges which were restricted to its School of Basic Studies to all the northern Schools of Advanced Studies that were networked to it. This created a uniform curriculum for these schools controlled and regulated by the Ahmadu Bello University. The first examination, the *Interim Joint Matriculation Board* examination (IJMB) in this arrangement was conducted in June 1975.

The Ahmadu Bello University was not the only university either with School of Basic Studies, or with "special relationship" with such schools outside its campus. When the University of Port Harcourt was established in 1977,

a decision was also taken to establish a School of Basic Studies as integral part of the academic programmes of the university with a view to providing remedial instruction primarily to candidates from schools in Rivers State to prepare them for entry into our degree programmes (Port Harcourt 1980 p. 27).

In 1978, however, a new federally controlled Board, the Joint Matriculation Board (JAMB), was established to regulate entry into all Nigerian universities on a federal level. The Schools of Basic Studies/Preliminary Studies were subsequently closed down, although in some universities, e.g. University of Maiduguri and Bayero University Kano, they continued to operate by providing remedial training which was, as in the case of Maiduguri,

intended for candidates whose performances at the WASC (West African School Certificate) examinations are good but deficient in some subjects. Successful completion of the Remedial Programme will enable such students seek admission into the University's four year degree programmes (***in*** Brann 1985 p. 91).

The introduction of the JAMB in 1978 signaled a dramatic change in the school−university interface and ushered in the wave of structural reforms in Nigerian universities.

Reform in School To University Transition, 1978−1988

Thus by the time the first National Curriculum Conference was held in 1969 the fate of the sixth form was already sealed: the conference called for its cessation, a move sanctified in the subsequent National Policy on Education that emerged from the conference. As stated in the Policy,

The Sixth Form as at present constituted will be abolished. Pupils will go direct from secondary school to university...The abolition of the Sixth Form (i.e. Higher School Certificate) Course means that the Universities will have to re−structure their courses from the 3 year to the 4 year degree course pattern to suit the six year secondary school system (Nigeria 1981 p. 18).

It was not, of course, clear what informed the decision to shift students from the secondary schools in Nigerian educational backgrounds directly to universities, especially as the vast majority of the secondary schools were incapable of providing the students with the necessary background to effectively cope with advanced academic work, especially in science subjects (to illustrate this point, see Yoloye (1989) which reports on the preparedness of Nigerian secondary schools to teach science and technical subjects in the aftermath of the compulsory 60:40 university admission ration in favor of science and technical students).

The policy gave the universities seven years from its inception (ten, actually since the prototype policy was made in 1977, and revised in 1981) to brace themselves for these changes, expected to be effected from September 1988. On October 8, 1987, all Nigerian universities were sent a form circular by the Federal Ministry of Education Lagos to inform them that

the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) will be conducted for the first time in May/June 1988 by the West African Examinations Council. Also the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) examination will be held for the Senior School Certificate holders and others in 1988 for possible admission to the universities. The purpose of this circular is to apprise you of the arrival of this category of school leavers in the country's educational scene as from 1988 and urge you to transmit this information to all universities, Polytechnics and other tertiary institutions under your Ministry so that due account could be taken of their qualifications when advertising for placement in these institutions (IMP/COM/NPE/22/SE/JSS/SSS circular of the Federal Ministry of Education, Director, Schools and Education Services, 8th October 1987).

Thus an immediate consequence of the National Policy on Education for the universities was that they had less control over their entry conditions. This was further stated in the Policy where it was outlined that

Admission of students and recruitment of staff into universities and other situations of higher learning should be on a broad national basis. For better mobility of students and easy access to higher education, the universities will need to establish a joint Matriculation Board for the selection of students for courses (Nigeria 1981 p. 24/26).

This intention of taking over the control of admission into universities had already made its appearance in the draft national policy first published in 1977. Immediately thereafter, the then Federal Military Government established the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) on February 13, 1978. The 1981 National policy further consolidated the position of the Board when it stated that

Admission to universities will be based on the results of matriculation examination conducted by the universities or by any agency established for that purpose (Nigeria 1981 p. 47).

The establishment of the Board was actually as a result of the initiative of Nigerian Committee of Vice−Chancellors (CVC), which was worried about multiple applications for admission as well multiple offers of admission to Nigerian universities. In 1974 the CVC set up a two man panel consisting of L. R. Kay, Secretary, Universities Central Council for Admissions in the United Kingdom (UCCA), and H W Pettipierre of the Ontario Universities Applications Center of the Province of Ontario, Canada. They were to examine the system of admissions into Nigerian universities, identify the problems and shortcomings arising from it and make recommendations. However, due to the regional nature of the universities at the time, it was not possible for the report submitted by this panel to have been accepted. When in 1976 new universities were created by the Federal Government, and all regional universities federalized, the government set up a National Committee on University Entrance whose terms of reference included the possibility of setting up a Joint Matriculation Board. The Committee recommended the setting up of two bodies, the Central Admissions Board and the Joint Matriculation Board. Of these, the latter board was accepted by the government which subsequently established the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB) in April 1977, although becoming fully operational in February 1978.

The primary functions of the Board were to determine matriculation requirements into the first degree programs of Nigerian universities, conduct a joint matriculation examination for candidates seeking places in these institutions and place suitably qualified ones in the available places within the universities. The first nation−wide Joint Matriculation Examination was conducted on April 29, 1978 and candidates placed in all the universities based on their preferences and level of performance in the examination. The JAMB therefore co−existed with the Schools of Preliminary Studies, and other Advanced level facilities up till 1988 when the latter were finally closed down as per the specifications of the National Policy on Education.

The introduction of the JAMB, and the subsequent closure of the School of Preliminary Studies evoked strong protests from students. As *West Africa* magazine noted in a commentary,

When the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board was set up last year [1978] by the Federal Military Government, nobody really wanted it. Since then its short life has been marred by widespread opposition to its very existence (*West Africa*, 9th April 1979: *JAMB today, none tomorrow?* p. 625).

The most notable opposition to JAMB was concentrated in northern Nigerian universities where students significantly rely on the School of Preliminary Studies to gain access to especially northern universities. Establishing the JAMB and abolishing these university access school was seen by northern students as an attempt to deny them access to university education by the Nigerian government — a move seen as championed by southern interests. It was on this assumption that northern students demonstrated against the JAMB in February 1979, causing a temporary closure of all the northern universities by the Federal government. A consequence of this was that

Students were splitting on ethnic lines, with Southerners favouring JAMB and Northerners determined to annihilate it...In no time at all the southern press was attacking the demonstrating students, and supporting the

principle that university admissions be based only on exam−proven academic achievement (which they still dub “merit”) — a principle that will obviously favour the better resourced south (*West Africa* 9th April 1979 p. 626).

To cope with events such as these, the Nigerian government gradually evolved an admissions policy for all federally controlled institutions based on an extremely flexible formula that apportions percentage points for: *Merit*, 40% (based purely on a combination of secondary school examination results **and** the results of the JAMB’s entrance examination to the university), *Educationally Disadvantaged Status*, 20% (the extent to which an applicant is from an area historically designated as having low educational output), *Catchment Area***,** 30% (the extent to which admission in a *federal* institution should serve the applicants from the immediate vicinity of the educational facility; *state* universities do not have to admit federal candidates and can restrict their admission only to the students from their states of location), and *Discretion*, 10% (a catch−all phrase for basing admission on the individual circumstances of the applicant).

Interestingly, while at the inception of JAMB it was detested by Northern radical student elements as attempts by Southern students to gain a stronghold into Northern institutions, the conception reversed itself a decade later when the JAMB admission formula seemed to favor Northern students. A significantly larger student output from Southern secondary schooling systems made repeated attempts to gain admission into apparently scarcely populated Northern universities (those in the South having been over−populated). This, coupled with strong protectionist measures from Northern institutions (claiming non−reciprocity for Northern students in Southern institutions) led to predominantly Southern dissatisfaction with JAMB as a means of gaining university entrance in Nigeria in late 1980s.

Particularly irksome to Southern opinions was the issue of basing admission on “quota”, the “disadvantaged status” and “catchment area” formulae. Indeed the feelings against the quota system which was seen to favor the Northern university admission candidates was so much that it was reflected included in the Longe Commission Report as a *Minority Report* where a member of the Commission noted that

The quota concession has been in use for more than 20 years, since it first began with Federal Government Schools in 1967. By now, it should substantially have solved or reduced the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged States. That it is said not to have done so, is in my honest view, because those it was intended to assist, no longer see the need for that special effort to close the gap...Consequently, places continue to be left unfilled...in certain areas...either because candidates are not available, or because those who should come forward, do not see higher education as a necessary step to high socio−political positions...I have no doubt in my mind that the system should be ended quickly, before it does more harm to our ethos as one people...What is even more dangerous is that it continues to discourage the still disadvantaged States from doubling their efforts to close the gap of Admissions. Even today, there is no clear and firm programme *which will ensure* the abolition of Quota in A.D. 2000, and usher in the era of open competition. (“Reservation on Quota For Admissions” a Minority View of the Longe Commission Report by Dr. Rex E. O. Akpofure, O.F.R.; Nigeria, 1992 p. 189, including emphasis).

Significantly, none of the only three Northern members (Alhaji Abdulhamid Hassan, Alhaji Yusuf Aboki, and Dr. A. R. Augi) of the 21 member committee sought to counter−act this minority observation with another minority report that provided the Northern perspectives on the quota system.

Further Southern arguments were that merit, reflected in examination results, should be the only criteria in determining admission into universities; while Northern universities themselves insist that they have to cater for the needs of their people by introducing other evaluatory methods to determine university eligibility beside examination results alone. In addition, extensive and considerable examination malpractices among potential university applicants cast doubt on the credibility of examination results submitted by many candidates, and consequently on the examinations as yard−sticks for measuring merit. For instance, “three years ago, Nigeria ranked Number 1 in examination malpractices in the General Certificate of Education, GCE, conducted by the West African Examinations Council, WAEC.” (*Newswatch* Magazine, July 1, 1991 p. 15). Thus the strong demand for university education has led to wide−scale examination malpractice as an emergent industry in Nigeria. According to an informed opinion,

“There is so much corruption now in the admission processes. the Joint Admission and Matriculation Examination, JAMBE, questions papers are leading and being paid for by influential parents. Some parents get their wards admitted by all means, even when they had failed the entrance examination. So the universities are saddled with materials of low quality who know they cheated their ways into the university and are poised to cheat their way all through to the end.” (Quoted in “Crookery in Classrooms” A Newswatch (Nigeria) case file on Examination Maltpractice in Nigeria. *Newswatch Magazine*, July 1, 1991 p. 26).

By early 1990s the fate of JAMB was in jeopardy especially when a new Commission on Higher Education in Nigeria (The Longe Commission) submitted a report in which the Commission observed that

Even with the present constraints in resources a formula must still be agreed on the pattern of admissions. Today, a breakdown of enrolment into State derivation shows a gross disparity between the States; but many submissions related their data to the numbers that apply originally from each State. The basis for the controversial Quota System of Admission which mandated a quantum of intakes from defined educationally disadvantaged States has been questioned in a large number of submissions and representations as morally indefensible and contrary to the spirit of the Constitution. Others have argued that if it was justified a decade or so ago because of imbalance in educational opportunity, the creation of thousands of primary and hundreds of secondary schools following the inauguration of the 6−3−3−4 National Policy on Education should by now have given the so−called disadvantaged States the opportunity to catch up. It was never envisaged that such a concession should be enjoyed on a permanent basis. The more radical critics of the quota system have therefore advocated its total abolition. Less severe views have advocated its drastic reduction over time (up to 2000 AD)(Nigeria 1991 p. 151).

The Longe Commission proposed a series of options for university admissions in accordance with the 6−3−3−4 Education policy. These include:

i. University Matriculation Exam (UME) + GCE O Level (as at present)

ii. UME only

iii. Senior School Certificate (as aptitude test)

iv. UME + SSC

v. SSC + interview (Nigeria 1991 p. 152).

The Longe Commission report further noted that :

After considerable soul−searching on the foregoing issues and careful weighting of the pros and cons, the Commission has gone on to make the kind of recommendation that will hopefully correct many deep−seated prejudices and mollify justified indignation in these sensitive areas:

i. The case of overwhelming call for a reduction of the percentage allocation to quota in favour of meritocracy for a defined period. By an agreed date, for example 2000 AD, this geographical concession can then be completely discontinued. A possible time−table of percentage admission into Federal Universities under the different headings is presented as follows:

	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000
Merit	40	50	55	60	65	70
Catchment Area	30	25	25	25	20	20
Disadvantaged States	20	15	10	5	5	—
Discretionary (incl. foreign students)	10	10	10	10	10	10

(Nigeria 1991 p. 153)

The Nigerian Federal Military Government, in its reaction (Nigeria 1992 p. 44) to this recommendation (reduction in percentage allocation to quota) by the Longe Commission noted that

...Inequality is a fact of life. It is the responsibility of government to recognise and address the problem pragmatically. The provision of equal educational opportunities is one such problem. Government will therefore, continue to review the admissions formula from time to time within the context of our

development. Government [also] rejects the recommended time−table. Government further directs that the following formula should apply for the meantime: merit (40%), catchment area (30%), disadvantaged States (20%), discretionary (10%). In place of disadvantaged States, government approves the use of special needs which is defined to mean that admissions to higher institutions should cater for the interest of candidates from all parts of the country who might apply for rare courses in particular institution. In applying the criteria for special needs, any unfilled vacancies shall be filled on the basis of merit.

This formula of course re−inforces the already existing practice. The government then proceeded to provide a more regional definition of "catchment area" by allocating admission priorities to some universities to States within the immediate vicinity of all federal universities: a policy decision which simply perpetuate the existing system, thus by−passing the Longe Commission's recommendations.

The final university entrance examination formula accepted by the government was the UME and Senior School Certificate. However, two modes of entry into Nigerian universities are controlled by the JAMB. The first mode is entry by *Universities Matriculation Examinations* for a minimum of a four year degree. Applicants are accepted for university admission ***after*** they have obtained five credit passes in the School Certificate, General Certificate of Education, or the Senior School Certificate examinations. This will qualify them to sit for the JAMB examination, although students awaiting the results of their Senior School Certificate Examinations can also sit for the matriculation examination. Then the applicants must write the UME and attain an acceptable standard in the Use of English (compulsory) and ***three*** other subjects relevant to the proposed course of study.

In the second mode, termed *Direct Entry*, applicant must possess at least three credit level passes at the School Certificate, G.C.E. or SSC, *and* two passes at advanced level courses or equivalent (e.g. National Certificate in Education, NCE). These students do not have to sit for the UME and if admitted, spend only a minimum of three years in the university, starting with the *second year***.** Students normally admitted to the universities through direct method were mature, in the sense of having graduated from the senior secondary school while the old structure was still in force; or having attended a further education unit such as an Advanced Teachers' College or had a first level diploma from a Polytechnic. And in all cases, no pass in a subject can be counted at ***both*** the ordinary and advanced levels for admission purposes. Interestingly, enough, the General Certificate of Education examination was not canceled; it was still left as an open facility for students to register and take it in any subject they wanted. It still commands enough respect to enable its holder gain access to university education in Nigeria.

The University Matriculation Examination itself is taken in February of every year. The "pass mark" for the UME is determined in a three stage process consisting of the mark given by the JAMB, the universities themselves (though individually, rather than collectively), and the individual departments within the universities. These marks are not always the same, as over the years the universities realize that they do not have the facilities to cope with the increasing number of applications and subsequently always set internal pass marks higher than those set by JAMB. Thus even if a candidate obtained the JAMB pass marks, admission is not automatic, as he has to also obtain the marks designated by the individual university of his choice.

The placement of the students in the universities is dependent on a number of factors including obtaining the pass mark, the vacancies declared by the universities, the choice made by the candidates, i.e. the preference as expressed by the candidates for particular institution and a particular course, and finally the guidelines approved for selection by each institution by its authorities. Indeed the final

admissions are done in three stages: First choice selection, when the results are available you choose the candidates on merit, by course. The institutions make the initial selections, many of them don't select more than 45 percent of their required candidates. The second choice selection is used to place candidates who have been placed on their first choice. But because the places are so limited, you cannot see the effect (*Our Educational Problems*. An interview with the JAMB Registrar, Dr. M. S. Abdulrahman, in *Newswatch* Magazine (Nigeria), November 30, 1992 p. 48).

The list of those selected is sent back to the JAMB in Abuja, the Federal Capital, where the students are issued admission letters by the Board.

In a strange twist to historical development, the introduction of the UME and the twin entry mode into Nigerian universities (through the UME, and direct) is a reversal to precisely the same conditions that led to the abolishing of the sixth form in mid 1970s. The sixth form was phased out in Nigeria because it was felt that it delays the rate at which a student could acquire a university degree. The JAMB was introduced to provide a seamless transition mechanism from the secondary school to the university.

And yet the mechanism of operation of the JAMB re−introduced the philosophy of the grammar school curriculum and its tightly selective and elitist mechanism of determining who can have university education. This is because the ***same*** academic tracking determined entry to the Nigerian university as in the previously British oriented system. Nigerian education, if anything, amplified its ***examination*** orientation, since students still ***must*** pass a battery of examinations before they can proceed to each stage of education. The National Policy on Education also made it clear that only students who are "able and willing" can proceed to senior secondary schooling, after the junior school — with a possibility of dropping out and getting a job which the junior schooling should have prepared the candidate for. In a situation where distribution of educational resources is not equitable, this imposed considerable disadvantage to junior high school students from poor urban schools, as well as virtually all the rural schools. University access then became possible only to students who attended well equipped schools, mostly located in urban centers.

And at the end of the senior secondary school, students still have to pass the *Senior Secondary School Certificate* examination ***before*** they can apply to take the university entrance examination. In addition, and as outlined in the JAMB guidelines for admission to the first degree course in Nigerian universities,

For a candidate to be offered admission into any of the institutions, he/she must attain an acceptable level of performance at the Universities Matriculation Examination (UME) in subject **RELEVANT** to the proposed course of study (Joint Matriculations Board *Guidelines for Admissions to First Degree Courses in Nigerian Universities, 1991/92* p. 20).

Moreover, despite the abolishing of the sixth form and School of Preliminary Studies in Nigeria, the government was aware that substantial remedial programs would have to be continued for a large number of students who would not otherwise have had a chance to obtain university education if the present mode of admission is maintained. To this end, the government accepted the recommendation by a committee set up in 1984 to investigate the university curricula in Nigeria to the effect that universities can continue providing science remedial programs "in order to attract students into their undergraduate programmes, especially in the sciences." (Nigeria 1987 p. 10). However, the same government accepted the recommendations of the Longe Commission, which recommended that

Remedial programmes in the Universities should be phased out and candidates defective in specific subject areas should find means of remedying them outside the university system (Nigeria 1992 p. 48).

The Government accepted this and "directs the gradual phasing out of the science remedial programmes from universities." (Nigeria 1992 p. 48). Only time will enable determining the consequences of this directive, especially in the light of attempts to provide more scientists and technologists in the university system in the country.

Over the years, the number of students sitting for the UME has increased, reaching an all time high of 397,780 candidates in 1991/92, with the highest number of entrants of 40,912 applying to the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and the least of 1,605 applicants for the Federal University of Technology Minna. Despite this surge, the National Universities Commission recommended that admission be given only to a total of 35,705 — accounting for less than 9% of those who applied (*The African Guardian,* December 23, 1991 p. 14). The demand for university education is reflected further in the statistics released by the JAMB. According to (The Nigerian) *Guardian* (August 13, 1991), of the 1,141,489 applications received by the JAMB between 1986 to 1990, the federal and state universities admitted only 204,223.

This increasing number, coupled with greater demand on university education, would have significant impact on the management of reform in Nigerian university education system.

THE SCHOOL AND THE UNIVERSITY: AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of the American system of education, is the flexible, and often informal relationship that exists between the high schools and the universities. In many ways, both the two educational systems share common interfaces and shared meanings. And since they provide a conceptually structural continuum, students find the transition from one to the other relatively straightforward. Indeed in some cases, such as the University of California, the universities provide opportunities for students to take some courses while still in the high school (California 1981).

The early American high school imitated European curricular models, and it still retains some aspects of the European tradition: teaching moral, civil and physical education. And while individual States have imposed their own curriculum requirements, these are similar across the country. The universities have contributed to this standardization, since they insist that all high school students meet their admission requirements in terms of the courses taken.

The historical relationship between the university and the school in America came about because

The widening of the fields of instruction in the nineteenth century was part of a drastic educational reform that was taking place on both sides of the Atlantic. The main objective of this reform was the recognition of the physical and biological sciences as reputable subjects to be studied in a university...As the fields of study of applied science and practical subjects broadened at the university level, instruction at the secondary level

also changed (Conant 1959 p. 4).

While all courses are offered in the high schools for the four years, universities imposed different exposure times to each course in addition to the school district graduation requirements; insisting, for instance, that a student must finish four years of a certain course, while two years of another are considered sufficient enough. The major requirements, representing *general education* at the high school level included:

English Language. This is quite broad and includes literature, public speaking, drama, composition and reading. This must be studied for four years.

Mathematics. The majority of American States require at least one year of mathematics to be learnt in the high school. The average student completes algebra and plane geometry; but many complete only algebra.

Science. Science education has had a long history of reform and development in the United States, with its greatest period being in the 1960s in the wake of the Cold War. Students are given laboratory type of instruction since from Junior High School. In grade 9 (freshman, or first year of high school) an integrated course in general science is offered, which attempts to give the students a scientific approach to various life problems. The standard separate sciences of Chemistry, Biology and Physics are offered to students in grades 10−12. Not all these three are compulsory to students; indeed some students may not even offer Science at all depending on what they feel they wish to do in life.

Social Studies. This is an all embracing term and includes subjects such as social sciences, history, geography, government and citizenship. The social studies courses are compulsory.

There is considerable variation in the years in which these subjects are offered to students. Students are normally expected to stay in the school for the whole of the four years; otherwise they would not be given a certificate of completion. These courses are recorded on a **transcript** which will indicate the grades earned for each course. If so instructed by the student, the school will send copies of transcripts to anyone who needs to see them. It is this transcript that students record on their university application forms to give a clue to their curricular efficiency and background.

In addition to these standard offerings, high school students are also offered elective courses in a variety of manner and for many reasons. In some cases students who have identified their intentions to go to the university take *advanced placement courses* which if they are completed successfully, would lead to a credit towards university courses.

These courses are *college preparatory courses* which are definitely compulsory for any student who wants to proceed to the university. Advanced placement examinations in these courses are not offered by the high schools themselves, but by an independent outside agency, the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB).

The examinations are offered in the third week of May each year after students must have completed appropriate advanced placement course offered in their high schools. Students however do not have to complete an AP course in order to take the AP examination, although the chances of passing are of course much greater after completion of such a course.

The AP examinations are offered in many diverse areas, including American Government and Politics, Economics, Latin, Physics, Computer Sciences and foreign languages (mainly French, German, Spanish). Thus the AP courses taken in the last two years of high school are regarded by the university as honors courses in calculating a student's eligibility for admission. In the examinations, students answer essay−type questions after following a prescribed curriculum intended to compare to the standard of the first year of a bachelor's degree. The grading system used is on a 1 (minimum) to 5 (maximum) scale. As such, they are given an extra grade point: an A=5, B=4, and C=3. Students achieving scores of 3, 4 or 5 generally obtain exemptions to some courses in an American bachelor's degree program.

Students who anticipate a difficult course load in the university can take the AP examinations in terminal subjects that are not in their major field, e.g. English, foreign language, or American history to satisfy the breadth *American History and Institutions* requirement of some universities.

Thus depending on a student's AP score, the University of California, for example, will grant unit and subject credit. That is, a score of 3, 4 or 5 will earn a student 8 quarter units (5.3 semester units at Berkeley) of university credit, which is equivalent to two university courses, and may earn subject credit when the particular examination is considered by the university to satisfy the requirements of one or two specific courses required for graduation. If an AP examination does not earn subject credit, it will be counted as an elective credit, thereby reducing the number of elective units a student needs to complete before graduation.

However, in some universities the number of college units granted for AP tests is not counted toward the maximum number of credits allowed before formal declaration of an undergraduate major subject of specialization. Further, the number of AP units granted is not counted toward the maximum number of units a student may accumulate prior to graduation from the university. But students who enter the university with AP credits are not required to declare a major earlier than students who do not have such credit, nor are they required to graduate earlier.

Upon leaving the high school, students have available to them second, third and fourth chances to proceed to higher education. Although students who want to go directly to the best colleges or universities have ensured that they did the right academic courses; yet even students who perform poorly can still get ahead in higher education: the only limit is will and determination, but not the opportunity.

Transition to the University

Admission in to the university is handled by each university on its own, and is not centrally (i.e. nationally) controlled. This makes it easier for universities to impose their own requirements and consequently control their standards, as well as serve the catchment areas of their locations effectively. This is more so since the university entrance requirements are often coordinated with the high school principals and teachers. The university is therefore aware of the limitations of the schools and can provide suggestions to overcome these limitations, while the high schools are aware of the expectations of the university and provides facilities to meets these expectations. The picture that emerges, though not a perfect one, nevertheless reveals a sharp focus on common interfaces between the high schools and the university that makes transition relatively less

traumatic for students.

Naturally, although the requirements for covering basic courses in the high school are the same across the board, the differences in the quality of the universities across the nation is reflected in the intensity of their emphasis on the level of preparation of students from the high school who apply to get admitted.

Students are normally ***directly*** admitted from high school into the university. In some few cases students come to the university through ***community colleges***. At the University of California, students must complete certain courses in the high school which the university refers to as the ***a−f requirements*** before being considered for admission. Students are required to take a total 15 units[3] of high school courses to fulfill the subject requirement and at least 7 of the 15 units must be taken in the last two years of the high school. The a−f courses stipulated are:

a. *History*. One year required. This can be covered either by six months each of civics and American government, or a whole year of American history. In the high school, this requirement is covered by the social studies sequence.

b. *English*. Four years are required, and must include frequent and regular writing and reading of both classic and modern literature, poetry and drama. The emphasis is on covering these within the last three years of high school.

c. *Mathematics*. Three years required, but the universities often recommend four. Aspects covered must include elementary algebra, geometry, and second year (advanced) algebra.

d. *Laboratory Science*. One year is required, but three recommended in either Chemistry, Biology or Physics and in the 10th grade (second year) or later.

e. *Foreign language*. Two years required, but three recommended. The same language should be studied for the two years. Courses within the language were required to emphasize speaking and understanding, as well as instruction in grammar, vocabulary, reading and composition.

f. *College Preparatory Electives*. Four years required. These are aimed at students who right from the high school had identified their intentions to proceed to the university. Such students were required to take additional courses to the a−e indicated above. These courses should be taken from at least two of the following areas: history, English, advanced mathematics, laboratory science, foreign language (a third year of the foreign language listed above; or two years of another foreign language in a addition to the foreign language listed above), social science, and visual and performing arts. A 9th grade science course is an acceptable elective.

For eligibility to university, a student must attain certain proficiency in each of these subjects and obtained a specific cumulative score; the minimum acceptable grade being a **C.** This is often the ***scholarship requirement*** and defines the grade point average (GPA) which a student must attain in the a−f subjects to be eligible for university admission.

Understandably this requirement differs among universities with some being more demanding than others. At Berkeley, for instance, the minimum GPA in the a−f subjects required is 3.3, and only the grades earned in the a−f subjects in the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades are used in the calculation of the GPA. Courses taken in the 9th grade can be used to meet the subject requirement if the student has earned a C grade or better, but they will not be used to calculate the GPA. Berkeley calculates the GPA in the a−f subjects by assigning point values to the grades earned, totaling the points, and dividing the total by the number of a−f course units. Points are assigned as follows: A=4 points, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0. Students with D or F in the a−f subjects must repeat the failed the subjects in the high school if they want them to be counted towards university admission.

Although there is no national high school examination in the United States in a similar way that obtains in most African countries, nevertheless students are expected to pass a series of tests in different subjects if they intend proceeding with their education. What makes these tests unique is their flexibility. The most common test requirement for university entry is the ***Scholastic Aptitude Test***, SAT. The latest time this test, reflecting verbal and mathematical scores, can be taken for admission into the university is normally December of the preceding year of expected enrollment in the first year of the university. The SAT can be taken at any stage at which the student feels he can take it. An acceptable alternative test scores to the SAT are the test scores of the ***American College Test*** (ACT).

Students that are university bound are also expected to provide test scores from the ***College Board Achievement Tests*** (ACH) in three subjects: English Composition, Mathematics (Level 1 or 2), and ***one*** test in one of the following areas: English Literature, science, or social studies. Thus, for California, for instance, the minimum qualifications for entry are based upon

test scores, curriculum taken and GPA, Grade Point Average, and activities and honors: four different things. And the minimum GPA is 3.3 on a High School, which is a B+ on a 4 point scale. You have to take the Scholastic Aptitude Test, Verbal and Math, plus three achievement tests, and they have to be English, Maths and a third one of your own choice. So you have ***five*** tests that you take while you were in High School. You have to take a College Prep Curriculum which includes Lab Science, Mathematics, Foreign Language and English[4].

These five tests are not all aggregated and taken at the same time as is common in most African countries. Students can spread taking the them over the last two years of high school. This makes it a lot easier to tailor the curriculum and the subsequent tests to developmental patterns of the learner as he moves through the various grades of the high school. It also considerably reduces the stress and anxiety associated with terminal examination syndromes, which, in some countries (e.g. Japan) can often be catastrophic due to the importance attached to passing the final examinations.

Negotiating Entrance to the University

The admission procedure itself, while highly complex, is made simple by the use of a vast array of computers. Indeed, in my interviews with Andre Bell and Charlie Wong both at the Admissions Office of the University of California at Berkeley, they made it clear that processing the admission of some 20,000 applicants would have been impossible without the technology to support it.[5] However, the process of admission — from submission of application to confirmation of offer of places — in UC Berkeley takes place within six months. Thus students know their admission status approximately six months from the November deadline set for the submission of the applications. This means that they get their admissions while still in high school.

The University of California, being a multi−campus university has a single application form for all the campuses, and students can fill in as many campuses as they want, provided they pay for ***each*** campus they select. The forms themselves were sent to a central pool — or what the university officials call “central processor”, and sorted out. The data for each candidate is sent to the relevant campus both on computer tape as well as hard copy of the form. Entering the information into the central processor prevents duplication of the same information about each candidate which would have otherwise been duplicated for any multiple campus application.

Once the individual data about each student has been received on each campus, an index is generated. This index is,

derived from the students’ grade point average in his high school work and the results of the two test scores (SAT and ACH). If a student has a perfect grade point average from high school, it would be 4.0, which is an A. So a 4.0 will give him 4000 points. There are five tests altogether between the SAT and the College Board Achievement Test (ACH). Each test is worth 800 points. In other words if they have a perfect score on each test, they would get 800 points. So they are five tests, five times eight would be 4000. So 4000 plus the 4000 points from the Grade Point Average would be 8000. So the highest index is 8000. We ask the computer for a roster of all the freshmen College of Letters and Science [for example], and we ask it to give us the Grade Point Averages and the test scores. And then it will also add up and give us the index for each individual. And then it also ranks them so it would be by the highest index. So it goes from 8000 all the way to zero.[6]

Once the ranking is done, the first 60% of the students are admitted purely based on this ranking alone, starting from the highest. In admitting the rest of the 40%, subjective criteria are often used. These would include personal abilities and circumstances affecting schooling (such as sporting capabilities, or low income or hardship) as well as diversity. It would appear that due to the need of the university to reflect diversity in its student intake, the more unusual surrounding circumstances of a particular student, the higher their chances of being admitted, provided they meet the basic requirements. These abilities are often reflected in the essays ***all*** applicants are requested to write about themselves,

So the essay is very critical here because we are looking for the student explaining why he want to go to the university, why he wants to study, what he wants to study, how he developed as a person; what were the significant things in his life; what experience might he have had that may have changed the whole course of

being. So what we are basically looking for from the students is for him to show us how he had developed and become this person who wants to attend the University.[7]

Once final decisions have been made about whom to admit, the system then generates admission letters (or denial letters) for specific colleges. It is significant that the faculty have no input on the admissions as such, especially for the first 60% of the merit students admitted;

But for the second half of the applicants [i.e. the remaining 40%], Engineering for example, the faculty is very involved. They do come over and read essays and make decisions too. Chemistry and Environmental design also do that. Letters and Science and Natural Resources, we do here. We do that. So it is a little bit of each.[8]

After the decisions have finally been made, students are sent admission letters. Decisions regarding whether to accept a place or not must be made within few weeks of receiving the offer. Once the offer is accepted, students are then sent a registration package with lists of course available. Berkeley's computerized Advanced Class Enrollment (ACE) system enable the student to request classes and receive a class schedule well before each semester begins. The system is designed to increase the probability that spaces will be available for all students wishing to take a particular course.

Inside the University

With about 5,000 sections of courses the choices can be pretty bewildering for many students, and for that, admitted students can come to the university immediately and talk to their designated advisors, if they feel it is necessary, before finally selecting the combination of courses of study in the university. As Dr Richard Bailey, the Registrar of the UC Berkeley explained,

So they talk to their advisor, decide on what courses they like to take, plus they take an alternative courses in case they can't get in their first choice. Then they can either use the telephone or they can go home and phone in. We have Voice Response Technology here! They call in to the computer, and the computer says ***"What would you like to take?"*** They key in the numbers of the courses. They either get in or don't get in. The computer confirms it. It has a vocabulary of over 3,000 words. They have ten minutes to register. They can do that ***world−wide***. After they do that, the computer talks to them and tells them what their confirmed schedule is. A week later we send them a written copy of that schedule. So then they come in late August or September and go to class[9].

Two other campuses in the University of California system — San Diego and Los Angeles — already implement such system of remote registration. This type of remote registration can only be made possible

through enhanced advancement of public utility systems. It also sorts out the problem of late registrations and prevents over−crowding of some courses and over−registration by students. There are bound to be problems, of course, most of which are more associated with the abuse of the system, rather than operational difficulties. For instance, the University of Washington in Seattle had several students circumventing the system which used birth dates as access codes. According to a spokesperson from the University,

A student learned the birth date and registration number of another student at a party, seeing her ID on a table, apparently. Later, he dropped her from an impacted class and added himself (***The Daily Californian***, September 23, 1991 p 8).

Prior to the introduction of the new at system UC Berkeley students chose their courses through Advanced Class Enrollment (ACE), a tedious form that students fill to indicate the courses they wish to register for. The completed forms were then scanned into the computer. But

the major problem with ACE has been the time lag between submission of a class request and receipt of a class schedule: the delay can run from a few weeks to a few months. A student's resulting class schedule often was far removed from what was submitted originally (***The Berkeley Undergraduate*** Volume 3 No 1, January 1992; UC−Berkeley).

Telephone registration was of course nothing new in the U.S., since it has been around for about a decade. But its recent acceptance by large campuses signals yet another cycle of innovation and reform in the university campuses. In Berkeley's Tele−BEARS approach (**B**erkeley **E**nrollment **A**nd **R**egistration **S**ystem) introduced in September 1991, students can directly access the university's enrollment database via a touch−tone telephone by keying in their student ID number, and then the last four digits of their social security number.

Thus issues such as time−tabling or class scheduling would have been taken care of long before the students even report for their first university courses. The entire class schedule that lists the courses, times of teaching and locations is then produced in the form of a booklet, and at UC Berkeley, was sold for 50 cents (in 1991) to every student. These schedules are therefore built ahead of time,

...and the computer does it. I mean we load [into the computer], by departments, the courses, and we schedule them into general assignable classrooms, at particular times. And then we publish that. Students read the schedule, see what course, by department, who is teaching it what time. The computer won't let them make a time conflict. I mean if they pick two courses at the same time, it tells that there is a conflict and they have to pick another course. It also requires that they take the full load.[10]

And because this schedule would have resolved any time conflicts between courses, it is also used as a framework for the end of the semester examination scheduling. Once these confirmed class schedules are sent

to the students, the next stage would be to report for classes in the university.

Providing Breadth and Depth

Within the diversity of California higher education, all segments share the same undergraduate education, particularly the first two years or "lower division" (comprising freshman and sophomore years) of the curriculum. The next two years, or "upper division" (junior and senior years) are the years of specialization or "major" during which the student must declare the major subject in which he wishes to graduate.

All four segments (i.e. four years of the university) share certain assumptions about the nature of this undergraduate curriculum which emerged from the development of American higher education (see Chapter 4). Key to these assumptions is a balance of courses to provide the students with appropriate ***breadth*** of subject matter (the aim of the lower division courses), as well as sufficient ***depth*** in a particular academic specialization (senior years). The breadth requirement is a **graduation** requirement and with the exception of the lower division writing requirement, need not be satisfied only during the lower division years.

To attain educational breadth, students must take a certain array of courses under the rubric of ***general education***. At Berkeley's College of Letters of Science, for instance, there are four of such breadth requirements. The first, in **reading and composition**, is designed to provide the student with the skills necessary to understand relatively sophisticated texts and to express ideas and opinions in writing as precisely and forcefully as possible. The second, in **quantitative reasoning** is designed to provide the student with some knowledge of fundamental mathematical skills and principles.

The third, in **foreign language** provides each students with some knowledge of the language of a culture other than his own. The fourth requires completion of six courses (minimum total of 16 semester units) **selected from areas outside that of the major** and is designed to provide the student with some knowledge in the broad fields of **natural science, social science, and humanities**. A student cannot register a course offered by his major department or degree recommending program among the six courses used to satisfy the breadth requirement.

For example, the major in anthropology is classified in the field of social science; anthropology majors may not count anthropology courses listed in the field of natural science toward the natural science breadth requirement. Similarly, students who want to graduate in history, which is classified as both social science and humanities, may not count any course offered by the Department of History towards the humanities or the social science breadth requirements. And further, students are not allowed to concentrate ***all*** the six courses in one field. They must complete at least two courses from each of the two fields outside the field of the major.

As it has evolved over time, the general education portion of the undergraduate curriculum is fulfilled at most institutions with lower division courses. As Condren (1990) pointed out,

The debate about the weighting of breadth and depth in undergraduate education has been prompted in large part by long−term student interests. Enrolment patterns among California students have followed national trends, shifting away in recent years from the humanities and social sciences to occupationally−oriented programmes related to California's technological economy. This strong interest in majors leading directly to

employment opportunities has placed considerable stress on the guiding principles of the traditional undergraduate curriculum. Most campuses, however, still regard their central purpose to be the provision of a more generalised “liberal arts” education (Condren 1990 p. 153).

Both the university and the individual schools and colleges within the university can have their own additional requirements on students before students can take courses. In Berkeley, the ***American Cultures*** breadth requirement is a pre−requisite for the bachelors degree. This requirement is satisfied by passing, with a ***C−*** or P an approved course — of which there were over forty. The courses that satisfy this requirement must be integrative and comparative and address theoretical and analytical issues relevant to the understanding race, culture and ethnicity in American history and society.

The second set of course requirements are set by the individual schools within the university. Every College and School has established a program of requirements for the degree which may be in addition to those of a field of concentration. These requirements may include preparatory subject requirements for admission; preparatory college−level courses for a particular field of study — to be completed if possible within the early residency in the university; breadth requirements, courses outside the field of study considered essential to a well−rounded curriculum; the credit requirements, which is the total number of units to be completed, with specifications of how these credits are to be distributed; and minimum scholarship requirement. The College or School normally makes available these requirements upon registration for courses.

Making Major Decisions

In addition to meeting the breadth requirement, students must pursue and complete a major program, the object of which is to provide them with a limited experience in specialization. The major is a selection of courses from one or more departments designed to provide students with the knowledge, skills and experiences necessary to pursue a specific career and/or advanced study. A student must earn a 2.0 grade point average in all courses required for the major in order to graduate. The major will not make students specialists upon graduation, but in most cases they will be prepared for graduate study or for independent pursuit of the subject beyond the university.

One of the first expectations placed on the student upon entering the university is some knowledge about the major subject he would graduate in. The decision on the choice of a major is very important and is often made on the basis of interests, abilities as well as career goals. It is often the case that the major could be offered in more than one college or division of the university; in which case then the student registers for that major in the appropriate college or division to his interests and abilities since they provide different emphases. Students at Berkeley are strongly urged to declare their majors as early as possible so as to begin orienting themselves towards taking the appropriate retinue of courses needed to support the major.

Some majors may require full four years to complete and would therefore not be available to students who have not taken the appropriate courses in their first years in the university. Others require that some or all of the lower division major requirements must be completed before declarations for the major can be accepted. In any event, students must declare a definite major by the time they complete ***60 units*** of study in the university; which places preparatory courses to the major within the first two years (lower division).

And although at Berkeley, for instance, a student does not have to declare a major before being admitted, this only applies to some colleges in the university, principally College of Letters and Science which has over 70% of undergraduate admissions, and the College of Natural Resources. The Colleges of Chemistry, Engineering and Environmental Design and the Department of Ethnic Studies select students by major, so a choice of anticipated major in these colleges can affect a students' chances of admission. Students are therefore admitted without having to necessarily declare what subject they would wish to graduate in.

Getting a Credit in Learning

Most university courses are assigned a unit value. The unit is also referred to as **credit**. A credit or semester unit represents one hour of class work per week for one semester. Three hours of laboratory per week are the equivalent of one unit. In a limited number of courses two hours of laboratory per week are the equivalent of one unit. Also, two hours of activity or studio (art, dance, music, physical education) are normally equivalent to one unit of credit.

In some other universities, the unit−credit conversions are slightly different. At Berkeley one unit represents three hours of work per week by the student, including both class attendance and preparation. Laboratory, discussion, quiz or review sessions may or may not be given unit value. The work of all students is reported in terms of the following grades: A (excellent), B (good), C (fair), D (barely passing), F (failure), P (passed at a minimum level of C−), NP (not passed), S (satisfactory, passed at a minimum level of B−), U (unsatisfactory), I (work incomplete due to circumstances beyond the student's control, but of passing quality), IP (work in progress; final grade to be assigned upon completion of entire course sequence). The grades A, B, C, and D may be modified by plus (+) or minus (−) suffixes.

A course in which the grades A, B, C, D or P is received is counted toward degree requirements. A course in which the grade F, NP, or U is received is not counted toward degree requirements. A course in which the grade I or IP is received is not counted toward degree requirements until the I or IP is replaced by grade A, B, C, D, P, or S.

Grade points per unit are assigned as follows: A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, and F=none. When attached to the grades, A, B, C, or D, plus (+) grades carry three−tenths of a grade point more per unit, and minus (−) grades three tenths of a grade point less per unit than unsuffixed grades, except for A+, which carries 4.0 grade points per unit as does A (California, 1991).

The grade point average is computed on courses undertaken in the university. Grades A, B, C, D, and F are used in determining the grade point average; grades IP, P, S, NP and U carry no grade points and are excluded from all grade point computations.

A minimum of 120 semester units is required for graduation. Students may complete an unlimited number of units beyond the minimum 120, provided they do so and graduate within a maximum of eight semesters. Students are not allowed to enroll beyond the term in which they have completed 130 semester units if their enrollment extends beyond eight semesters. The normal progress toward a degree requires 30 units of successfully completed course work each year. A 15 unit course load per semester is considered normal, while registration for less than 13 units must be authorized. Marking and grading examinations was by and large seen as a personal affair of the tutor. Individual course examination score sheets bearing the names of student students are filled in and sent to the Department, from where they are sent to the registrars' office. According to Dr. Bailey, the Registrar at UC Berkeley,

After they score them, after they have a class, we give them a grading sheet, and it has all the students names pre−printed on it, and all the grading options on it. And if a student has enrolled in a particular grading option, let us say Pass, Fail, as opposed to Letter Grades, or have to take a letter grade and can't take a pass fail, that is marked down there also. So it prevents the professor from doing something different. And then the professor just marks the right grades. They turn it, about three days after the exam.[11]

There are therefore no academic boards for the results to be scaled through. Results do not have to be subjected to the approval of either a Departmental Board, a Faculty Board, or a Senate. Indeed any attempt to subject the results of any examination to a further scrutiny would cause an uproar among the faculty with accusations of breach of academic freedom. Once the forms with the results are in the Registrar's office,

...then we have scanners that read these forms. The scanner is 99% correct, but sometimes they read them wrong, or the professor may have scored it wrong and he doesn't realize it until after he sees it later. We ran 50,000 of these forms through quickly. We have two scanners and whatever is turned in one day can be read in an hour. They put them into the computer and we ran the grades by the students, or by faculty. The computer then calculates all the scores including the Grade Point Averages, and provides numerical basis for judgments about the student.[12]

Thus students are normally informed of the status of their examination within a few weeks after the examination itself. These are processes and procedures which differ radically from the way the Nigerian undergraduate curricula is evaluated within the framework of the course unit system as currently being implemented in Nigeria. The rest of this book explores further the differences the two countries, and the changes that need to be made in the Nigerian educational system to make it more effective in the implementation of an American−style course unit system of structuring and evaluating undergraduate education.

CHAPTER 6

GENESIS TO REVELATION: REFORM AND ADAPTATION IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY CURRICULAR STRUCTURE, 1960−1988

Introduction

The greatest challenge faced by the Nigerian university in the years after independence from Britain was whether to retain its British legacy — the *gold standard* of Lord Ashby of Brandon (Ashby 1965 p. 82) — or open itself to other influences — as is the case with universities all over the world — and gradually evolve a distinct character of its own.

The desire to retain the British framework predominated quite simply because the Nigerian labor market — civil service, private sector and the industries — has not developed a system of assessing prospective employees except through their education and examination outcomes. And since the entire employment superstructure is based on British patterns, retaining British educational framework had the comfortable currency of predictability. An almost paternally condescending relationship between Nigeria and Britain also helps to retain Nigeria within the British ambit for a considerable period after independence.

The First Wave: Aid Agencies and the Nigerian University System

Gradually, however, a crack began to appear in the relationship between Nigeria and Britain in the 1970s over geopolitical issues and this had the effect of orienting Nigeria gradually away from British influences, for as Gambari (1989) argued,

Nigeria shares with Britain the use of English as the official mode of communication, but the two countries rarely speak the same language on political issues. In spite of close historical, economic, trade, cultural, institutional, and other ties between independent Nigeria and the former colonial power, serious political discord has seldom been far from the surface (Gambari 1989 p. 139).

This serious political discord (between Nigeria and Britain) appeared almost immediately after independence when, in 1962, Nigeria abrogated a defense agreement with Britain which was part of the independence package. But despite this move, Nigeria remained dependent on Britain for military supplies until 1967 when the Nigerian Civil War broke out (Ate 1987). The British policy towards the war — neutrality — deeply disappointed Nigerian leaders “and had a chilling effect on Nigeria−British relations” (Eke 1990 p. 133). This chill continued until 1973 when attempts were made by the two governments to normalize relationships on somewhat warmer levels. But the change in government in 1974 in Britain set in another chill when in that year the British government reduced its general aid package to Nigeria based partly on Nigeria’s unexpected windfall in oil revenue following the rise of oil prices after the Yom Kippur War of October 1973 (see *The changing emphasis in British aid policies: More help for the poorest*. London: HMSO, 1975; and Hewitt and Sutton, 1980). This, of course, affected any British aid to Nigerian universities. Coupled with subsequent

frosty relationships as a result of increasingly differing political standpoints regarding global issues such as South Africa, Angola, Palestine Liberation Organization, independence in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Namibia, competition between the British North Sea Oil and Nigeria's oil, (see Galloway 1987 for a detailed analysis of this development), the impact of British academic system on Nigerian universities went steadily into decline.

It would seem that subsequent changes in government — in both Nigeria and Britain — had the effect of further widening the gulf between the two countries because by 1984 diplomatic relations were at a point of rupture, and Nigeria almost withdrew its membership of the Commonwealth. Things stabilized, but whatever intellectual influence Britain might have had on Nigerian educational development has already withered away as early as 1960s, when, in 1969 the National Curriculum Conference in Nigeria organized by the Nigerian federal government advocated a restructuring of Nigerian education system along more American lines. Even politically, the image of Britain as a source of inspiration waned when after the failure in 1966, of the Westminster style of government adopted by Nigeria in 1960, the Nigerian government adopted an American presidential style of administration for its civilian government in 1979. And although a military intervention curtailed that system of administration, a subsequent military government (established 1985) adopted a loosely American defense structure replete with a President, and Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Certainly, despite the theatrics by university students and labor union leaders at the American embassy which surfaces up after every international incidence involving the United States, the intensity of Nigerian feelings towards Britain, if the Nigerian press can be considered a measure of public opinion, was hostile for the most of the 1970s and 1980s. By and large, the same media considered American attitudes towards African issues, while not wholeheartedly the same as Nigeria's, nevertheless more appreciative and in any event, not as patronizing as the British. In this climate of opinion, combined with increased American aid to the Nigerian educational system, especially the universities, it is not surprising that the Nigerian educational system started taking an American hue. Indeed the only British influence on Nigerian education was the founding process: the development and reformation of Nigerian education was a studied attempt to break away from the British mold.

On the other hand, relationships between Nigeria and the United States, since the 1970s have been considerably warmer than with Britain (see, for instance, Montgomery 1961, United States 1980). The relationship between Nigeria and America was contextualized by Professor Jibril Aminu, a one time Minister of Education in Nigeria who noted that,

Nigeria, in spite of its clear policy of non−alignment, has demonstrated in the last few years, its genuine desire for strong links with the United States, especially after 1977 when the U.S. policy in Southern Africa showed a somewhat favourable shift. There will also be need to show genuine appreciation, not only for the uninterrupted supply of oil, but for the more profound political development of Nigeria largely and freely adopting, in its first post−military era, a constitution modelled largely on the U.S. constitution. (Aminu 1986 p. 270).

However, the influence of American ideas in the development of education in Nigeria has as long history as American involvement in African education. In the 1920s the Phelps−Stokes Fund undertook a mission on African education and came up with a series of perceptions that did not go down well with Nigerian nationalists who rejected the patronizing proposals of the Fund on the sort of education an African should receive. Since then American aid agencies had been rather cautious in prescribing any specific educational development pattern, preferring, instead to provide funding through which Africans can develop their ideas

using the aid agencies, through American universities, for consultative purposes. As Eberly (1962) pointed out,

The American−West African relationship until the late 1950s may be described as a slender two−way bridge with the traffic directed by the Americans. More recent events indicate the evolution of a partnership with American resources being geared to West African educational needs, as outlined by the Africans themselves (Eberly 1962 p. 49).

In this way, the International Development Placement Association, United States Agency for International Development, the African−American Institute, Operation Crossroads Africa, the American Council on Education along with about twenty or more other American organizations have all contributed to provision of fund and expertise to Nigerian education. In addition, U.S. colleges and universities aided in the process by sponsoring many African academics which included many Nigerians to study in American institutions. For instance on September 25, 1960, *The New York Times* reported that

A large scale scholarship program for students from tropical Africa, sponsored by twenty−four American colleges and universities will be expanded to include an additional seventy five to one hundred institutions...When the participating African nations have made known the kinds of training most needed for their development, the sponsoring colleges will enlist the cooperation of American institutions which offer established courses of recognized quality in these fields [E11].

The biggest contribution to the educational aid process, of course, was by the big three American aid agencies: Carnegie Corporation, Rockefeller and Ford Foundations. For instance, the Carnegie Corporation made possible a massive training of African scholars through funding of Afro−Anglo−American Program in Teacher Education at the Columbia Teachers' College, and

by 1975 personnel from institutes of education at most universities in most formerly British colonies had been exposed to (if not influenced by) American pedagogical concepts as practised at the influential Teachers' College, Columbia University. Movement of personnel between African institutes and Teachers' College for advanced degree work was an integral part of the program. In this way, large numbers of influential African educators were exposed at first hand to American pedagogical concepts and practices (Berman 1977 p. 80).

And when the American National Science Foundation sponsored the review of science curriculum in the early 1960s, some of these curricula formed the basis for the Nigerian Secondary Science Project (NSSSP) materials, developed by the Comparative Education and Study Adaptation Center of the University of Lagos. The Center itself was set up with partial funding from the Ford Foundation. In 1985 the NSSSP materials were introduced in all the senior secondary schools in Nigeria as part of a compulsory National Policy on Education.

The Ford Foundation also played a very key role in the establishment of the African Primary Science Program in 1965 in Nigeria, which in 1970 became the Science Education Program for Africa, aimed at using the U.S. sponsored National Science Foundation approaches to teaching science in African primary schools.

The Aiyetoro Comprehensive school established in Ibadan was an even more explicit statement of the early transfer of American educational ideas in Nigeria: not only was it designed as an American high school in 1963, it also introduced *general education* philosophy of the American high schools in its curriculum.

But despite the barrage of American influence on Nigerian university structure and curricula organization in the 1970s, especially through training offered to Nigerian academics and defrayed by the American aid agencies, Britain nevertheless maintained a working interest in Nigerian universities, at least up till the mid 1970s. British involvement, however, had more to do with staffing the universities with British lecturers than making provisions for structural reforms, or even small scale innovations; in any event it was not likely that the British would support any radical departure from the inherited British educational format in Nigerian universities. The relationship between Nigerian universities and British institutions before and a decade after independence in 1960 was articulated through the Inter−Universities Council, formed on the recommendations of the Asquith Commission in 1946. The purpose of the Council was to

promote the foundation and expansion of universities in the British colonial territories as comprehensive institutions offering both liberal education and professional training (Kolinsky 1983 p. 37).

The essential tasks of the IUC were to provide a supply of British university teachers to the new developing universities in the colonies, as well as to help in training local promising graduates to supply locally needed academics (Kolinsky 1987). And due to the importance of the tasks of the IUC, it was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee in October 1970. Its operational expenses were borne by the British Ministry of Overseas Development.

In Nigeria, the IUC was most closely associated with the University of Ibadan, Ahmadu Bello University and the University of Ife (Obafemi Awolowo University), with nodding acknowledgments to University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and the University of Lagos (particularly the College of Medicine which benefited from a stream of short term British visitors brought to the College by the IUC) and the new universities established (not entirely to the IUC's pleasure) in the 1970s. Further, albeit limited aid to the Nigerian universities was also provided by the British Council, the Technical Education and Training Organisation for Overseas Countries, the Centre for Educational Development Overseas, the British Volunteer Programme, and most importantly for training young university academics in Nigeria, the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission (Griffiths 1980 p. 699; Hawes and Coombe 1986).

The Second Wave: Reform and Innovation

However, the biggest outcome of the strained relationship between Nigeria and Britain was reflected in the total reorientation of the Nigerian educational system, from the elementary school all through to the university away from its British *gold standard* and movement towards a more diversified and cosmopolitan model. The University of Nigeria, Nsukka led the way to the reform right from its inception. Not only was it

the first *indigenous* university in Nigeria (i.e. set up as a result of African, rather than British colonial initiatives), but it was also the first to be based entirely on an American model of university course structure and evaluation, complete with semesters, schools, and credit system in its courses.

Nsukka was established following an initiative by the then Eastern Nigeria Government in 1955 in collaboration with the Michigan State University. And

although the stated intention of Nsukka's founders is to draw the best from British as well as American experience and create something uniquely suited to Nigeria's needs, the approach is considerably more American than British (Conklin 1961 p. 9).

This American approach caused quite a bit of stir, laced with regional sentiments — even leading to the establishment of another university in the Western Region (the University of Ife). Further,

this break with tradition has opened the university [Nsukka] to a great deal of criticism, for British attitudes toward American education are still strong in Nigeria. Holders of American degrees have long had to face prejudice in finding jobs in both government and business (Conklin 1961 p. 9).

Official British participation in the establishment of the university was initially "not forthcoming" (Umeh and Nwachuku 1986 p. 76), although gradually the British were made part of the process, since after all, Nigeria was still a British colony then. British attitudes to the new university, according to Umeh and Nwachuku (1986) were further affected by whether or not the competition for students and staff would not adversely affect Ibadan (then a showpiece of educational institutional transfer from Britain to Nigeria), whether the magnitude of the proposed project would not impose too large a financial burden even if the university adopted a less expensive style than Ibadan; and whether the emergence of the university would not encourage an uncoordinated proliferation of universities.

Further, the Nigerian prejudice against American education was in a way amplified by the Ibadan axis some of whose members believed that in America,

there is a vast proliferation of so−called universities which have no academic standards and precious few of any other sort...It cannot be said too strongly that a first degree at an American university is worth no more than an English Higher School Certificate: even the best universities, Yale and Harvard, are compelled to spend much time imparting instruction which should have been given at school (Olubummo and Ferguson 1960 p. 14).

These views, coming from a staff in the Department of Mathematics (Olubummo) and Head of Classics (Ferguson) both at University of Ibadan further served as a commentary on British/Nigerian attitude to American education being tried at Nsukka in 1960. What made Nsukka a maverick was its unashamedly

American orientation in virtually every way (although retaining the British concept of external examiner). For example, at Nsukka,

instead of reading in a single subject throughout their stay at the university, as is customary in the British−style African university, Nsukka students are required to spend their first two years in a school of general studies. There, American fashion, they are introduced to the concept of related disciplines as they take basic courses in English, a modern language, general science, and the social sciences. Only after a through exposure to this broad base do the students choose their area of specialization (Conklin 1961 p. 9).

And although Nsukka incorporated suggestions of university structure predominantly from America (or, to be precise, Michigan State University), nevertheless it used a sprinkling of British consultants during its initial days; a situation which was without its source of tension as, for example,

The British were concerned that the proposed General Studies curriculum not take away time from the students' area of concentrated study. They wanted external examiners to read the students' papers and assure that proper standards were being upheld. To the British, nothing was more fearful than the notion that one might become involved with mediocrity, and to the Americans, nothing seemed more frightening than the possibility that this should be just another traditional university which ignored the special needs of the Nigerian community (Zerby and Zerby 1971 p. 108).

The unease regarding general studies from the British consultants (and some of the students) was surprising considering the care with which Michigan State University consultants ensured that the program would be as Nigerian as possible, since

from the start it was recognized that the general studies work in Nigeria should be uniquely Nigerian. Thus it was not possible to import syllabi from other universities: teachers were forced to be creative (Zerby 1965 p. 10).

Unobtrusively, one of the texts used by Michigan State faculty to teach the general studies program in Nsukka was *Toward Liberal Education* — a text will no doubt ensure more converts to the general education philosophy!

Eventually Nsukka stabilized and provided a virtual model of the first American university transplant in Africa.[13] Michigan State was chosen as model for Nsukka not just because they were willing to help, but also because of the land grant philosophy behind its establishment, which the founders of Nsukka were convinced should provide the most acceptable framework around which Nigerian university education should be based. As one of the Michigan State consultants argued,

High level instructional staff capable of tapping and developing the human resources in the primary and secondary schools is going to need to be developed. Production of such individuals in the technical, commercial and scientific fields for the secondary school level of instruction is especially urgent. The land grant philosophy, with its emphasis upon tailoring the curricula to meet whatever needs arise, whether traditionally acceptable or not, is ideally suited to countries facing such new needs (Hanson 1962 p. 53).

However, although elements of the American structure of undergraduate curriculum were gradually spread across other universities in Nigeria (and not necessarily through Nsukka's example), the land grant philosophy, despite Nigeria's oil wealth in the 1970s, did not provide a basis for mass higher education in Nigeria. Indeed, if anything, the *special relationship* that existed between Michigan State and Nsukka was curtailed in 1975 (Osuntokun 1985 p. 136) and all issues of external aid to Nigerian universities reviewed. Professor Jibril Aminu attributed this to the

militant uppity nouveau riche foreign policy of the Government, whereby the country felt that it could pick and choose from where to receive external aid. Blood money was unacceptable even for the universities. There was also the general feeling that aid could be used to subvert the nation in some way. These prevailing official attitudes led to the Federal Government centralising the channels of external aid (Aminu 1987 p. 92).

There was certainly a drastic decline in the activities of the aid agencies, particularly the American after this period (1975−1979). Britain had earlier removed Nigeria from its list of poorest countries deserving aid and had also substantially cut back its aid to the country (see, for instance, Hodkingson 1976). Subsequently, the Nigerian government opened up new types of *agricultural* and *technological* Universities in Nigeria in the 1980s which, while not exactly based on the land grant framework, nevertheless shared similar philosophy and were geared towards using agriculture and technology as a means of rapid social transformation.

Before long, the Nsukka experiment started showing its appeal — at least in the structure of its curricula, if not in its philosophy — and when Nsukka's arch−rival, the University of Ife was being planned in 1960, a commentator noted that

it was evident that the committee [to set up academic programs of the university] would recommend that the new University borrow ideas from the American model. It observed that the adoption of the European model had hampered the successful operation of many African universities and that any new institution which adopted the European model was not likely to meet the demands of its society (Adediran and Omosini 1989 p. 14).

And although the University of Ife started off with conventional British university structure, by 1968 there were mounting criticism from faculty at Ife at the inadequacies of the current educational structure. As Akintoye (1973 p. 33) noted,

There had, for some time, been growing criticism of the existing curriculum and structure. It was widely felt that the existing system whereby every student had after his Part One (first year), to register for either a single Honours degree in one subject or a combined Honours degree in two subjects was too restricting and did not allow for as wide a general education as was desirable.

This led to the university senate establishing a university committee on Curriculum Reform and gave it the task of creating frameworks for the reform of the curricula at Ife. The committee recommended, among others,

the introduction of 'units' and 'credits' for weighting courses, a method most widely used in the American university system. It recommended modifications of the examination system, especially the provision of examinations at the end of courses rather than at the end of the session (Akintoye 1973 p. 34).

In 1972 the university also introduced a general studies program "to enrich, broaden or meet whatever deficiencies exist in the academic or general educational background of students" (Akinrinade 1989 p. 37). The General Studies programs

were almost immediately accepted and incorporated into the structures of the various degree programmes. All students were expected to register for two compulsory General Studies courses, the Use of English and African History and Culture, as well as a third general studies course (Akinrinade 1989 p. 37).

By 1976 a complete change had occurred at Ife because that was when the course unit system was introduced "to enrich the intellectual diet of students" (Adediran 1989 p. 49), coupled with the introduction of a semester system, splitting the year into "Harmattan Semester" (September to February), and "Rain Semester" (February to July).

The University of Lagos, also established in 1962 with the University of Ife, started off on a *gold standard* footing reflecting British university structure. However, by 1966 it had undergone some changes and adopted a *school* and *collegiate* system for its teaching units. By 1975,

the university had experimented with the schools system for a decade, and students have successfully been trained under it. That notwithstanding the system suffered some measure of criticism. There was undoubtedly a greater degree of familiarity with the Faculty system operating in other universities. Besides, it was a bit confusing to have too many systems in operation. For, whilst Law and Engineering had the faculty system, the other seven 'faculties' operated under the schools system. Medicine and Education which have been brought more closely into the University fold ran the "Collegiate" system. This triple system of organising the teaching aspect of the University soon became fatiguing. The question would appear not to be about the retention of this diverse system, but about the modalities of how and when it can be changed and streamlined (Gbadamosi 1987 p. 38).

And while some streamlining undoubtedly took place in the ensuring years creating a more uniform administrative structure at the University of Lagos, its most radical innovation was in the adoption of what it called Unit Course System in 1972. As the university's historians recorded, by 1987

the Unit Course system that had been introduced in the Faculty of Science since 1972 has now been adopted in all the teaching units of the University. The system has been designed to allow for flexibility in course offerings across disciplines and Faculties initially at the undergraduate level. In this way, students can broaden their knowledge at least in the first two years of their degree programmes while they specialise in their major disciplines in their last two years. This interdisciplinary approach is exemplified in the Faculty of Engineering where students take courses in the Faculties of Social Sciences, Arts, law, Science and Environmental Sciences (Agiri 1987 p. 62).

The first generation University of Ibadan, that bastion of *special relationship* with the University of London staunchly resisted any new−fangled reforms in its curricula structure for the first two decades of its existence. For instance, according to Professor Aliu Babatunde Fafunwa, another one−time Federal Minister of Education in Nigeria,

Conservatism, scholasticism, romanticism and a colonial outlook joined forces to frustrate curriculum reform in higher education from the time Ibadan opened its doors in 1948 until the early 1960's when the four new universities entered the scene. There was considerable optimism among a number of Nigerian educators, some sections of the press and the public that these institutions would blaze a new trail in higher education (Fafunwa, 1971 p. 274).

Even the Nigerian government found Ibadan conservatism rather too much, especially on account of influence it could have on emerging universities. For as the then Head of State of the Nigerian Military Government, Lt.−General Olusegun Obasanjo stated in an address to Vice−Chancellors and Principals of Nigerian Universities and University Colleges on Saturday September 18, 1976,

by an act of commission or omission the premier university of his country unfortunately emphasised the concept of ivorytowerism from its inception. Both physically and otherwise it maintained an aristocratic seclusion and remoteness from the society it was meant to serve. Nobody seemed to appreciate the danger involved in this but today we realise that it was a bad precedent. That fact has been a big constraint in the expansion programme of all our Universities because all other Universities tended to follow the example of the University of Ibadan (Bayero University Kano Academic Development Committee Archives, Volume II p. 249).

This scholastic conservatism, according to an observer, actually reflected a power, or more appropriately *influence* struggle among the faculty at *Ilosho* a.k.a. Ibadan, for as van den Berghe (1973 p. 137) noted,

in matters of curriculum reform, for example, the alignment is largely in terms of British versus American trained. The latter group are in minority and tend to favour a more American model. The British trained majority (both expatriates and Nigerian) naturally lean towards the *status quo*, and being in majority, often manage to prevent change, or at least slow it down. A good example of this inertia was the "course system" reorganisation of undergraduate courses, providing among other things, for more flexibility for teachers and students. The implementation of the proposal was delayed several years despite the absence of strong arguments against it.

Similar observations were noted by an Ibadan insider concerning the introduction of the course unit system and its perception at Ibadan who wrote that

In the University of Ibadan...it took almost two years of impassioned debate to get some faculty members who have been schooled in the British and other European traditions to accept the introduction of the American−type "course system", because they saw in this move a plan to "cheapen degrees"! (Unoh 1970 p. 95)

The resistance went beyond course reorganization and extended to training. Not only were faculty at Ibadan reluctant to embrace American ideas, but it would seem they were also reluctant to accept even *free* American training, for as noted by Ajayi (1988),

In African universities and government circles, offers of American aid continued to be treated with suspicion though a few politicians and other alumni of American universities were also advocating the virtues of American system of education. Three times between 1954 and 1980 Ibadan University College authorities failed to take up offers of postgraduate studies at Massachusetts Institute of Technology for nominated graduates of Ibadan (p. 11).[14]

And while other first generation universities were imbued with intellectual nationalism, as reflected in a focus on African culture in their compulsory general studies programs, Ibadan University curricula structure remained true to its classical heritage, for as Ferguson (1965 p. 400) defended, regarding the non−introduction of General Education programs at Ibadan,

there is a major problem about any compulsory subject. If it is not examined, it is not taken seriously. If it is examined, you are confronted with a prospect of failing, say, a first−class chemist because he cannot write critical essays on African studies...The Nigerian members of the Board felt that the whole thing was too

self−conscious; an English undergraduate does not have compulsory European studies; our culture surrounds us as the air we breathe.

The classical heritage of Ibadan was reinforced by the faculty's recommendation of the performance of heart stopping theater thrillers such as Mozart's *The Magic Flute,* Handel's *Messiah*, Gheon's *The Way of The Cross,* Sophocle's *Antigone,* and Shakespeare's *A Midsummers Night Dream*; works which Olubummo and Ferguson (1969 p. 75) were convinced will help Ibadan maintain good standards — although it was not clear in what. From Olubummo and Ferguson's account of Ibadan as an *Emergent University*, the only missing ingredient to a decent African university is a river flowing through the Ibadan campus; for that will provide a good starting point for the boat race team.

But despite the disdain for American influences in Nigerian universities at early Ibadan, links were still made with an American university. For instance when in 1967 Ibadan setup an IBM 620 mainframe computer, the Rockefeller Foundation made it possible for Professor R. L. Wilson head of computing at Ohio Western University to be seconded to Ibadan for two years (*in* a graduation speech given by the Acting Vice−Chancellor Professor John Harris on June 30, 1967, and reproduced in *Minerva*, Autumn 1967).

Yet perhaps more significantly, the course unit system *was* introduced at Ibadan as early as 1969 — after a nine year delay; possibly in response to the introduction of similar reforms in other universities, particularly Ife, Lagos and Nsukka; a very healthy competitive development. In November 1960, the Faculty Board of Science at Ibadan discussed a memorandum from D. H. Irvine of the Chemistry Department proposing a consideration of the degree structure of the university college, especially as it would soon become an independent university. This subsequently led to a new degree structure at Ibadan, approved in May 1962 (Ekong, 1973). In altering the existing structure of degree programs at Ibadan, a mechanism was suggested to deal with large student failures due to excessive specialization. This mechanism was first suggested by the Ibadan Faculty of Science in 1966. However, instead of considering a *school structure* as urged by the then Vice−Chancellor Dr. Dike, the faculty proposed a c*ourse unit system* should be introduced which would provide a more flexible framework for dealing with students of varying ability and backgrounds. This system was approved by the Faculty of Science in 1968, but became into effect in the faculty only in October 1969.

With the Ibadan Faculty of Science breaking the ice of conservatism by introducing the course unit system in 1969, the Ibadan senate recognized the inevitability of the system for the future of Nigerian university education by creating the Course System Committee in 1971 which worked out the modalities for the introduction of the system in the university (Awe 1981). It was practical considerations that led to the system−wide decision to adopt the course unit system at Ibadan in 1972. Obviously the Faculty of Science could not operate the system in isolation since many departments in the faculty offer courses to students from other faculties (Ayandele and Taylor 1973). In any event, it was just a matter of time before the other faculties joined in the new system.

Thus academic program reform and structure in the oldest four southern Nigerian universities (Nsukka, Ife, Lagos and Ibadan) from 1960−1975 was quite individual to the university, and was accompanied by an underlying tone of competition on two perspectives. First was regional competition to ensure that each university sets a high standard for itself consistent with the aspirations of those who set it up. Secondly, the four universities became theaters where the drama of British versus American educational traditions were played out. If anything, however, the intensity with which there were attempts to ensure that each university has the most American undergraduate degree structure and pattern reflected the total decline of British educational tradition in Nigeria in mid 1970s.

Breaking the Mold: The New Universities and the Reform Process

The new second generation Nigerian universities established in 1976 lost no time in jettisoning their European metropolitan orientation right from their inception. The Universities of Jos, Ilorin, Sokoto (Usmanu Danfodiyo), and Maiduguri all started off with a course unit system structure in their curricula, in one form or another, while definitely moving *away* from the subject based university curricular structures inherited from Britain. The Universities of Ilorin and Jos were already campuses of the University of Ibadan before becoming full−fledged universities. A combination of geopolitical circumstances, coupled with their newness created, for them, the perfect ignition for starting their programs on a different foundation.

Some of the new universities started on an often aggressive footing. As the University of Port Harcourt cautioned its new staff in a broadside fusillade attack on the *gold standard* when the university was opened in 1976,

If any of you come here with the notion of introducing any of the academic or administrative practices, traditions, or programmes from your former or indeed any other institution, no matter how famous or successful, you are now earnestly advised to abandon any such notions (Port Harcourt, 1980b p. 6).

The University of Port Harcourt then created a structural framework for itself which moved *away* from the standard faculty structure in Nigerian universities. As the university's historians noted,

The University of Port Harcourt was the only one among the new Universities in the country that started without any basic infrastructure, virtually *ex nihilo*. Neither was it encumbered by any set procedures or inherited academic prejudices and was therefore able to devise its own approach to teaching, research and the organisational structure of its constituent units..The academic year at Port Harcourt is...organised on the basis of the semester system, while the mode of instruction has been the course system since the inception of the university. The basic unit of teaching and research is the School of Studies, and *not* the Department. During the first two years of the 4 year degree programme the school offers courses with a strongly integrative core to all students irrespective of their intended specialization. The last two years are then fully devoted to the students' special field (Port Harcourt 1980a p. 13).

Thus the American division of general education for the first two years and the major for the last two years of undergraduate education, split up into semesters, found one of its first full uninhibited expression among the second generation Nigerian universities at Port Harcourt.

Other new universities evolved a community approach to university education while at the same time adopting innovative features in their structures. The Federal University of Technology, Minna initially established in 1983, but formally founded in 1986, is a case in point. During the ceremony for the installation of its first Chancellor on February 1, 1986, its Vice−Chancellor reported that,

This university has two distinct features. One, our session runs from January to December. This is because we prefer JAMB to clear up all the admission exercise before asking the fresh students to report for registration and matriculation. Two, we run a forty−week year made up of two semesters of sixteen weeks and one semester of eight weeks...The main thrust of our conceptual approach in the training of students is that of multi−disciplinary approach to the study of human problems. It is clear that a structure that separates disciplines does often have disastrous consequences. Courses organised on rigidly separate disciplines are not only wasteful of human and material resources, but also do not appreciate the reality of the multi−disciplinary nature of human problems and consequently the design of appropriate and relevant solutions for the improvement of the quality of life and living (Speech of the Vice−Chancellor on the occasion of the Official Opening of the Federal University of Technology Minna, February 1, 1986).

Northern Universities and the Reform Process

While curricular structure reform and organization in southern Nigerian universities, and their affiliates and neighbors was embarked with enthusiasm, the reform in northern Nigerian universities was rather slower, and more cautious. The newer universities (Jos, Ilorin, Maiduguri and Sokoto), established in the mid 1970s followed the pattern set in by their southern counterparts and challenged in one form or another, their curricula structural dogma, and slowly, but gradually re−oriented their degree programs along the now more fashionable course unit system. The University of Jos, which started as a college of the University of Ibadan embraced the course unit cause right from its independence in 1975. At University of Sokoto some departments such as Nigerian Languages, started on the course unit system while other departments retained their traditional honors degree structures. Similarly, the University of Maiduguri started with honors degree programs in 1975, but almost soon after adopted the course unit system in most of its units. These developments were random, rather than structured, and there was nothing much to indicate any degree of correlation between a departmental discipline and the speed and ease with which the department reformed its academic programs.

Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), the oldest university in the North (established on the same Ashby bandwagon as Ife, Ibadan and Lagos) was as a central cultural icon to Northern Nigeria as the University of Ibadan was to Western Nigeria, and University of Nigeria, Nsukka to East. As Professor Jibril Aminu noted,

If, as one Head of State once remarked in 1973, it is difficult to imagine what Nigeria would have been like without the University of Ibadan, it can be added here that it is becoming increasingly true that it is difficult to image what Nigeria, certainly Northern Nigeria, would have been like without the Ahmadu Bello University (Aminu 1983 p. 24)

Indeed ABU was seen primarily as a northern establishment, starting as it did as an unashamedly *Northern* University intended to portray northern Islamic values. As Sir Ahmadu Bello, the then Northern Region Premier and after whom the university was named himself stated,

if our staff and students are drawn from all parts of the world then the mixture of international minds working together under an atmosphere of academic freedom can produce a university true to its ideals and meaning. But we are, as well, the University of Northern Nigeria, and our character must reflect the needs, the traditions, the social and intellectual heritage of the land in which we live (*Speech by the Chancellor, Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto, Premier of Northern Nigeria, his installation as the first Chancellor of Ahmadu Bello University*, Saturday November 23, 1963).

ABU also served as the breeding ground for northern intellectuals. And although it is superfluous to talk of *northern* and *southern* universities in a federal (and extremely regionally sensitive) system such as Nigeria, the divisions are brought out in this book to illustrate the combined effect of British colonial policies and social cultural norms to reform and innovation in Nigerian higher educational programs.

Thus despite the strong northern identity of ABU and its British roots, thanks to the Indirect Rule, yet surprisingly, when the University was being planned in 1961, the University of the North, as it was initially intended to be called, was expected to

develop its campus system along the lines of some of the Welsh and big American State Universities — that is to say different faculties and colleges of the University will be situated in different towns (Kirk−Greene 1961 p. 35).

Another alternative strategy for the establishment of ABU which was strongly favored by the Premier of the Northern Region, Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello, the *Sardauna of Sokoto* was to model the university after the famous Al−Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt (Chafe, 1987). *England* was neatly edged out of the possible models. In the end, the University of California system with its nine campuses dotted throughout the State of California provided an inspiration for Ahmadu Bello University planners (Kirk−Greene 1961).

This was more so since the Nigerian College of Arts and Science in Zaria which formed the nucleus of the university had associated institutions linked to it at Samaru, Vom and Kano, each a fair distance from Zaria (with exception of Samaru which was some few miles away). And while the
Ahmadu Bello University retained its British faculty and subject structure, nevertheless by 1978 it had also introduced General Studies (more as result of federal directive enshrined in the National Policy on Education, than a deliberate attempt at systematic reform).

And yet although there was no rapid embracement of American curricular structural ideas at
Ahmadu Bello University, there was nevertheless a particular disenchantment with the *contents* of the inherited British curricula. Predictably, this manifested itself in the individual faculties — as in the case of Ibadan — rather than in the university as a whole. Generally, the period 1974−1987 signified the greatest period of change in ABU's curricular structures. In 1975, the University directed all faculties to re−examine the teaching/research programs of their departments and make recommendations on how such programs could be made more relevant to Nigerian developmental circumstances. In January 1976, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, FASS, created a Faculty Development Committee to review the faculty's curricula which was considered predominantly Eurocentric. For instance, it was noted that degree structure of the Department of Geography,

reflects the academic backgrounds of the expatriate teachers, largely in British, but also in Indian Universities. Thus there is virtually nothing in it to suggest that it was designed for a University in Nigeria or even Africa. *Only in the final year is Africa given specific recognition in terms of a (comparative) Regional Geography course* (Ojuwu et al 1987 p. 97; including emphasis).

As a result of these observations, the curricula in virtually all departments of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at ABU were Africanized and the Committee proposed the introduction of "Logic of the Scientific Method" and "Nigeria and World System" as foundation courses to be common to all first year students of the Faculty. This proposal — providing the first glimmerings of a liberal General Education — was not however accepted by the faculty despite the fundamental review of the curricula just accepted.

This slow beginning at the radically oriented Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at ABU remained the only attempt at a wider scale curricular review. But there were clearly no attempts to use the American model. However, Professor Hamman Tukur Sa'ad's historical account of the development of the Faculty of Environmental Design provides an indication of the reasons for any slow pace of curricular structural reforms at ABU along American lines as already undertaken in southern universities; for as he observed with regards to his faculty,

our experience is that a minor course restructuring takes anything from one to two years while obtaining approval for the initiation of a new programme consumes anything from two to four years with a bit of luck. The case of the 4 year degree and course credit system that has taken more than nine years to formulate is an example. Even when finally accepted and approved, we should expect bottlenecks in the implementation of the programme as a result of inertia from Academic staff (Sa'ad 1987 p. 154).

By 1986 the Ahmadu Bello University has come to terms with the reality of curricular reform in Nigerian universities — and that is to adopt American course unit system. This was more so when the university's Academic Development Committee issued a circular requesting all faculties to reorganize their curricula and course structure in order to begin the 4 year Degree program with effect from October 1988. Professor Sa'ad noted that

The changes proposed represented a real quantitative improvement in curriculum structure if not in content. However, the ultimate issues was how well the academic staff would adapt to the proposed structure and how willing they would be to operationalize the system. Staff that had been educated under the existing course structure and operated it all their academic life might be unlikely to find this new structure palatable (Sa'ad, 1987 p. 157).

Thus Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, the central beacon of university education in the north, delayed implementing its course unit system until the very last minute, 1988 — a year in which the National Policy on Education made it mandatory for *all* Nigerian universities to restructure their curricula along the course unit system.

Bayero University Kano (BUK), a former affiliate of the Ahmadu Bello University before being made a full university in 1977 also remained faithful to the tenets of its parent university in its cultural and academic structural orientation. According to a submission of the University to the NUC concerning the academic programs of the newly created university in 1977, its founding philosophy was that

...overall, the basic guideline for the university is that whatever curriculum is developed must be inspired by the three constants of its environment: an Islamic culture, a time−tested commercial civilization and complex political community. Thus, whether in medicine or basic sciences, economics or geography, sociology or public administration, the starting point for our students needs to be the actual experience of this culture zone (BUK Academic Development Committee archives, Volume III, 1978 p. 397).

And while this may have little bearing with regards to the reform of academic structures in the university, subsequent debates of the university Senate and the Academic Development Committee made it clear that there was a polarization with regards to abandoning the British degree patterns adopted, and accepting an alternative. Indeed, between 1976 to 1983, there were three attempts to introduce the course unit system in the University — and at each stage, these attempts at reform were thwarted by the university senate. However, when it became an official Nigerian government policy for the universities to change their academic programs, Bayero University, like all the others had to respond to the new directives, although taking its time to do so. During the 1988 graduation ceremony of the Bayero University Kano (held in 1989), the Vice−Chancellor of the University announced what was the first clearly enunciated policy concerning the Course Unit System in Bayero University Kano:

I am happy to announce the successful take−off of the Course Unit and Semester Systems this academic year [1988/89]. The Course Unit System has several advantages especially for students. It...reduces the rate at which students fall casualty to that dreaded monster, examination. Under the system, students repeat course, not years of study. From the point of view of standards, the system ensures uniformity of the criteria by which courses within the University and between universities may be assessed. The Semester System, which goes hand in hand with the Course Unit System, ensures that students do not accumulate all their examinations to the end of the year. By splitting the academic year into two equal halves, it gives students the opportunity to study many more courses than was possible under the old dispensation (Graduation Day Speech of the Bayero University Kano Vice Chancellor, February 11, 1989).

It is significant that while southern universities were reforming not only the contents of their curricula to make them more sensitive to African needs, they were also experimenting with structural frameworks; yet in ABU and BUK the latter course was not willingly followed, although the former courses were also zealously embarked on. A closer look at some of the reasons for the regional differences in accepting innovations in the academic structure of the programs might provide more insight into the mechanism of acceptance of the change process in higher education in a Nigerian setting.

There were three possible reasons for the slow reforms in northern universities.[15] Firstly, northern Nigerian universities, reflective of their social and cultural environments, tended to be conservative, and resistant to changes. It took between 1962 to 1975 before ABU could challenge the Eurocentric orientations of some of its programs. Indeed, on the whole, northern political structures tended to be less antagonistic towards the

British and subsequently British institutions than those of the southern Nigeria (Mackintosh (1966 p. 32) and consequently the region retained its British educational legacy quite faithfully — any educational reforms were based on a Federal initiative, rather than state governments in the region or even the individual institutions. The lack of antagonism to British institutions in the North might be attributed to the effects of Indirect Rule, a mechanism through which the British colonial administration ruled the Northern Region through the traditional rulers. These rulers, highly respected in the northern enclaves exerted powerful influences in all aspects of life in the north, making challenges to the British dogma difficult.

The British themselves capitalized on this and at every opportunity were quick to accord full, albeit condescending respects to the Northern traditional institutions, a process which further enamored the latter to the former. For instance, a retinue of northern *Emirs* was given an extremely warm welcome in London during a visit in 1934, with speeches given by the Lord Mayor of London in which he proclaimed that

We feel that the Fulani and the English races have much in common. Both have had a long experience and special aptitude for administering their own and other people's affairs. Ancestors of both races share that enterprise of outlook which in the old days sent them over the face of the earth to strange countries, among foreign peoples... (*West Africa* Volume XVIII, No 909 June 30, 1934 p. 709).

Such romantic views and justification of British colonialism in Nigeria and the earlier conquest by the Fulani of Northern Nigeria contributed in ensuring a support of existing British academic ideals among the traditional rulers in Northern Nigeria and created a conservative cabal among the powerful ruling traditional hierarchies in Northern Nigeria with nominal resistance to British traditions.[16] Introducing any structural reforms of academic programs along lines that differed from these British traditions would not have been welcomed by this northern traditional cabal.

Secondly, northern universities had more expatriate academic members of staff than those of the south. Such expatriate faculty rarely allow themselves to get deeply involved in matters as politically sensitive as major academic reforms with geopolitical implications, thus contributing little to the impetus for change. As Ward (1971 p. 35) noted,

On various occasions...expatriate academics have either been praised or damned for intervention in local politics or in questions of academic freedom or human rights. The political and social pressures upon expatriate academics can lead them to perform their requisite duties in the most perfunctory manner, fearing controversy, participating in the university community only as observers, being overly sensitive to local prejudices.

A sampling of expatriate distribution among selected Nigerian universities illustrates their number, as indicated in Table 6.1.

.c. **TABLE 6.1**

Percentage of Expatriate Academic Staff in Selected Nigerian Universities, 1980−85

University	Nigerian	Expatriate	% Expatriate
Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto	141	99	70.2
University of Maiduguri	265	180	68.0
University of Jos	231	134	58.0
Bayero University, Kano	216	114	53.0
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria	840	351	42.0
University of Calabar	260	109	42.0
University of Nigeria, Nsukka	681	158	23.2
University of Port Harcourt	268	53	20.0
University of Ilorin	265	41	15.4
University of Benin	500	76	15.2
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife	855	98	11.4
University of Lagos	897	67	7.4
University of Ibadan	1001	71	7.0

Source: National Universities Commission, *Digest of Statistics, 1980/81−1985/86*

Thus the southern universities of Ibadan, Lagos, Ife, Benin, and Ilorin had a combined expatriate percentage population of 56.4% in the period surveyed, which is less than the percentage expatriate population of Bayero University Kano alone. Nsukka and Port Harcourt seemed to occupy middle positions. Far Northern universities such as Usmanu Danfodiyo, Maiduguri, Jos and Ahmadu Bello indicated their preference for expatriate staff overwhelmingly, with each, with the exception of the more cosmopolitan Ahmadu Bello University[17], having more than 50% expatriate population in the period. It is argued that the lesser expatriate population in southern universities which meant a larger population of highly sensitized

Nigerian faculty would have created a more effective forum for reform than in northern universities.

Third and finally, curricular structural reform in northern universities was comparatively slower than in the south possibly because of the relatively high turn over of the Nigerian academic staff in northern universities. Because manpower was still a developmental problem, especially in the 1970s, northern states tended to rely on northern *returnees* or those with high qualifications from Nigerian universities to man strategic posts in the civil service and the labor market. There was thus a constant movement of academic staff from the universities to the civil service — a fact which helps to partly explain why these universities have higher proportion of expatriate staff to begin with. At one stage, for instance,

shortage of teaching staff in some of the universities has reached a level where they now depend on other universities for the training of some categories of students. The University of Jos, UNIJOS, which has attracted some of the best lecturers from other universities in the past four years, not only allows its lecturers to teach in other universities hit by mass exodus of lecturers but had had to complete the training of medical students from at least two universities in the northern part of the country ("Universities Under Lock" *Newswatch* Magazine (Nigeria), April 13, 1992 p. 21).

Situations such as these which had been recurrent in northern universities since early 1970s do not promote experimentation in academic programs, and consequently little progress would be made in any reform of such programs.

By late 1970s low level institutional innovations in the structure and organization of the university curriculum had started in Nigeria, spiraling from the extremely influential first generation universities of Lagos, Ife, and Nsukka. Since the innovations started slowly and on an individualistic basis, it was not precisely clear *why* they took place; and certainly reflect a combined effect of political forces, geopolitical influences with a desire to experiment with new modes of organization, as well as the possible influence of a large number of returning American trained Nigerian university lecturers as well as the efforts of American aid agencies in the transformation of the Nigerian university. These *outcomes* certainly reflected one of the main propositions of American aid agency efforts which believed that educational development required changes and not merely expansion of the status quo; a proposition which has been

an article of faith of the United States aid program all along. Its overseas advisers and officials have given strong encouragement to the introduction of new types of institutions, programs, methods and content into educational system which they regarded as obsolete, inappropriate or incomplete. This has encouraged a wholesome questioning of existing educational patterns and has given legitimacy to the idea of change (Coombs 1965 p. 22).

Coombs did not make it clear to whom the programs to be replaced were considered obsolete — the benefactors of the programs or the recipients. That some of the aid agency officials or agents found much to be desired in the British system of education in Nigeria was fairly noted. For instance, according to Masland (1967),

Most U.S. advisors and developers eager to aid African education see the sixth form as an alien importation which fails to fulfil African needs. So far, however, U.S. alternatives have been equally culture−bound...What is needed is a detached approach, growing out of African experience (p. 32).

It may also be possible that these innovations were stimulated by the affiliation of the various units of these universities to overseas, predominantly American, universities. For instance, the Faculty of Business and Social Studies at Lagos was affiliated to the City University of New York; University of Ife had the University of Wisconsin as its mentor, and the historic link between the University of Nigeria of Nigeria Nsukka and the Michigan State University marked the first foray of American university transplant as an African university. Similarly, links existed between Ahmadu Bello University and University of Pittsburgh. Bayero University Kano also formed an academic linkage with the University of West Virginia in 1987 fostered by visiting Fulbright scholars from that university. All these linkages created facilities for staff exchange between Nigerian and American faculty and tremendously facilitated transfer of ideas, especially from American universities to Nigerian institutions.[18] Similar linkages were not well formed or extensive with British universities.

Into this mix came the ideas brought by returnees from American universities concerning university academic structure and reform. The statistics show clearly that there more Nigerian faculty trained in the United States than in Britain, and this might have contributed to the rapid adoption of American curricular model of university organization. The figures are indicated in Table 6.2.

TABLE 6.2

Training of Nigerian University Academics

	HIGHEST DEGREES OBTAINED FROM			
UNIVERSITY	U.S.A.	U. K.	BOTH	TOTAL
Obafemi Awolowo	239	195	02	436
Nsukka	234	196	08	438
Ibadan	204	226	10	440
Lagos	176	198	12	386
Ahmadu Bello	172	126	11	309
Port Harcourt	105	89	05	199
Ilorin	94	78	09	181

Maiduguri	84	90	06	180
Bayero	47	63	06	116
Usman Dan Fodio	17	43	02	62

(Source: *Commonwealth Universities Year Book*, 1990)

Although the figures that made up the table were taken at a time when the Nigerian university system was faced with a problem of massive brain drain, nevertheless it did show an interesting trend. The northern universities of Maiduguri (50%), Bayero (54%) and Usmanu Danfodiyo (69%) would seem to prefer British to American training since more than 50% of each of their highest qualified teachers were trained in Britain. Only Ahmadu Bello University staff indicated American preferences. Interestingly, a closer examination of the *names* of the faculty at Ahmadu Bello seemed to indicate they were more cosmopolitan reflecting greater diversity of ethnic origins, especially from southern Nigeria. Similar cosmopolitan trend is not revealed in the staff listing of other northern universities.

On the other hand, the southern universities of Ife, Nsukka, Port Harcourt and Ilorin indicated preference for American training. The only exceptions being, predictably enough despite massive American foundation aid, the University of Ibadan which, next to Usmanu Danfodiyo has the highest number of trained teachers from the U.K. at 51% The University of Lagos also, interestingly enough, has more U.K. trained academic staff — the same percentage as Ibadan — than would have been expected, considering the university's readiness for reform towards American university structures early enough in its establishment (although it was the only university, together with Ibadan, that started out with federal backing; the other universities at Nsukka and Ife were regional universities).

On the whole, slightly more than 50% of Nigerian academics in selected first and second generation universities received their highest training in the United States, with less than 48% receiving similar training in the United Kingdom; while about 3% received their training in both the two countries.

Thus as the table shows, there was some preference for American universities among Nigerian academics[19]. In this way, returning academics from the United States, more numerous than those from United Kingdom might have also returned with greater enthusiasm for implementing American style curricular structures and organization in their universities. Thus as Coleman (1958) argued, Nigerians trained in the U.S. during the second world war have been leading figures in postwar nationalism. And upon their return to Nigeria, they

became crusaders for American practical ("horizontal") education, as contrasted to the British literary ("vertical") tradition. Their agitation in behalf of American education...was one of the principal reasons for the post war migration of hundreds of Nigerians to America. Their propagation of the American educational ideal and their positive nationalism contributed to the antipathy of both British and British educated Nigerians toward American education and American−educated Nigerians (Coleman 1958 p.243).

This provided background to understanding the continuous experimentation with various configurations of programs in Nigerian universities, but most especially towards an American pattern.

Autonomy and Control: The National Universities Commission

It is something of an anomaly that under a centralized system of political control, Nigerian universities continued to alter and change their programs without having to seek approval from any authority beside their academic senate. This does not mean that although free to do these things, they have no higher authority to account to. Part of the recommendations contained in the Ashby Report noted that

We are strongly of opinion that a body should be set up in Nigeria without delay which will play a vital part in securing money for universities and distributing it to them, in co−ordinating (*without interfering*) their activities, and in providing cohesion for the whole system of higher education in the country (Nigeria 1960 p. 33, emphasis added).

What emerged out of this opinion was the National Universities Commission (NUC) as a Department of the Cabinet Office in Lagos. One of the first missions of the Commission was to survey university education in Nigeria, which it did in 1963, and part of its report, which is to embody its policy statement, reads

We recognize the importance of the universities being free to decide how best to meet the educational needs of the country. The independence of Nigerian universities to teach what they will to whom they wish, without any discrimination on grounds of race, tribe, religion or colour has not only been widely accepted, but it is enshrined in the laws under which everyone of them is established (Nigeria 1963 p. 8).

Under this freedom, the universities in their halcyon days had felt free to experiment with shifting patterns of academic structures and curricular organization. But then the NUC could hardly be in position to prescribe any program for any of the Nigerian universities at that time when it was not a statutory body. Further, only the University of Ibadan and the University of Lagos were actually federal government financial concerns receiving all their financial funding from the federal government (Nigeria, 1964). The other universities were set up and maintained by the respective regional governments of East (Nsukka), West (Ife) and North (Ahmadu Bello).-[20]

The constitution of the Nigerian universities enabled the regional governments which established them to wield large amount of influence in these universities, thus making it difficult for the NUC to carry out its task of co−ordinating university development in Nigeria, although at the same time allowing the universities to create their own individual and often tailor−made, programs.

The aftermath of the Nigerian civil war (which lasted from July 1967 to January 1970) provided a more federal tone on education. In 1972 the federal government transferred university education to exclusive legislative list thus conferring the powers to create new universities on the federal government. With this

development, the regional universities were given the option of retaining their regional status or accept federal tutelage. Most of them retained their regional status.

However, in 1974, the NUC was finally reconstituted by Act No 1 as a statutory body in order to give it the proper scope to perform the functions assigned it which included co−ordination of the general programs to be pursued by the universities in order to ensure that they are fully adequate to national needs and objectives. The Commission was also given the function of recommending the establishment and location of new universities when needed in the country, as well as "make such other investigations relating to higher education that the Commission necessary in the national interest" (NUC 1990 p. vi). Clearly the NUC was beginning to take on more authoritative functions, especially with the political reorganization of Nigeria into *states*, which abolished *regions*.

Further, in August 1975 all the universities in the country were taken over by the Federal government, although the State universities which came later were allowed to be controlled by their individual State governments. A constitutional amendment was effected by removing the provision for higher education from the concurrent legislative list to the Federal exclusive list by the promulgation of Decree No 46 of 31st May 1977. The Federal government was then able to legalize its take over of the existing regional universities at Nsukka, Ife, Zaria and Benin, as well as planning for more universities.

This situation remained the same until the 1979 constitution came into effect on October 1, 1979 which also ushered in new democratically elected civilian government in the country. Under this constitution, universities were placed back in the concurrent legislative list. Taking advantage of this constitutional provision, many State governments as well as individuals declared their intentions of establishing their own universities, and actually did so. The State universities created under this partisan political climate were Rivers State University of Science and Technology (1979), Anambra State University of Technology(1980), Bendel State University (1980), Imo State University(1981), Ondo State University (1982), Ogun State University(1983), University of Cross River State (1983), and the Lagos State University (1983).

Table 6.3 shows the status of Nigerian universities (1994) in terms of their number and their *undergraduate* enrollment in 1989.

Table 6.3

Nigerian Universities, 1989

University	Year	State	Status	Population
University of Ibadan, Ibadan	1948/1962	Oyo	Federal	9604
University of Nigeria, Nsukka	1960	Anambra	Federal	11535
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria	1962	Kaduna	Federal	9259

University of Lagos, Akoka	1962	Lagos	Federal	10384
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile−Ife	1962	Osun	Federal	11759
University of Benin, Benin City	1970	Edo	Federal	9120
University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri	1975	Borno	Federal	6218
University of Calabar, Calabar	1975	C/ River	Federal	4592
University of Jos, Jos	1975	Plateau	Federal	7289
Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sok.	1975	Sokoto	Federal	3532
Bayero University, Kano	1977	Kano	Federal	3602
University of Ilorin, Ilorin	1977	Kwara	Federal	6053
University of Port Harcourt, P. H.	1977	Rivers	Federal	6053
Nmandi Azikwe University, Awka	1980/1992	Anambra	Federal	NA
University of Technology, Owerri	1980	Imo	Federal	1742
University of Technology, Yola	1981	Adamawa	Federal	479
University of Technology, Akure	1981	Ondo	Federal	1305
University of Technology, Minna	1983	Niger	Federal	759
University of Uyo, Uyo	1983/1991	A/ Ibom	Federal	4353
University of Agriculture, Abeokuta	1984	Ogun	Federal	830
A. T. Balewa University of Tech.	1988	Yobe	Federal	1749
University of Agriculture, Makurdi	1988	Benue	Federal	739
University of Abuja, Abuja	1988	FCT	Federal	NA
University of Agriculture, Umudike	1992	Abia	Federal	NEW
Rivers State University of Technology, Port Harcourt	1980	Rivers	State	2688
Enugu State University of Tech.	1980/1991	Enugu	State	NA

Edo State University, Ekpoma	1981/1991	Edo	State	3824
Imo State University, Owerri	1981	Imo	State	3492
Ogun State University, Ago−Iwoye	1982	Ogun	State	3664
Ondo State University, Ado−Ekiti	1982	Ondo	State	3524
Lagos State University, Ojo	1983	Lagos	State	4986
Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso	1989	Oyo	State	NA
Abia State University, Uturu	1991	Abia	State	NEW
Delta State University, Abraka	1991	Delta	State	NEW
Benue State University, Makurdi	1992	Benue	State	NEW
Bagauda University of Science and Technology, Kano	1992	Kano	State	NEW

Total (36) Federal: 24; State: 12 in 1994. *Undergraduate* degree Enrollment (1989): 138004 Source: Universities compiled by the author; enrollment figures, NUC, 1990.[21]

Perhaps it should be pointed out that the number of Nigerian universities has changed considerably since 1991 when new states were created in the federation making a total of 30 states in August 1991. In cases where some universities had more than one campus, each metamorphosed into a separate university in *different* states. The Federal University of Technology, Anambra is a case in point. When Anambra State was split into Enugu State and Anambra State, the two campuses of the University became autonomous universities — the older campus became the Federal University of Technology, Enugu located in Enugu State; and the younger campus at Awka in Anambra State became the Nmandi Azikwe University. Some other universities changed their names. For instance, the Oyo State University became Ladoke Akintola University of Technology. Ondo State University started out with that name in 1982, and soon after became Obafemi Awolowo University. However when the University of Ife was changed to Obafemi Awolowo University, the Ondo State reverted to plain Ondo State University, a name it still retains. Similarly, the Cross River State University was renamed University of Uyo in 1991 and taken over by the Federal Government. With all states assuming democratic control through elected legislature, it is quite likely that more states will establish their universities. Table 6.3 is therefore just an indication of an unfinished agenda in the development of Nigerian university education.

Private Universities in Nigeria (1983)

However, the test of the Nigerian constitution with regard to autonomy in higher education came in a landmark decision by the Supreme Court on March 30, 1983. The legality of an individual, Dr. Basil Ukaegbu, to establish a private university was challenged by the Imo State Attorney−General. Consequently, when the case was taken to the Supreme Court, the latter ruled that under the then Nigerian constitution, any individual or organization can establish a university; or more accurately, the constitution did not *prevent* any individual from starting a private university. The issue of the private universities in Nigeria merits a little further consideration because of the insight it provides into the mechanism of autonomy and independence of the Nigerian university system up to 1984, and also provides a basis for understanding how the National Universities Commission evolved into a powerful instrument of university reform in Nigerian education.

The Supreme Court decision with regards to private universities of March 30, 1983 made it possible for many individuals and organizations to establish their own *private* universities. The then civilian governor of Imo State where quite a few of the private universities were located was quite distressed about the development and issued a statement during a press conference where he said

the whole thing was becoming a huge joke. The whole affair became dangerously confusing as people started establishing kiosks which they called Universities. Across our state (Imo State), one individual in Cross River saw what was happening in Imo, and decided too to set up his own University...Honestly, if we don't do something fast to arrest this situation, we might end up producing graduates that cannot qualify as bus drivers (quoted in *The Guardian* (Nigerian) Newspaper December 19, 1983 p. 3).

Whether taken seriously or not, many individuals saw the issue of the private universities as a testing ground for newly defined Nigerian democracy and educational autonomy. It heralded a virtual stampede to participate in the process, because according to a report in November 1983,

Plans are underway to establish eleven more private universities in the country. If the plans materialise, the country will have 15 universities in addition to the existing 27 federal and state universities. Already four private universities have been set up — three in Imo State and one in Cross River State (*Daily Times*, Saturday November 5, 1983 p. 1).

Between March 30, 1983 to December 31, 1983 twenty−eight *recorded* private universities had been established in Nigeria. These were the ones whose proprietors went through the process of holding a press conference to announce the creation of their universities. The full list, gleaned from media reports[22] in the period, is given in Table 6.4.

TABLE 6.4

Private Universities in Nigeria, March−December, 1983

UNIVERSITY	LOCATION (STATE)
1. Imo Technical University	Imerienwe, Imo
2. West African University	Nkwerre, Imo
3. University of Akokwa	Ideato, Imo
4. World University	Owerri, Imo
5. Ezena University	Owerri, Imo
6. Holy of Holies University	Owerri, Imo
7. Trinity University	Owerri, Imo
8. Technical University of Afa	Oru, Imo
9. Pope John Paul University	Afa, Imo
10. National College of Advanced Studies	Aba, Imo
11. Ekpoma University	Aba, Imo
12. Uzoma University	Ileh Ekpoma, Imo
13. Institute of Open Cast Mining and Tech	Auchi, Bendel
14. Afro−American University	Orogun, Bendel
15. Obare University of Technology	Eboh−Iyede, Bendel
16. Nmandi Azikwe University[23]	Onitsha, Anambra
17. God's University, Umuezema	Ojoto, Anambra
18. University Courses College	Port Harcourt, Rivers
19. Laity School of African Thought	Nembe, Rivers
20. Afendomifok University	Ikot−Ekpene, C/River
21. Ajoni Middle Belt University	Ibadan, Oyo
22. Akoko Christian University	Akungba−Akoko, Ondo

23. Islamic University of Nigeria	Alabata, Ogun
24. Feyson University	Ijebu−Ode, Ogun
25. Graduate Teachers' University	Epe, Lagos
26. Ogodogo International University	Abuja, Federal Capital
27. Open University College	Kaduna, Kaduna
28. Kano State Islamic University	Kura, Kano

Thus of the 28 known private universities, the first 20 were located in the former eastern sector (twelve in Imo State alone), while the next 5 were in the western sector of Nigeria. Only 3 were located in the northern regions (Abuja, Kaduna and Kano). Significantly, of the eight state universities established between 1979−1983 by individual state governments, the first 5 were also located in the eastern sector, while the rest of 3 were in western sector. It is interesting to note how religion reflected itself even this process. This is because 7 of the private universities had either Christian (5) or Muslim (2) orientations.

This development, if anything, further underscores the educational imbalance that existed between northern and southern Nigeria, and which continue to be a source of problem for higher education planners in the country.

Dr. Basil Ukaegbu, who started it all, in the meantime opened his *Imo Technical University* starting off the school in November 1983 with 500 students and six faculties — Social Sciences, Law, Medicine, Engineering, Agriculture, and Political Sciences. Two other private universities (names not revealed) also reported an enrollment of 200 students (*Daily Times* Tuesday December 13, 1983 p. 34).

The National Universities Commission at that time had no legislative control over who should establish universities, although according to the mechanism setting it up, its counsel was to be sought before any university was to be established. This was more so since there was no accreditation procedure set up to ensure that the private universities conform to any set of standards for university education in the country. As the then Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission, Alhaji Yahaya Aliyu complained,

> we must record our increasing concern with the way and manner these universities are springing up to that extent that we [at the National Universities Commission] can no longer keep track of them other than by reading of their existence in the newspapers (*Daily Times* Saturday November 12, 1983 p. 3)...We have ourselves not been approached by any of the private universities now in existence or those being [planned] other than desultory inquiries by correspondence and we fear that neither have professional bodies been so approached. This being so, the fear of indiscriminate proliferation of universities and the fear that such universities may train students who would graduate into unrecognised and unemployable status are now very real (*Daily Times* Monday November 14, 1983 p. 3).

The civilian federal government, however, *favored* the establishment of the private universities, and was therefore clearly not interested in "doing something" about them. The then Minister of Education was quoted

as stating that

establishing private institutions was not a bad idea provided the institutions were prepared to fund themselves adequately. But speaking rather seriously, I would advise that there is no need for any individual to embark upon such exercise. I think corporate bodies like the missionaries and big organisations could effectively do that (*Daily Times* Saturday December 3, 1983 p. 27).

However, all these issues soon became academic. On December 31, 1983 the civilian government in Nigeria was overthrown in a military coup. One of the first acts of the new Military Government was rationalization of both academic programs and courses in Nigerian universities. An Open University established earlier in 1983 was closed down indefinitely (although incorporated later into the University of Abuja; see also Mailafiya, 1986). In February 1984, the government announced that a decree would be promulgated to abolish all private universities existing in Nigeria and forbid the establishment of new ones. The decree was subsequently *Decree 19 Private Universities (Abolition and Prohibition) Decree 1984*. In the decree, the government directed that

As from the commencement of this Decree all private universities and similar institutions in existence in any part of Nigeria are hereby abolished and no such private university or similar institution shall henceforth be established....All existing private universities and similar institutions are hereby, as from the commencement of this Decree, closed down and all students' registration and matriculation prior to the coming into effect of this Decree are hereby cancelled.

Further, typical of political changes in developing countries, the decree abolishing the private universities in Nigeria was not the end of the private universities saga in the country. The Military Government that introduced the decree banning private universities in Nigeria after a coup on December 31, 1983 was itself toppled in another military coup on August 27, 1985. This Government eventually established a *Commission on the Review of Higher Education in Nigeria* on December 5, 1990. One of the terms of reference given to the Commission was to *propose eligibility criteria for the establishment of future universities in Nigeria* (Nigeria, 1992 p. 4).

In deliberating this term of reference, the Commission recommended the criteria for establishing institutions of higher education in future, with one of its recommendations stating that

The Federal Government should make laws/rules...to guide the implementation of the constitutional rights of private citizens and corporate bodies to establish tertiary institutions and ensure that it is used constructively and under controlled conditions and criteria. (Nigeria 1992 p. 52).

The Commission had earlier in the report provided a series of control checks to ensure that a more rational approach to the establishment of new higher institutions by both government and individuals was adopted.

These control checks include the expectations that:

(i) Sponsorship/proprietorship should be made by the Federal Government or State Government, a corporate body or any group of Nigerian citizens of high repute.

(ii) An application to establish a new institutions must be made to the NUC (National Universities Commission), NBTE (National Board for Technical Education, for polytechnics), NCCE (National Council for Colleges of Education, for Colleges of Education) as the case may be, in accordance with the guidelines prescribed.

(iii) In addition to the requirement prescribed in (ii) above, the application must be supported with a feasibility report which demonstrates that on the basis of adequate and realistic manpower projections,

(a) its graduates would be readily absorbed into the nation's work force;

(b) the new institution would cater for areas of felt needs in its academic structure and spread of discipline;

(c) the institution would be provided with adequate funding (capital and recurrent) and adequate academic and support staff by the sponsoring body. Staffing guidelines must meet current NUC/NBTE/NCCE staff ratio based on the courses contemplated;

(d) its sources of funding and evidence that the necessary funds will be available on approval to open;

(e) the Federal Government or its accredited agency has ascertained and certified that the fixed enabling assets (funds, land, movable and immovable assets) are appropriate for establishing the new institution in the light of such factors such as the type of institution envisaged, its philosophy and objectives, cost of goods and services prevailing at the time, etc, and that these assets will be assigned to the institution on approval to open (Nigeria 1992, p. 50).

The Federal Government accepted these recommendations and in January 1993, the government issued *Education (National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions)(Amendment) Decree 9 of January 1993* which spelt out the criteria for the establishment of private higher institutions in general by individuals, associations and corporate bodies. The decree vests the final authority on the establishment of private universities on the Education Minister, who will act on the advice of the NUC. Thus this time around, the NUC was given more decisive powers in granting permission for individuals to set up the private universities. To also ensure that the universities that may be privately established do have sound financial support, the decree indicates that applicants for the permission to set up private universities must prove a guaranteed source of financial support to the tune of twenty million naira[24]. And even where the prescribed requirements are satisfied by prospective applicants, the NUC may still be asked to strictly adhere to the unspecified ratio in the decree between the science/technology and the humanities (a ratio of 70:30

respectively).

No sooner was this decree released than announcements were made, as usual in the media, about the establishment of private universities in Nigeria. According to a report in *The Independent Weekly*, 7−13 March 1993 p. 5),

Two private universities have taken off in Kano and Enugu respectively in response to the federal government's liberalisation of establishment of universities. In Kano, Nigerian University will soon begin to teach students, according to its proprietors. And in Enugu, Our Saviour University of Management, Agriculture and Technology (OSUMATECH) established by the Catholic Church has been endorsed by the State House of Assembly. The establishment of these universities has however not impressed university teachers. They fear that proprietors moved by profit motive could trivialise the primary goals of universities.

Another report by *The Guardian*, April 25, 1993 p. A3 stated that "by last week no fewer than 21 applications [to establish private universities in Nigeria] were said to have been received by the NUC which has set up two committees — the accreditation committee and the academic planning committee — to screen the serious applications."

Clearly therefore if the *gold standard* is to be maintained, and elements of control introduced, then the Nigerian university system required a mode of central policing as supplied by the NUC, an institution whose existence was recommended by the chief apostle of the British gold standard syndrome, Lord Ashby of Brandon.

But even more alarming than private universities to a centralized system of control was the issue of diversity in university education in Nigeria. By the mid 1980s the Nigerian university curricula has departed considerably from its sedate British structure and had become more diversified, reflecting different educational traditions on the faculty who had been increasingly subjected to influences of American educational system. Indeed the architects of Nigeria's higher education policy — reflected in The Ashby Report — had earlier on warned about sticking to the British model of higher education curricula where it was observed that

there must be more diversity and more flexibility in university education if it is to be relevant to the needs of the Nigerian people. The British system of university education suits Britain because there are many alternative routes to professional training, and the prestige of these alternative routes is such that thousands of young people prefer to take them rather than go to the university. In a country where these alternative routes are missing or carry less prestige, the British university system is too inflexible and too academic to meet national needs. We think it is very unlikely that in Nigeria these alternative routes will, in the foreseeable future, acquire the prestige which universities already have. Accordingly, a much greater diversity of demand is likely to be made on Nigerian universities than their British counterparts (Nigeria 1960 p. 22).

The main problem with this approach is *standards*. Too much confidence had been invested in Nigerian university education with its British roots to welcome too much deviation or any experimentation in the beginning of the system in the 1960s. But the Ashby Report had foreseen that and further urged that

We believe that Nigerian universities should meet this demand on one condition: that what is required of them is indeed greater diversity and not lower standards...However, a country can stay on the intellectual gold standard without, as it were, having to adopt the imprint of another coinage. Fortunately, there are models for diversification of university studies without lowering of standards (Nigeria 1960 p. 22).

The Ashby Report, in recommending a possible model for Nigeria to adapt, if it can, went further to suggest that

The land−grant universities of the United States have had to fulfil functions similar to those which Nigerian universities are now called upon to fulfil, and the best of them have done so without in any way surrendering their integrity. Let us add that Nigeria should not imitate American land−grant universities any more than she should imitate British universities. Neither kind of university should be exported unchanged to Nigeria; but both kinds have something to teach this country, and the lessons to be learnt from America include diversity and flexibility (Nigeria 1960 p. 22).

These lessons of diversity and flexibility had, by 1970s started filtering themselves within Nigerian university system, particularly encouraged by the success of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, coupled with the need to move away from the confined British model of the university. More range of fields of study were introduced into the system, and more areas of specialization opened. A notable example of this was the Faculty of Education which had remained monolithic for a long time. By mid 1980s it had become departmentalized and emphasized areas of specialization like planning, guidance and counseling, teacher education, adult education and community services, curriculum studies, science education and so on. The Faculty of Law had also been fragmented to contain departments, rather than units, in commercial and industrial law, international law and jurisprudence, public law, private and property law. Studies of solar energy, with strong backings from the federal government and international aid organizations also started to appear in the faculties of engineering; in some universities, e.g. Usmanu Danfodiyo University a whole separate Solar Energy Research Center was set up.

This diversification, of course, did not mean that the British university model was static. The British civic universities established in the late 1960s and early 1970s have also departed from the tradition in several respects:

First, they are located away from major industrial cities. Second, unlike the older universities, they have been given the right to award their own degrees immediately...They are attempting to avoid excessive specialization and are rejecting organization on the basis of faculties in favor of boards of schools or of study with group−related subjects. Some have fourth years of supervised postgraduate study rather than the independent research more usual in British graduate work (Burn, 1971 p. 81)

It just so happens that this brand British reform and innovation in higher education had no visible impact on Nigerian university curricula transformation. A further diversification was the early attempt at introducing breadth in Nigerian undergraduate curriculum, an approach pioneered by Nsukka in its general studies program, and which was soon adopted by some universities, notably the University of Lagos. Thus the Nigerian university system had, by the 1980s, actually evolved to a stage where, just as with regards to American undergraduate education, it could not be described accurately as a single system.

It was at this stage that the Nigerian university had a unique opportunity, rarely present in the life of an academic system, to carve out a distinct identity of its own into a direction dictated by its *social* circumstances, unhampered by conventions except those it set out for itself. Unfortunately, the Nigerian public was too sensitive to comparisons, and too comfortable with uniformity to allow such individualistic interpretation of university education to go unchecked.

Still smarting from the bitter episode of the virtual explosion of private universities in Nigeria, the Nigerian government went a step further in 1985 and gave the National Universities Commission a more decisive role in controlling, for the first time ever, the curricula — both the content and the structure — of Nigerian universities. The promulgation of Decree 16 *Education (National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions)* of 1985 (after a Military coup) gave the Commission the responsibility to lay down minimum academic standards for all universities' academic programs and the power to enforce these minimum standards. As stated in the decree,

The power to lay down minimum standards for all universities and other institutions of higher learning in the Federation and the accreditation of their degrees and other academic awards is hereby vested in the National Universities Commission, after obtaining prior approval therefore through the Minister, from the Head of the Federal Military Government

The innovative and individualistic nature of the Nigerian university curricular structure which had started in the older universities therefore was checked with this decree.

CHAPTER 7

GATHERING THE MOMENTUM: MASS SCALE REFORM IN THE NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY CURRICULAR STRUCTURE, 1988−1994

Introduction

In the general attempt to reform the Nigerian university curricula, especially following the trends of the arguments for such reform presented at the 1969 National Curriculum Conference, four distinct strategies appeared to have been adopted in the *government−sponsored* reform of the university curricula from 1977 to 1990. These were the introduction of a general studies program, determination of a basic core curriculum in all the disciplines, the creation of a minimum accepted standard of teaching and learning in Nigerian universities, and the accreditation of the newly created core curricula. All these were to be framed within an evaluative element, the credit unit system. These four reform elements provide the analytical framework for this chapter.

General Studies in Nigerian Universities

Abolishing the sixth form and creating a facility where students can be admitted to the university directly after their senior secondary school through the University Matriculation Examination (JME) marked the beginning of the reformation of the Nigerian university curricula on a mass scale. In the next stage, a program of general studies was introduced by a federal mandate in all the universities, although it had been operating in many southern universities since their inception, with the notable exception of Ibadan. The move to introduce a general studies program as part of the Nigerian undergraduate experience was first made by the National Universities Commission in 1977. When it became apparent that more new universities would have to be established in the country after 1975, the National Universities Commission set up, among others, an Academic Planning Group aimed not only

to ensure the rapid take off of the new institutions but also to ensure that programmes were not proliferated indiscriminately thereby prejudicing the maximum utilisation of funds and human and material resources. This is of course the first the time country has had an opportunity and the challenge to plan simultaneously the establishment of many universities and to relate them to the real needs and aspirations of the people (*S. O. Adebo*, then Chairman of the National Universities Commission, in *Forward* to the *Report of the Academic Planning Group*, NUC, 1977).

It was the recommendations of this Group that outlined the basic core of the General Studies programs in Nigerian universities. As stated in the Report,

In response to the need to produce graduates with a good education, with a mature sense of social responsibilities, and with a love and awareness of what is exciting, beautiful and educative in our culture and

heritage, “General Studies” programmes will be included in the curricula of all new universities. Some of the existing universities in Nigeria already offer these courses as straight “General Studies” or complemented by “African Studies”. The objectives of the “General Studies” in the new universities should be as summarised by one of the submissions from the universities:

to assist students to understand and promote cultural heritage of the local, Nigerian and the African traditions;

to inculcate respect for moral values, and to encourage students to come to grips with the moral and societal values of contemporary life;

to encourage both depth and breadth of learning on a continuing basis, recognising that it is the students themselves who will eventually be responsible for interpreting and integrating such knowledge;

to strengthen a sense of national loyalty and understanding;

to assist students to integrate scientific and technological outlook in their lives and attitudes. (NUC 1977 p. 15).

These recommendations were later incorporated in the draft National Policy on Education first published in 1977, and later revised in 1981 where the document directed that,

As part of a general programme of all−round improvement university education, students will be made to take a course in history of ideas and the philosophy of knowledge or some other such suitable course as may be determined (p. 23). For the universities to serve as effective instruments for cementing National Unity, the quality of instruction in Nigerian universities will be improved with a view of further enhancing objectivity and tolerance. Widespread ignorance among Nigerian groups about each other and about themselves will be remedied by instituting a compulsory first−year course in the social organisation, customs, culture and history of our various people. *The award of degrees will be made conditional upon the passing of the paper in this course* (Nigeria 1981. p. 24; emphasis added).

In the aftermath of this recommendation of the National Policy on Education to introduce such course, the Federal Ministry of Education sent a circular dated January 23, 1978 to all Nigerian universities requesting them to implement some form of general studies program in their curricular structures. All the universities responded, and either reoriented their existing general studies program to dispel the “widespread ignorance among Nigerian groups about each other and about themselves” as mandated by the Federal Government, or created a new general studies program where none exist before.

In Bayero University, Kano for instance, a School of General Studies was created as an independent unit of the university in July 1978, and charged with organizing and conducting the general studies program at the degree level in conjunction with the faculties.

And although no common *federal* curriculum was created for this course, the broad areas recommended by the NUC's Academic Planning Group report of 1977 provided a rough scheme of work for the universities. As recommended in the report,

The general studies programme should consist of core and elective courses. The core courses should be compulsory, but the subjects selected would depend on the students' major discipline. Although some of the courses will involve all, others will only be taken by those who would not normally touch the subject in their major discipline. The elective courses are elective but students should be encouraged to take as many as possible.

Core Courses:

Basic principles of logic and scientific method

Ethics, concept of justice and element of jurisprudence

History (emphasis on African History)

Sociology and basic economics

Use of English

Elective Courses:

Man in his environment

History of Science

History of Philosophy

Fine Arts — Music and Drama

Basic Mathematics

African Literature

Study of African civilisation (NUC 1977 p. 73−74).

The report however did not recommend the percentage of the general studies program in relation to the overall degree graduation requirement. Long before the recommendations of this report, Nsukka had already started a prototype general studies program which reflected not only its founding philosophy, but also the direction of university curricula reform in Nigeria. The general studies program in Nsukka, like in Bayero University, Kano was operated by a separate academic unit of the university,

to ensure that the University can produce not merely specialist but rather cultivated men and women. The Division of General Studies thus aims at giving each student a certain body of knowledge outside his field of specialization which would stimulate him towards greater awareness and understanding of his social, physical and cultural environments within which he will go out late to pursue the ordinary business of making a living. The General Studies programme also attempts to provide some mental skills, especially those related to the ability to communicate with others, i.e. to handle language effectively (Nsukka 1984 p. 249).

Nsukka's program, closely modelled after its affiliate — the Michigan State University — was quite accurate to the aspirations of the general studies program. And in order to avoid the problems the general studies program may face and counter any opposition to it on academic basis, the Nsukka provided a strategy:

To avoid the pitfall of presenting the students with a "mish−mash" of topics from the numerous disciplines spanned by the programme and which at best can provide only a quick tour of the various disciplines, the "theme" approach has been adopted. In this way, by focusing on particular themes, the interdisciplinary aspects and the inter−relationship between the various disciplines are fully brought out (Nsukka 1984 p. 246).

Thus although general studies has been made part of the undergraduate experience of Nigerian students, yet a survey of the catalogs describing the programs from various Nigerian universities indicated that it constituted on the average, less than 10% of the total degree requirements for the students, even though its successful completion has been made a pre−requisite to graduation from any Nigerian university.

The Core of the Matter: Curricla Relevance and the University System in Nigeria

For many years, general studies remained the only reform of the Nigerian university curricula imposed by the *government* (through the National Policy on Education). The main factor that accelerated state−sponsored reforms in Nigerian universities was the felt need to create a core curriculum encoding *minimum academic standards* in all the courses offered in Nigerian universities, leading to a uniform system of presentation of knowledge to students and evaluating that knowledge. Overshadowing this was the political considerations of

the *relevance* of the university curricula for the Nigerian labor markets.

By the mid 1980s, the Nigerian economy had taken a further dive downwards, and created, for the first time in the nation's history, a large pool of unemployed university graduates. The feelings among government circles were more of a blame on the inappropriate training of the Nigerian graduate for the labor market, rather than lack of employment opportunities. This was of course left to be proved; but the greatest contributor to unemployment was government, since government is the largest employer of labor. The mass sacking and purges from all sectors of the Nigerian economy between 1983 to 1985 have contributed in increasing the unemployed pool, than the inappropriateness or otherwise, of the university curricula.

That the Nigerian undergraduate would emerge jobless into the labor market was something of an anomaly to the architects of university policies in Nigeria. Optimistically, The Ashby Report noted in 1960 that,

Nigeria has not now, nor will she have in the next few years, the capacity to generate the high−level manpower necessary to make rapid economic growth possible (Nigeria 1960 p. 63).

However this did not take into account the virtual explosion in school population leading to greater demands for university education. The effect of all this on the Nigerian labor market was therefore quite predictable: unemployment for large numbers of university graduates. According to a report,

It is evident that the current level of unemployment of graduates of Nigerian schools started in 1982. Out of the 35,000 Nigerians who completed the National Youth Service Scheme (NYSC) in August 1982, about 70% found no permanent job...Going by this trend, it is projected that only about 6,000 out of the 37,000 members of the NYSC who will pass out in July 1985 will obtain permanent employment ("Solving the unemployment problem" *African Concord*, August 14, 1986 p. 26).

The problem of unemployment of university graduates in Nigeria was accentuated by lack of diversification in the labor market to cope with the university output. This revealed a painful truth: that social demand for higher education grows faster than manpower requirements of the labor market.

However, Nigeria was not the only country facing problems of graduate unemployment, for it is a common sub−Saharan African problem of the 1980s. Interestingly,

Conversations with public and private sector employers of university graduates throughout the region highlight collective dissatisfaction with some aspects of university education. Common complaints are that graduates are narrowly trained in a single discipline and lack the breadth of understanding necessary to confront complex problems. In Zimbabwe, a major manufacturer notes that he must give university graduates in engineering an additional six months of training in business administration before they can assume factory responsibilities...In Mozambique, Ministry of Agriculture officials lament that university agronomists have no understanding of farm management or agricultural economics. Greater student exposure to the principles of management and administration was a frequent suggestion (Saint 1992 p. 80).

Two approaches were taken by the Nigerian government to deal with the problems of unemployment, especially among graduates. The first was the establishment of a series of committees, beginning with *Committee on Gainful Employment Creation* in 1984, and the *National Committee on Strategies for Dealing with Mass Unemployment* in 1986. The recommendations of this second committee led to the establishment of a *National Directorate of Employment* (NDE) in November 1986 to implement the approved recommendations which centered on finding ways of reducing unemployment among youth (ILO 1987).

The second strategy in dealing with unemployment among graduates focused on the content and structure of the university curricula. In 1984, the government directed that the Ministers of Education, Science and Technology, Employment Labor and Productivity, the Manpower Board, and the National Universities Commission study the problem of *university curricula* with the hope of identifying the precise nature of the problems and consequently suggestion solutions. The solutions were to be aimed at making the Nigerian university curricula more relevant to self−employment.

A Study Committee was set up by these ministries to undertake a study of the undergraduate curriculum, in addition to the curricula from other institutions of higher learning. The Study Committee submitted its report in 1985 titled *Report on the Study of Higher Education Curricula and Development in Nigeria* (Nigeria, 1984). In the report, the Committee noted that

We have used the term “curricula” in its wider sense of the totality of course programmes and the overall experiences acquired by the student in an institution. We have, therefore, not considered the more specific components of curriculum in terms of the details of the content and objectives of the syllabuses, course programmes, evaluation or teaching methods, which we recognise are designed by Faculties, Departments and Academic Boards of Institutions. In short, without running the risk of over−simplification, we have looked at curricula of an institution in terms of the types of manpower produced by the institution (Nigeria 1984 p. 1).

Although this Committee was more concerned with strategies for facilitating greater manpower production and utilization, nevertheless it provided the first scheme for the acceptance of the concept of core curriculum for all programs taught in Nigerian universities. As noted in the Committee’s report,

We recognise the fact that the University Senates have the ultimate responsibility for the academic standards of each university and that external examiners and assessors provide some input into the standard of university degrees awarded by each university. We are also aware of the autonomy granted to each university to fashion out its own programmes of studies and award its degrees which would make it difficult to harmonise the standard degrees between universities.

We are of the opinion, however, that there should be a basic core in the curriculum of each academic discipline at the first degree level that should be common to the curricula of each specified discipline in our universities. The NUC, in collaboration with the universities, should be mandated to work out a basic core for the curriculum of each discipline. The individual philosophy and identity of each University should then be

built on this core. Although, we did not find any direct link between these issues and unemployment of graduates, we find the topic relevant to the issue of the quality of university curricula, and hence deserving of some attention (Nigeria 1984 p. 18).

It was this report that also recommended streamlining the total number of programs offered in Nigerian universities to thirteen disciplines (these are discussed subsequently in this chapter), apparently because it was felt that these would be the most appropriate in national development, as well as providing the most lucrative career opportunities for their graduates. The report also noted that

two of such courses which are not relevant to national planning are: Classical Studies and African Religious Studies. In the Classical Studies programme, only one graduate was produced in the country by 1982 by the University of Ibadan which is the only University offering the course. Similarly, only one graduate was produced in African Religious Studies by the University of Ife (Obafemi Awolowo University) in 1982 and two in 1983...We therefore, feel that the two courses should be phased out in the two universities as specialist courses. Instead, related courses should be restructured to include elements of Classical Studies and African Religious Studies (Nigeria 1984 p. 31).

Immediately after the submission of this report to the government, there was military coup on August 27, 1985. The new Military Government set up a *Review Committee* to study the report of the Study Committee. This Review Committee submitted its report in May 1986. This second report was basically a commentary on the original Study Committee report. The Nigerian Government considered *both* the two reports, and in 1987 issued a government white paper, *Views and Comments of the Federal Military Government on the Report of the Study of Higher Education Curricula and Development in Nigeria* (Nigeria 1987). These views directed the next stage of the government sponsored reform in the Nigerian university curricula.

The Emergence of the Minimum Academic Standards (MACS) and the Credit System in Nigerian Universities

While the general studies program came into *system−wide* effect in various universities from 1978, the *credit system* was introduced on a *system−wide* basis only in 1988. This was because although an arrangement existed where the general studies program could co−exist within the framework of the old degree structure, the credit system required a total co−ordination for mass implementation in all the Nigerian universities. As stated in the National Policy on Education,

A credit system which is transferable among universities and the institutions of higher learning on a reciprocal basis will be initiated. This is to enable a student who may be compelled to change his residence before completing his course to finish it in another institution (Nigeria 1981 p. 47) The universities and other institutions of higher learning will also be required to reconsider the practice whereby examination performances in a limited number of papers determines the grading of graduates and to explore ways of

introducing an element of continuous evaluation (Nigeria 1981 p. 27).

The credit system came to the Nigerian universities accompanied by all the accessories necessary to its comprehension, which included the semester structure for the school year, grade point average, and continuous assessment. Of these only the last item was a familiar term to most Nigerian universities. However, definite government backing was given to it as a result of the recommendations of the Study Committee on University Curricula in 1984. In responding to the Committee's recommendation for a basic core in the curriculum of each academic discipline, the Government White Paper noted that

...it should be observed that there is in fact nothing like basic core curriculum. The answer to the proposals for core curricula as proposed by the Study Group is the introduction of the unit course system which will introduce some uniform approach to curriculum development in the country and make the course content of the subject being taught in the Universities and the designation of the courses comparable. In any case, under the provision of Decree No. 16 of 1985 and the Accreditation System to follow therefrom, minimal standards can be set and monitored by the NUC in all disciplines (Nigeria 1987 p. 9).

It is significant therefore that although a mechanism existed for the introduction of the course unit system for evaluation of Nigerian university curriculum in the National Policy on Education, none of the committees set up by the government or the National Universities Commission actually provided its blue−print.

To fully implement the observation of the needs for uniform standards and common core curriculum and accommodate it within the credit and course unit system, the government amended an earlier promulgated Decree 16 of 1985 which gave the NUC the responsibility to lay down minimum academic standards for all universities' academic programs and the power to enforce these minimum standards. In 1988 the government issued a *National Universities Commission Amendment Decree No 49, 1988* which provided the NUC with the powers to

lay down minimum standards for all Universities in the Federation and to accredit their degrees and other academic awards after obtaining prior approval therefore through the Minister from the President, Commander−in−Chief of the Armed Forces, providing that the accreditation of degrees and other academic awards shall be in accordance with such guidelines as may be laid down and approved by the Commission from time to time (NUC 1990 p. viii).

To set the process in motion, earlier on February 17 1987, the Minister of Education inaugurated thirteen panels made up of senior academics in Nigerian universities to draw up the required standards for the thirteen recognized undergraduate disciplines being taught in the universities. Each panel

was headed by a very senior academician of professorial rank with enough experience and peer respect in the discipline. The panels were also given free hand to co−opt other members of the academic community they

felt would make meaningful contribution to their work (NUC 1989c p. iv).

The specific terms of reference given to the individual panels are quite similar in all the disciplines, as for instance reflected in those of the Arts panel which include:

(i) To set up minimum standards for all the academic disciplines in the Arts. Such standards will apply uniformly throughout the entire system;

(ii) To examine existing syllabuses and from such examinations draw up a model syllabus for each of the disciplines;

(iii) Examine the existing physical facilities and recommend the minimum facilities required for effective teaching and research;

(iv) To recommend basic staffing needs of each discipline; and

(v) to make any other recommendations as appropriate (NUC 1987 p. 3).

The Arts panel met four times in 1987 at Bayero University, Kano (March 3, April 7, June 10−12, and August 18−20) under the Chairmanship of Professor Muhammad Sani Zaharaddeen. It was during these meetings that the blue−print for Arts disciplines in Nigerian universities was drawn up. In its recommendations, the panel lists the following eleven Arts programs which it recognized:

1. African Languages and Literature
2. Arabic and Modern European Languages and Literature
3. Classics
4. English Language and Literature
5. History
6. Islamic Studies

7. Linguistics
8. Music
9. Philosophy
10. Religious Studies
11. Theatre Arts

It is surprising that Classics still featured in this list of programs, despite the earlier recommendation by the Federal Government Study Group that it should be phased out (Nigeria 1984 p. 31).

Further analysis of the methodology of the Arts panel reveals a general pattern through which the minimum standards for the programs were determined by the panel. For instance, in deciding the structure of the programs, the panel recommended that

the following should apply throughout Nigerian Universities: Compulsory Courses: Core courses within the discipline that must be *taken* and *passed.* Required Courses: Courses *outside* the discipline, otherwise known as subsidiary that must be *taken* and passed. Elective Courses: Courses within and outside the discipline from which students may elect a number for the purpose of fulfilling the minimum requirements for the award of a degree (NUC 1987 p. 8).

The compulsory courses were given a weighting of 65%; the required 25%; electives 5%; and final year project 5%. Thus the core courses — holding up the specter of specialization which the government had wanted to avoid — nevertheless carry more weight in the new structure. Further, the panel also retains the external examiner system. Finally, the panel recommended the adoption of the course unit system and the semester system as frameworks for the teaching of the Arts programs.

All the thirteen panels produced draft documents laying down the minimum academic standards in Nigerian undergraduate education. These draft documents were then sent back to the Nigerian universities for scrutiny and commentary where they were discussed at the various Faculty Boards and Senate Meetings. The final set of draft documents were eventually produced and submitted to a newly created Accreditation Committee of the NUC in 1988. As noted by the NUC,

The Accreditation Committee painstakingly went through all the reports and effected the necessary corrections as well as some editorial work. These reports were then reproduced and sent to every academic department in all the Universities in Nigeria and their critical comments on the document sought...At this stage, every academic staff in all the Nigerian universities had an opportunity to comment freely on the proposed documents and make whatever input he/she deemed fit. Most departments and faculties did very good job on the review of the documents and made meaningful contributions (NUC 1989c p. iv).

The strategy adopted by the NUC was to work on these revisions and decide the best format around which the minimum standards can be generated. However,

by the time all the suggestions and comments were received from the Universities, it became obvious to the NUC Management that the nature of the comments on proposals were so fundamental that it would require the services of experts in the respective disciplines to discuss them further in order to effect amendments in the documents as appropriate. In view of this and with due consultations with the Chairman of the Accreditation Committee, a task force for each of the disciplines was set up to look at the recommendations/suggestions from the universities (NUC 1989c p. v).

These task force committees met in Lagos and finally created a clean draft proposal for the minimum standards in academic disciplines of Nigerian universities for further consideration by the Commission's Accreditation Committee which after its deliberations finalized the documents and made its recommendations to the NUC. The NUC in turn held a three day special meeting during which it discussed each document in order to arrive at the final format in which it believed each panel's report should be submitted to the government.

Any objections to the notion of core curriculum or uniform minimum academic standards for the entire universities of the country from a centrally controlled government agency were only privately voiced in the faculty clubs or outside meetings — and there were such reservations. But there was no pressure or interest group reaction *against* the reforms.

Indeed Nigerian university academic unions were more worried about funding to the universities to cope with increasing student enrollment and coping with research issues than whether their academic freedom was under a threat by the imposition of any uniform standards. However one clearly expressed reservation — surprisingly from a professor at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka — was against the "umpirish" role of the NUC which, according to him, created conditions where

uniform curricula in each of the major disciplinary areas have been installed with hardly any discussion in the senates and of course the uniform adoption of the Semester system. Fortunately, the price the nation will pay for these 'innovations' will come in 15 years time — in the 21st century — since policies in higher education usually have a gestation period of 15 years. None of us the prime movers of these policies will be around then (Professor A. O. Anya, *The Universities and Our Future*; an address to the Students' Union, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Wednesday July 4, 1990).

Similar observations were made with regards to specific disciplines. For instance, Ajayi (1990 p. 44) has noted that

the details of the accreditation requirements for Medicine as contained in the NUC guidelines could not have been conceived within the economic realities of our time nor fully informed by our new directions in relevant medical education. The handing down of a detailed curriculum in a course−credit system seeks a questionable

uniformity in all University medical Programmes and indeed recommends a uniform terminology for Medical Schools...The NUC proposals in my opinion do not sufficiently address the need for integrative teaching, they are extensively designed for hospital−based practice and they do not sufficiently integrate health education and service. The NUC curriculum as proposed does not even achieve the minimum 25% it suggests for Primary Health Care.

The accusation that there was hardly any discussion of these issues at the senates of Nigerian universities was rather inaccurate. This was because any document on these two issues — minimum academic standards, and course unit system — produced by the NUC was always sent back to the universities in a *draft* form for comments and revisions. The NUC took these steps because at the beginning of the reforms in 1987 — and coming hot on the heels of *another* military coup (the second in four years) — there were strong views from some sections of the Nigerian university communities against the minimum standards and rationalization of programs.

These centered around, first the view that it was an instrument of rationalization of academic programs which could lead to mergers and closures of duplicated programs in the universities. Second, it was seen as an instrument for retrenchment of academic and support staff. This was more so in the wake of purges and retrenchment of the civil service accompanying each change in government since December 1983 (see Bello 1988). The Nigerian university, backed by a powerfully vocal union, Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU), has not been too adversely affected by these purges[25]. The minimum standards academic rationalization intentions introduced a new fear that the universities, after all, were not immune to pruning. Finally, the accreditation was seen as a political instrument for the forceful transfer or movement of academic staff from one university to another. All these were considered a negation of collective bargaining and democratic autonomy of Nigerian universities which had hitherto been sacrosanct and relatively free from government control and manipulation.

The Evaluative Mechanism of the Minimum Academic Standards

While working on the draft documents that preceded the minimum academic standards, the NUC panelists needed to gain a comprehensive picture of the state of university education in Nigeria. It was during this process that the diversity of the courses offered in Nigerian universities revealed itself. The pattern that emerged was that some of the universities, particularly those in the south, had already started experimenting with concepts such as the course unit system. In other universities, only some faculties had started the system, while yet other faculties based their curricular structure and evaluation on the British oriented subject based system. In acknowledging this diversity, the NUC noted further that

it became obvious to the Accreditation Committee that several issues related to academic administration needed to receive a separate but equal attention with the academic disciplines. These issues included such things as the length of academic year, minimum number of actual teaching weeks per session, the issue of external examiners for undergraduate programmes, the issue of resitting failed papers, the course unit and grade point average system, implementation of continuous assessment programme as requested by the National Policy on Education and the implementation of the four year degree programme in the Universities as well as the determination of the minimum number of credits required to graduate from a degree

programme (NUC 1989c p. v).

To sort out the issues of diversity in the Nigerian undergraduate curriculum and provide a nationally accepted framework for the implementation and evaluation of the minimum academic standards, the NUC set up another panel on June 17, 1988. Thus *two* tasks were being undertaken by the NUC simultaneously: *first*, was the determination of the minimum standards by its Accreditation Committee in all the thirteen recognized disciplines in Nigerian undergraduate curriculum; *second*, was a panel set up to create uniform guidelines on how these minimum standards can be introduced, but most especially within the framework of the course unit system already in operation in some Nigerian universities.

This second committee is the most influential force in the reform of the Nigerian undergraduate curriculum because virtually all its recommendations were accepted and became legislative with effect from October 1988 in all Nigerian universities. The course unit system panel was inaugurated on June 28, 1988 and given the following terms of reference (NUC 1988 p. 1):

1. To examine the issue of course systems in Nigerian universities and the ways of making them uniform. Related to this is the issue of sessional and resit examinations.

2. To examine the issue of Grade Point Average (GPA) as an acceptable basis for judging each student's overall performance as against the existing system of varied classifications. Also the practice of comprehensive sessional examination (s) as distinct from unit semester examinations needs to be carefully considered.

3. To examine the issue of percentage weighting (s) between continuous assessment and final (term, semester or sessional) examinations. The possibility of recommending an acceptable range for continuous assessment in various disciplines should be considered.

4. To examine the issue of quarter (term) versus semester system in the University system and consider how these can be feasibly hormonised.

5. To examine the issue of external examiner (s) as related to the course system. The need for continuation or cessation of the use of External Examiners should be looked into.

A link was created between the working of this committee and the Accreditation Committee on the minimum standards when the course unit panel was also given the responsibility to consider how to

6. Promote or allow for easier transfer of students from one University to another if and when the need arises.

7. Provide an easier basis for comparing academic programmes from one University to another thereby enhancing the work of the accreditation panel and the maintenance of academic standards within the university system (NUC 1988 p. 2).

This task force considered these issues as they affect Nigerian universities, in addition, it also consulted documentary material from other parts of the world.[26] The main mode used to determine the state of affairs by the Committee in the universities was through a questionnaire titled *Course System and Grade Point Average Questionnaire*. The responses from the universities revealed that

All universities responding to the questionnaire operate the course unit system, which some universities designate as “course unit system”, “unit course system”, and “course credit system”; and defined differently. Also in many Faculties of Medicine the structure of the system is not well established. These varying definitions create problems of interpretation in different universities and difficulties in inter−university transfer (NUC 1989b p. 4).

The first recommendation therefore made by the panel to the NUC was that

Ideally, a uniform terminology should apply, and the Panel therefore recommends the use of *Course Credit System* since this is more descriptive of the system in which students earn credits for courses completed successfully (NUC 1989b p. 4 including emphasis).

And in order to indicate the panel’s awareness of the pros and cons of the course credit system, it outlines what it considered the advantages of the new system which were that it

allows a thematic structuring of the programmes of study, i.e. ability to break courses into convenient and manageable concepts;

allows students within limits to move at their own pace;

allows inter−departmental and inter−disciplinary collaboration in curriculum planning, formulation and teaching, and minimizes duplication of courses;

permits a diagnostic approach to students' learning as well as a continuous examination of students in each subject area;

provides students with greater flexibility in taking elective courses from outside their area of specialization, thereby broadening their educational base;

allows for the introduction of new degree programmes without necessarily creating new departments;

facilitates inter−university transfer, thus enhancing student mobility (NUC 1989b p. 5).

These perceived advantages would proide a convenient analytical framework in the documetary analysis of the system in Nigerian universities. The panel also provided, for the guidance of the universities, the first national definition of the course unit system, which was

a quantitative system of organisation of the curriculum in which subject areas are broken down into course units which are examined and for which students earn credit (s) if passed...The credit units consist of specified number of student−teacher contact hours per week per semester. Credit units are used in two complementary ways: one, as a measure of course weighting, and the other, as an indicator of student work load (NUC 1989b p. 6).

As a measure of course weighting for each course, the minimum credit units to be earned for satisfactorily completing a course is often specified, e.g. a two credit course may mean a single two one−hour lectures, or a 1 hour lecture plus a 1 three hour practical per week per semester (NUC 1989b p. 6). And as a measure of work load, *one credit unit* means

one hour of lecture or tutorial per week per semester. For other forms of teaching requiring student−teacher contact, the following equivalents may apply: two hours of seminar; three hours of laboratory or field work, clinical practice/practicum, studio practice or stadium sporting activity; six hours of teaching practice, one week of industrial attachment (NUC 1989b p. 6).

Based on these definitions, the staff/student workload was also computed by the NUC. These details were already covered in the Minimum Academic Standards as they affect the individual disciplines; nevertheless the NUC provided the following as an approved general guideline:

a) Every full time student should be required to register for a minimum of 15 credit units per semester and a maximum of 24 credit units except for students on field experience/industrial attachment.

b) A full time staff on the other hand should have a minimum teaching load of 8 credit units per semester including post graduate teaching. For science based disciplines, this should mean a minimum of 6 lecture hours and two 3 hour laboratory work per week. For arts based disciplines, this would mean a minimum of 6 lectures and two 1 hour tutorials per week.

The next major observation of the panel based on the practice in Nigerian universities was that there was a

considerable variation in the grading systems operating in Nigerian universities. Most universities tend to use a combination of letter and figure grades. The letter grades range from A to F/Z, while the figure grades vary from 0 to 7, but most universities use 0 to 6 figure grades (NUC 1989b p. 7).

While this was a state of affairs which the NUC panelists welcome due to the individualistic interpretation it gave to education, nevertheless the panelists recommended the following grading guidelines:

A grading system using both letter (A−F) and figure (0−5) is more consistent with the system of degree classification in use in Nigeria...A minimum pass mark of 40% (equivalent to Grade Point of 1) is approved for uniform adoption. Also a minimum CGPA of 1 is required for graduation (NUC 1989b p. 4).

Thus the British bedrock of Nigerian education shines through the American finish glossed on it. This is because the concept of degree *classification* was too entrenched in the collective psyche of Nigerians as the final status of university education. Thus it was prudent to provide an old interpretation of the results to the new evaluative system. The final guidelines approved by the NUC for the classification of Nigerian degrees is as follows:

SCORE	GRADE	GP	GPA*	CGPA	DEGREE

70−100	A	5	4.50−5.00	First Class
60−69	B	4	3.50−4.49	Second Upper
50−59	C	3	2.40−3.49	Second Lower
45−49	D	2	1.50−2.39	Third Class
40−44	E	1	1.00−1.49	Pass Degree
0−39	F	0	<0.99	Fail

(* The Grade Point Average, derived by multiplying the score with the grade point and dividing by the total credit units).

To enable university staff to calculate the units as they affect students, the NUC provided further definitions:

The *Grade Point* derives from the actual percentage for a given course; the raw score is converted into a letter grade and a grade point.

The *Grade Point Average*: performance in any semester is reported in Grade Point Average. This is the average of weighted grade points earned in the courses taken during the semester. The Grade Point Average is obtained by multiplying the Grade Point attained in each course by the number of credit units assigned to that course, and then summing these up and dividing by the total number of credit units taken for the semester.

Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA): This is the up−to−date mean of the Grade Points earned by the student in a programme of study. It is an indication of the student's overall performance at any point in the training programme. To compute the Cumulative Grade Point Average, the total Grade Points multiplied by the respective credit units for all the semesters are added and then divided by the total number of credit units for all courses registered by the student (NUC 1989b p. 4).

The NUC also noted that some universities still (up to 1988) conduct a mixture of sessional and "semestral" examinations and directed that

Considering that all universities have adopted the Course system, examinations should be administered at the end of each course, which is usually at the end of the semester. In this regard, it becomes superfluous to

conduct comprehensive sessional examinations or special degree examinations in the final year of study (NUC 1989b p. 5).

With this directive, the traditional sessional year was abolished and replaced by a two semester year, first and second semesters for regular courses and a Long Vacation period for a Vacation course. Further,

the first and second semesters should last 17 to 18 weeks (including registration, teaching and examination period) provided that no less than 15 weeks each are actually devoted to teaching. Programmes of study for the Long Vacation period should last 11−12 weeks, 10 of which are devoted to teaching. For maximum utilisation of staff and resources, and to give more opportunity to students to take courses under the course credit system, each University should introduce programmes of study for the Long Vacation period (NUC 1989b p. 9).

With these directives, the Nigerian universities acquired a new look from 1988, and a machinery was set in motion to ensure that all these reforms are either taking place or the necessary preparations for their implementation were being made through an accreditation by the NUC.

An Intrinsic Analysis of the Minimum Academic Standards Documents

The minimum academic standards created by the NUC in 1988 became the working guidelines for any evaluation of the Nigerian undergraduate university education. As indicated, the standards were identified in thirteen disciplines (the full listing of these disciplines is given in the bibliography under NUC references).

Further, the *standards* alluded to in the guidelines were actually a list of courses to be taught in each discipline, with the minimum number of required years and graduation credits for each course. Coverage of these topics does not necessarily connote attainment of any specific *standards* in such discipline, a term which may have different meanings not only for different people but also in different contexts. For instance, it raises the issue of how such *standards* can be *measured* beside merely ensuring such topics have been taught. Thus it would seem that what the NUC created were minimum academic subject matter *requirements* rather than *standards*; a situation which more accurately reflects the rationale behind the listing of the topics for each discipline which the NUC felt has minimally defined the content matter of that discipline. Further, as subsequent analysis will show, the NUC seemed to have perceived *conformity* to mean standards. The term *standards*, however, will be used in this study in the way the NUC used it; i.e. as the desired subject matter content coverage in each discipline.

The minimum guidelines went beyond a mere list of component courses for each discipline; they included parameters considered necessary for the attainment of the objectives specified for each discipline. In every guideline for the thirteen disciplines are lists of equipment, instruments, and even individual student space requirement with regards to teaching and learning that particular program. Included also as part of the minimum standards package are detailed specifications of the qualifications of the faculty for each level of the university hierarchy, and in all cases, even details of the promotion procedures for faculty.

Perhaps an appropriate guide to creating an analytical scheme for the new guidelines would be the perceived main structural advantages of the new programs. It could be recalled that the NUC, in listing the advantages of the new system included the view that the new system would enable a thematic structuring of programs, allow inter−departmental and inter−disciplinary collaboration in curriculum planning, provide greater flexibility in elective courses broadening the educational base of the students, and facilitate inter−university transfer, thus enhancing student mobility (NUC 1989b p. 5). These central points provide a loose analytical framework in looking more closely at the guidelines.

The Structure and Emphases of the Minimum Academic Standards Guidelines

In the presentation of the new curricular guidelines, each discipline was prefaced by a comprehensive outline of its general philosophy and the fundamental principles of its curricular development. This is followed by a listing, as in the case of *Pharmaceutical Sciences,* of "appropriate competencies (objectives) which, when acquired by the student will give adequate professional recognition for the various services" (NUC 1989*l* p. 1).

Next, a base rationale was provided for the structure of each discipline in the new academic guidelines which, in some cases (but not all), gives a clue as to how different the new was from the old. For instance, in working out the minimum academic standards in *Education,* the NUC provided for the following degrees: B.A (Ed)/B.Sc (Ed)/B.Ed, BLS/B.A (LS)/B.Sc (LS). Based on this categorization, the NUC found that before the minimum standards guidelines were introduced into the universities,

Some differences existed in terms of core courses and electives;

Some universities demonstrated a bias in the weighting given to teaching subjects vis−a−vis education subjects;

Some other universities omitted what were regarded as core courses in Education in degree programmes. These core courses were either left as elective or did not exist in the curriculum of the affected universities.

It was found out that support services and facilities for the preparation of science teachers were totally inadequate and in some faculties, non−existent;

It was also observed that there was a need to expand the various methods of continuous students' assessments because the present list was considered restrictive (NUC 1989g p. 4).

Yet the NUC did not reflect on either the rationale, or origin of this diversity in education programs in Nigerian universities prior to the reform. For instance, it could be argued that these differences might have arisen in response to different needs of the communities in which the universities are located which could very well lead to different emphases in the education programs provided by the different universities in different locations.

By developing different programs, the various faculties not only provide wider choices for students, but also developed tailored programs in response to specific community requests or needs. For instance, in Bayero University Kano, one of the most sought after programs in the 1980s was an English Language proficiency program developed by the Department of Adult Education for Kano State merchants who did not go through the formal western educational process (a situation typical and quite characteristic of Muslim Northern Nigeria), but who find themselves increasingly dealing with culturally diverse range of contacts. In response to their requests for a language proficiency program which fits with their working pattern, the Department of Adult education was able to mount a very popular and successful program which is a response to a specific need — thus enabling the university to fulfil parts of its mission to society.

It is issues like these that would help to determine if a core uniform program for a very diverse country such as Nigeria would be more beneficial than an individualistic program development.

In order to create common meanings of all structural concepts in all the disciplines, the new programs also explained certain key structural elements associated with the course unit system. To this end, new concepts such as core courses, electives, and specialization were defined across all the thirteen disciplines. For instance, the definitions of key structural concepts provided by the NUC were

Core Courses: Courses defined as core are the minimum (compulsory) professional courses offered by all students in any Nigerian university. They must also be passed.

Specialisation: Every student will have an area of concentration defined as specialization. These are courses that are compulsory within this area.

Electives: These are restrictive and unrestrictive courses: *Restrictive Courses* are courses taken from defined areas from which students are free to choose specific courses. The programme specifies the minimum course credit unit to be passed. *Unrestrictive Elective Courses* are taken from any area of a student's choice. The programme specifies the minimum course credit unit to be passed (NUC 1989g p. 6).

Other frameworks provided included *pre−requisite courses* which are courses that must be passed before a linked course can be taken. Thus by providing a general structure for each program, the NUC has made it possible to focus on any aspect of any program which could constitute a problem, and provide an indication as to the desired format around which instruction could be provided to students. However, although the National Policy on Education has determined four years as the minimum number of years for a university education, such policy directive was altered in the new programs. This is because they all have different completion rates. Also, there are differences in the weighting given to the individual disciplines, since the credit distribution was not the same in all the disciplines. It was not clear whether this reflects the structural

philosophy of the discipline, or the planners' view of exposure times in the discipline. Table 7.1 shows both the years and the credits for all the disciplines in Nigerian universities.

TABLE 7.1

Minimum Graduation Requirements in Nigerian Universities

DISCIPLINE	MINIMUM GRADUATING CREDITS	YEARS
Medicine	319	6
Dentistry	253	6
Veterinary Medicine	203	6
Law	194	5
Pharmacy	188	5
Engineering and Technology	180	5
Environmental Sciences	162	5
Agriculture	160	5
Social Sciences	130	4
Sciences	120	4
Education	120	4
Arts	120	4
Administration	120	4

(Source: NUC Minimum Academic Standards in the various disciplines (NUC 1989 series in the bibliography)

It would seem that the original number of years required for graduation in some of the disciplines before the reforms were retained. For instance, all medical, agriculture, and pharmacy programs required five years (in advanced standing admission) prior to the reforms.

It is interesting to note that more years are expected to be spent in technology related disciplines than in arts. This is because from Table 7.1, social science, education, arts and administration have all four years allocated to them, and with the same number of graduating credits. But although all the individual components of sciences (such as Microbiology, Zoology, Statistics, Geology etc.) have four years allocated to them, students are expected to spend *six* years for the degree of *doctor of optometry* also offered the faculty of Science.

The differences in the years between the technology and arts disciplines are explained possibly in the light of the Nigerian government emphasis on the development of technology in tertiary institutions. This has led to a funding decision for all Nigerian universities to implement a *minimum* ratio of 60:40 in students' admission in favor of science based disciplines. Universities that did not meet this requirement from their admission have portions of their central funding from the National Universities Commission withheld.

And yet again when the disciplines are analyzed in terms of their overall graduating credit requirements, particularly *within* the individual subjects, further interesting trends emerge that show a difference between policy expectations and curricular developmental reality. For instance, to obtain a global ranking of the graduation requirements for all the subjects taught in Nigerian universities, the actual credit requirements for each year of the subjects was computed.

There appeared to be a total of 43 subjects of specialization in the Sciences, Social Sciences and Arts groups (four year degrees). When the credits for all these 43 subjects were ranked, surprisingly the first top five positions were not dominated by science and technology disciplines, contrary to policy expectations. The subject with the highest graduation credits — 168 — among the four year courses is Human Anatomy, a bachelor's degree program in the Faculty of Medicine. This is then followed by Mass Communications (156, Social Sciences), Classical Studies (147, Arts), Physiotherapy (147, another bachelor's degree in the medical faculty), and Psychology (144, Social Sciences). Biochemistry is the first pure science subject to appear in the rankings with 131 graduating credits, placing it at the 13th position. Even Modern European Languages at 132 credits and 12th position have a higher ranking than Computer Science with 120 credits at 25th position. Similarly, Fine Arts (144, 7th) ranked higher than Physics (123, 20th). The ranking from which these figures are taken are contained in Appendix 1 which lists *all* the disciplines in Nigerian universities ranked according to their graduating requirements. The Appendix also gives the full methodological details behind the computation of this ranking.

This trend seemed to be maintained even when comparing clusters of subjects as disciplines. For instance, among the five year degrees in Nigerian universities, the highest three positions, in terms of graduating credit requirements, are occupied by Industrial Engineering (226), Management Technology (205) and Law (194) respectively; all higher than other Engineering and Environmental Science programs with the same pattern e.g. Agricultural Engineering required only 166 credits (making it 13th).

Clearly therefore there has not been a corresponding policy emphasis in the Nigerian university curricula development to reflect science prioritization.

Further, the new minimum standards guidelines gave different rates of completion of the degree programs depending on entrance qualifications. Students who enter the programs directly after the Senior Secondary School would be expected to spend the minimum number of years outlined in Table 7.1 for the individual disciplines. Students who come in with higher qualifications, such as the Higher National Diploma (HND), National Certificate of Education (NCE) or General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level) would start each program at Level 200 — by−passing the first year.

There was often what seemed to be a considerable disparity between the minimum number of credits quoted as graduation requirements in the guidelines, and the *actual* number of listed graduating credits. For instance, in Medicine, the guidelines state that

To graduate from the M.B.B.S degree programme, a student needs to get a minimum of 180 units. For other Bachelors degree programmes, the minimum units are 120 and 150 for 4 and 5 year programmes respectively (NUC 1989k p. 3).

And yet when the actual *minimum* credit requirements in the M.B.B.S programs are counted, the final tally was 319 credits — all in courses that are *compulsory* to the program. It would seem that providing a minimum would be most useful in cases where there are many electives which will give an impression of attainment of a certain breadth. In the case of medicine there do not seem to be any listed electives; therefore it would be more accurate to state the number of actual credits needed for graduation, if only to avoid the possibility of misinterpretation by graduating students.

Even in cases where there are electives outside the discipline, the disparity between the "minimum" and actual graduating credits appears wide. A more global look at the individual subjects of the Arts guidelines will provide an example, as shown in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2

Minimum Graduating Requirements in Arts

	Minimum Listed Credits for Level				
PROGRAM	100	200	300	400	Total
Classical Studies	38	31	47	31	147
Modern European Languages	34	32	34	32	132
English Language	27	36	39	27	129
Archeology	34	30	30	30	124
English Literature	31	30	30	30	121
Music	30	30	30	30	120
History	33	30	22	29	114
Arabic	21	16	39	34	110
African Languages	28	32	20	18	98

Linguistics	25	26	26	18	95
Islamic Studies	20	10	30	30	90
Philosophy	20	12	28	20	80
Theatre Arts	22	18	14	08	62

The credit listing in Table 7.2 included core, specialization and elective courses necessary for that particular program. As can be seen there are different emphases given to each year (level) for each of the programs in the Arts disciplines.

Table 7.2 reveals other interesting trends in Arts. For instance, despite the rhetoric about tailoring Nigerian education to Nigerian realities and circumstances, it is surprising that Classical Studies (with an 8 credit minimum compulsory course for specialization in Latin, Greek, or Greek and Roman Civilization), Modern European Languages (which included, as listed in the guidelines, French, German, Portuguese, Italian and Russian) and English Language have the three highest graduation requirements than, say, African Languages, Islamic Studies, and Theatre Arts which fall within the least five. It is not clear whether this is due to the perceived higher content volume of the Eurocentric subjects; but either way, the emergence of Classics at the top of Arts agenda in Nigerian universities must surely be a triumph for the classicists of the Ibadan axis!

From the trend shown in Table 7.2 it is therefore quite difficult to discern the rationale behind the differences in graduating requirements for the subjects, or why some subjects require more credits (thus more exposure) than others.

General Studies and the Minimum Academic Standards

Underlying this new structure for all the courses to be taught in Nigerian universities is a redesigned *general studies* program. It may be recalled that individual universities run their own general studies programs prior to the reforms in line with the 1977 recommendations of the National Policy on Education; and indeed in many universities even before then (e.g. University of Lagos, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and Obafemi Awolowo University). For instance, prior to 1989, the general studies program of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka had a total of 24 credits, covering 24% of the degree requirements. At Ahmadu Bello University, there was less emphasis on the general studies programs, since they comprised of only 9 credits (6%).

In the new guidelines, a more streamlined general studies program was created by the NUC to replace the ones in the various universities and incorporated elements of the old programs. The central core of the new general studies program include *Use of English* (4 credits), *History and Philosophy of Science* (2 credits), *Logic and Philosophy* (2 credits), *Nigerian Peoples and Culture* (2 credits). However, there are variations in the modules suggested for some disciplines. For instance, in the *Medicine* guidelines, *Medical Sociology* is substituted for *Nigerian Peoples and Culture* (although the contents listing is the *same* as the system−wide course). Also in the same program, *History and Philosophy of Science* was omitted, while *Philosophy* and *Use of English* are retained.

Two other *new* general studies modules are also provided in the minimum standards guidelines. These are *Introduction to Computers* (3 credits), and *Application of Computers* (3 credits). The total number of credits devoted to general studies by the NUC panelists is therefore 16.

However, it would seem that the two computer related programs did not appear in *all* the guidelines. *Education*, for instance, does not have *Application of Computers* as a separate module, although its general studies program listed *Introduction to Computers.* The Engineering guidelines omitted them completely, presumably because Engineering students would have to do "real" computing at one stage or other.

Introduction to Computers was aimed at providing Nigerian students with an awareness in the use of computers in modern affairs. The excerpts of the program listing for *Social Sciences* indicates the areas of coverage:

History and development of computer technology. The Why and How of computers, computer types; analog, digital and hybrid; central preparation equipments [sic], key punch, sorter etc.The programming process; problem definition, flow charting and decision table (NUC 1989n p. 6)

Surprisingly, there seemed to be a lack of consistency even in this module listing for the various disciplines. For instance, the same general studies module for *Environmental Science* lists the components as:

History of computers, functional components of computer, characteristics of computer programming; statements, symbolic names, arrays, subscripts, expressions and control statements. Introduction to BASIC or FORTRAN programming language (NUC 1989i p. 2)

Since *Introduction to Computers* is meant to carry the same message to all students regardless of their specialization, it would have been expected that a more common list of components should have been provided; rather than variations which could be subjected to literal interpretation by faculty who may thus give different emphasis to the same program for different students. This in itself would not necessarily be disadvantageous as clearly the needs for computer literacy of a graduate in Environmental Sciences may differ from that in Arabic. However, the impression given by the guidelines is that all students would be subjected to the same treatment, regardless of specialization. Analysis of these two computer literacy modules indicated that this was not so.

Further, while *Introduction to Computers* is meant to be a general studies program and covered within the first two years (its coding indicates this also), yet in some disciplines these two computer education components are to be taught in higher classes. In Veterinary Medicine, for instance, *Introduction to Computers* (CMP 601) is to be offered in the first semester of the 6th year (final), while *Application of Computers to Vet Practice* (CMP 602) is listed as a second semester 6th year course. This is similar to Dentistry where *Introduction* is a 5th year course, while *Application* is a 6th year course. If the general studies programs are university wide programs, then this differential leveling would have adverse effects on class scheduling where students in advanced standing are required to do courses in junior years.

The second component of the general studies program, *Application of Computers* was aimed at exploring the impact of computers in the development and practice of the respective discipline. However, a more generic module listing was created by the NUC for all the disciplines, without tailoring the philosophy behind the module to each discipline. For instance, in the *Social Sciences* program guide, the program listing for *Application of Computers* gives the following areas of coverage:

Introduction to Basic programming; data types: constant and variables. Statement types; assignment statements, input−output statements, control statements.

Again surprisingly similar listing was given in any discipline where such program was required as part of general studies. And yet there were *no* variations to reflect the specific discipline, as for instance reflected in the *Applications* listings for *Law* (NUC 1989j p. 17). This gives the impression that the same computing procedures are the same in all the disciplines.

To obtain a clearer idea of how important the general studies programs are in relation to the Nigerian undergraduate experience, the total number of credits (16) for the course was computed as a percentage of the respective credit requirements for each discipline. The results are shown in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3

Percentage Credit Requirements for General Studies

PROGRAM	CREDITS	G. S.	% G.S.
Medicine	319	16	5.0
Dentistry	253	16	6.3
Veterinary Medicine	203	16	6.3
Law	194	16	8.2
Pharmacy	188	16	8.5
Engineering and Technology	180	16	8.8
Environmental Sciences	162	16	9.8

Agriculture	160	16	10.0
Social Sciences	130	16	12.3
Sciences	120	16	13.3
Education	120	16	13.3
Arts	120	16	13.3
Administration	120	16	13.3
Average General Studies	174.54	16	10.91

Thus on the average general studies courses constitute almost 11% of Nigerian graduation requirements. It is thus interesting how the breadth requirements of Nigerian universities seemed to be linked to specialization. There appears to be less emphasis on general studies credits in relation to the total number of graduating credits in technology and medical disciplines than in sciences and arts related programs. Medicine has the lowest percentage with 5.0 while Sciences, Education, Arts, and Administration, all with almost similar graduation credit requirements have about 13.3 of their credits devoted to general studies.

It would seem, therefore, that the NUC team that worked out general studies courses has under−estimated the credit weighting of these courses in relation to the overall graduation credit requirements of other disciplines. Clearly then, general studies may not have the same impact on all the students if this trend is to continue.

Breadth and Depth in the Minimum Academic Standards Guidelines

The new guidelines attempted to integrate learning elements within the same academic blocks through inter−disciplinary interaction by making provisions for students to take elective courses in other departments. However, this was not a facility provided in *all* the programs. For instance, in Veterinary Medicine, Dentistry and Engineering, *all* courses are compulsory and do not provide any facility for students to take courses outside each program; the list of the individual course components made this clear. Other programs such as Medicine, Veterinary Medicine restricted instruction within their faculties, while yet others restrict electives only to allied faculties, e.g. Pharmaceutical Sciences with Sciences.

Programs, such as Science, Arts, and Social Sciences do provide facilities within their individual component structures where students are required to combine electives from other disciplines to meet their graduation requirements, but not in every direction. For instance while some departments in the Sciences are to allow students to take courses in Social Sciences, no single program in Arts or Social Sciences created facilities where *their* students could take courses in Science.

It could be, of course, that the non−scientific background of Arts based students, especially in Nigeria might have restricted the NUC curriculum developers from recommending that these students do elective courses in

pure sciences; and that may in part explain the presence of *History and Philosophy of Science* component of general studies which is compulsory for every student in Nigerian universities. But it is doubtful whether this can provide the Arts based students with the same level of scientific awareness, as *Nigerian Peoples and Culture* is expected to provide a sociological background for Science and Technology based students.

And although an underlying rationale behind the reforms was to break away from excessive specialization of the Nigerian degree structure, yet a closer analysis of such intentions in some program reveals inconsistencies between the rhetoric and the reality. For instance, the minimum standards outlines in Sciences expect that

out of the 120 units required as minimum unit load for four (4) years, 50% to 70% must come from the student's discipline (NUC 1989m p. 2).

This would seem to suggest that at least 30% to 50% of the elective courses for the students in Sciences must be from *outside* the area of specialization of the student. Yet an analysis of the credit distribution and their percentage elective requirements in the Sciences reveals that the core courses take a considerable precedence over the electives in every subject with the exception of *Statistics*. This is reflected in Table 7.4.

Table 7.4

Elective Requirements in Science

	Minimum Graduating	E L E C T I V E S	
Program	Credits	Credits	% Electives
Biochemistry	131	00	00
Optometry	208	00	00
Geology	127	02	02
Physics	123	09	07
Botany	122	11	09
Computer Science	120	18	15
Zoology	127	20	16
Biology	122	21	17

Mathematics	122	25	20
Microbiology	131	28	21
Chemistry	125	35	28
Statistics	120	41	34

(Source: NUC 1989m).

Thus in nine departments of any faculty of science in Nigeria, the core courses from that department constitute more than 80% of the graduation requirements, while in two they constitute over 70%. Consequently, 11 of the 12 departments in Sciences did not appear to have fulfilled the liberal electives requirements of their developers. In the extreme cases of Biochemistry and Optometry, no electives outside the course were suggested. Only Statistics has 66% core courses, providing 34% of electives for its students.

However, it must not be assumed that electives in sciences are liberal programs aimed at broadening the learning experience of science students outside their areas of specialization (science). Again a closer look at all the electives suggest that most of them are to be offered in the *same* faculty. For instance, of the 12 various Departments in Sciences, only 4 provided a facility where their students can take electives outside their core departments. Computer Science provides for electives in Electrical Engineering, and Economics (NUC 1989m p. 35); Mathematics in Accounting, Economics and Business Administration (NUC 1989m p. 45); and Statistics in Economics and Agriculture (NUC 1989m p. 65). Interestingly enough, Chemistry also provides for electives in Management, Graphics, French, Russian and German (NUC 1989m p. 26). As with all the other electives, the structural rationale behind the choice of these elective languages over others, or over electives in other disciplines was not clear. In the case of all other departments, *all* their electives are faculty of science courses. General studies courses, of course do not count since they are uniform for the whole students.

Surprisingly, there is no provision for interaction between science and education programs in the new guidelines. This is because although in most universities B.Sc (Education) students who are going to become science teachers have to go to the Faculty of Science for the science components of their degrees (with the exception of Physical and Health Education majors), yet there is no single listing of education elective requirements for Science students who may wish to become teachers, athough in some universities (e.g. Bayero University Kano) science students are allowed to register for a first year course in Education.

Other programs have liberal electives in varying degrees. The minimum academic standards guidelines in Agriculture, for instance, suggest devoting the first year to the study of basic sciences, arts and social sciences. Similarly, Law also suggests students studying *compulsory non−law* courses which included two separate courses each in Social Science (6 credits) and English Literature (also 6 credits). In addition Law also had seven electives each of six credits in various areas including Economics, Philosophy, and Social Relations.

The new guidelines sought to provide a mobile mechanism to facilitate the transfer of knowledge (and instruction) from one location to another. This point indeed appeared consistently in all the guidelines and was cited as another fundamental advantage of the reforms. By breaking down courses of instruction into uniform units with fixed value, a mechanism is created where students could continue their instruction where

ever they go.

There is a main base assumption to this rationale. This was that all the listed courses are offered in all the universities. The listing of programs available in various Nigerian universities by the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) brochures clearly indicates that this is not so. For instance, students starting a course in Philosophy, Agriculture, Pharmaceutical Sciences, Environmental Sciences could not transfer to Bayero University Kano which does not offer these courses. The efforts invested in making the curriculum mobile would therefore seem to offer little dividend.

A series of observations can be made following this brief analysis of some of the features of the minimum standards guidelines introduced for the first time in Nigerian university education in 1988. First, it would seem that the traditional structure of the disciplines has been retained, although this will only be certain after a detailed comparative analysis of the contents of the new and the old curricula. Nevertheless elements of tradition remain especially in professional courses (especially Medicine, Pharmaceutical Sciences, Veterinary Medicine). This is because prior to the reforms, a standard arts or science degree takes three years in advanced standing admission to complete, and four years for students coming directly from secondary schools. Similarly, medical programs require five or six years. Under the new minimum standards guidelines, it would seem the same provisions have been retained.

Secondly, there seemed to have been little attempt to expose the student to as many different disciplines as possible. This is despite the overall claims of the developers of the new curricula that they are inter−disciplinary. Again this may be a reflection of traditional stereotyping of the various disciplines that makes it difficult for the developers to be truly innovative and break down the barriers that separate blocks of knowledge.

Further, this trend might be seen as a cautious acknowledgment of the labor market forces. It could be that curriculum developers, unsure of how the labor market will react to sudden and radical re−orientation of traditional conceptions of knowledge, decided to play it safe and strike a balance between innovation and tradition. Despite these possible shortcomings, the minimum standards guidelines become the first uniform and definitive statement of university education in Nigeria. The course unit system panel submitted its final report on August 19, 1988. This report was

also discussed by the Accreditation Committee and then circulated to every faculty in the Universities for comments and suggestions. The comments from the Universities were incorporated into the draft document which was again discussed by the Accreditation Committee and finally by the Commission itself before being presented as a separate but equally as an important document for Government’s consideration and approval (NUC 1989c p. v).

In the next stage of the reform, a Standing Committee on the Accreditation Exercise (SCA) was set up by the NUC on August 5, 1989 to monitor the activities of the Ad−hoc accreditation panels that would be set up to conduct the actual accreditation. The SCA drew up an elaborate time table for the accreditation exercise spanning August 1989 to June 1991. By December 1989 it had finalized the initial ground work and was ready for the accreditation scheduled to start on March 19, 1990 and end on March 22, 1991. A total of 372 panels was set up for the exercise. The next stage would be to determine the extent to which these minimum standards guidelines are interpreted by the universities and the findings of the accreditation committees set up to monitor the implementation of these guidelines.

CHAPTER 8

LIVING ON THE CREDIT LINE: THE MANAGEMENT OF CREDIT COURSE UNIT CURRICULAR REFORM IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

Introduction

Two main aspects of the reform will now be analyzed in terms of their introduction into the system and how they are managed. These are the *General Studies*, and the *course unit system*. These are selected for deeper analysis because they form the basic core of the reform, and also because they characterize the broad structures of American university curricular organization as discussed in earlier chapters.

The central icons of American university education — general education, course credit system — which were transplanted to the Nigerian university all evolved as a result of distinct social, rather than political (specifically, government controlled), processes. For instance, the *general education* breadth requirement of the lower division of the American undergraduate degree was the product of dissatisfaction with the classical monolithic curriculum of Harvard. Increasingly multiracial and expanding economy demanded a more realistic curriculum to cater for individual needs; general education with its electives as accessories satisfied that need. And although Nigeria also has a multicultural configuration, nevertheless the level of social input into government policy decision making process was extremely limited. As such, due to the centralized nature of educational mechanisms, social parameters rarely make impact on the final shape of educational policies. Thus an attempt to implement a policy with derivative roots from a liberal democracy into a centralized system of state control would appear stilted, and perhaps not surprisingly, not achieve the same set of outcomes.

General Studies in Nigerian Universities

General Studies deserves attention because of the importance of the program given in the National Policy on Education (Nigeria 1981 p. 24; see also Chapter 7). By 1978 (the initial observation in the National Policy was made in 1977) most universities had introduced a General Studies curriculum in response to this national directive; although older universities, such as the University of Lagos already had a program on their curricula with similar objectives under *general education*. Thus there were two stages to the introduction of General Studies: after the National Policy on Education directives, and after the NUC *Minimum Standards* guidelines in 1988.

In the various universities General Studies existed in a unit headed either by a Director, or a Co−ordinator. Worried about the divergence in their various programs all aimed at achieving more or less similar objectives, a *Conference of the Directors and Co−ordinators of General Studies Units of Nigerian Universities* was held at the University of Lagos on October 5, and 6 1982. During the conference, a *National Committee for the Harmonization of General Studies* was set up with the aim of harmonizing the syllabuses and programs of General Studies. This committee which comprised the University of Calabar, the University of Lagos, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, the University of Ilorin and Bayero University Kano met at the University of Ilorin on Monday February 28, 1983 and Tuesday March 1, 1983 and recommended four component divisions for the General Studies as follows:

The Use of English and Study Skills

The Humanities

The Social Sciences

The Natural and Technological Sciences

The four components of the Harmonized General Studies Program were each to carry a minimum of 3 semester credits. The courses were also recommended as compulsory to be passed by every student; and it must be credit carrying for the purposes of computation of GPA or class degree. But although this represented an attempt to provide a common based learning to all Nigerian undergraduate students in General Studies, the program remained individualistic to each university and the harmonized curricula never really took off.

Although variations of the same themes, there were differences in which the General Studies directive was interpreted in Nigerian universities before 1988. At the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, the courses offered in 1981/82 were: Use of English (GS 101, 6 credits) theme: *Proficiency in the acquisition, communication and critical evaluation of information and ideas through reading, writing and speech*, Social Science (GS 103, 6 credits) theme: *Social Development*; Natural Science (GS 105, 6 credits), theme: *Man and His Environment*; and Humanities (GS 207, 6 credits), with a theme of *African Cultural Development*. Thus the total number of credits for the General Studies program at Nsukka was 24, with virtually all but six credits in the freshman year. The total number of credits required before graduation, incidentally is not less than 135. This means that the General Studies program actually constituted only about 17.7% of the undergraduate experience in Nsukka in 1981/83 (Nsukka, 1984).

At Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, the courses were not clustered, but offered as a series of one credit programs. The entire range was: *Nationalism* (SGRS 101, 1 credit), *History of Scientific Ideas* (SGRS 102, 1 credit), *English Communication and Skills* (SGRS 103, 2 credits), *English for Academic Purposes* (SGRS

104, 2 credits), *Use of Library* (SGRS 105, 1 credit), *Moral Philosophy* (SGRS 201, 1 credit), and *Environmental Health* (SGRS 202, 1 credit). The total number of credits for the program was 9. Depending on the faculty a student must earn a minimum of 120−150 credits to graduate from the Ahmadu Bello University, which means that the General Studies program there constitutes only about 6% of the undergraduate experience (ABU, 1987).

However, in the *Minimum Standards* guidelines in 1989, the National Universities Commission designed a *new* General Studies curriculum which is the same for all the Nigerian universities. It provided for six subjects that make up the General Studies curriculum with a total of 16 credits. However, since Nigerian university students require different credits to graduate depending on their program, the actual percentage of the General Studies in their education varies from just 5.0% for medical students (319 credits to graduate), to 13.3% of the 120 credits needed to graduate by science and arts based undergraduates (see Table 7.3 in Chapter 7). The overall average percentage of General Studies curriculum in the Nigerian undergraduate education is thus about 11%.

It is quite clear that the conception of general studies as applied in American education and as it is perceived in Nigerian education are similar, but not the same. Both aimed at providing breadth to undergraduate educational process. But they do it at different depths. On the average, the general education portion of the American undergraduate curriculum constituted about 30% to 40% of the entire undergraduate education. In a survey conducted by Gaff (1991), he discovered that there was an increase in the proportion of the curriculum allocated to general education in American colleges and universities. Out the average 124 credits required for graduation in a typical four year institution, the average of number of hours allotted to general education was reported to be 49.2 credit hours (39.5% of the total). Also,

among the Deans responding to the survey, 59% said that the number of credit hours in the [new] general education program were more than in the previous one; 39% reported that they were the same; and only 3% noted that the number of hours were fewer (Gaff 1991 p.71).

This compared with the trend in the proportion of time given to general education over the years in American colleges which Gaff (1991) reported as being 43.1% in 1967 decreasing to 33.5% in 1974, and showing an increase in 1988 at 37.9%. A percentage of 39.5 in 1991 may not have been too much different, but it does indicate more favorable consideration to general education in American undergraduate curriculum.

In Nigeria the proportion of time spent on general studies in a number of universities before the 1988 reform varied from 6% (Ahmadu Bello University) to 17.7% (University of Nigeria, Nsukka). Under the new *minimum academic standards* for Nigerian universities, general studies was allocated 16 credits which is an average of 11% of the total number of credits required for graduation. Clearly, therefore, the importance of the program is underestimated despite its potential for achieving so much in a highly diversified society.

Further, the general studies programs in Nigeria — both the old (1968−1988) and the new (1989 onwards) — did not have in−built flexibility which makes them possible to serve as a focus for contemporary issues within the themes covered by the program. This is because the carnage of the Nigerian civil war (1967−1970) and its aftermath, the numerous religious riots that punctuate contemporary Nigerian social structure, the increasing ethnic tensions in the country, the social upheavals leading to frequent changes in government are all issues that found no niche in the general studies programs of Nigerian universities. The course component that came nearest to this was *Nigerian Peoples and Culture* (GST 202), and this was only devoted to 3 credits. It had the same purpose as *American Cultures* breath requirement at the University of California,

Berkeley, but could have been made more integrative to the diversity of the Nigerian population. The full program outline is:

Study of Nigerian history and culture in pre−colonial times. Nigerian's perception of his world. Culture areas of Nigeria and their characteristics. Evolution of Nigeria as a political unit. Concepts of functional education; National economy; Balance of trade; Economic self−reliance; social justice; individual and national development. Norms and values, oral national development. Moral obligations of citizens, Environmental sanitation (NUC 1989g p. 9).

The decline in Nigerian general studies (for it can only be called a decline) might have been prompted by many factors all associated with the nature of general studies wherever it is taught. For instance, although the University of Nigeria was considered revolutionary in being the first Nigerian university to offer general studies in 1961, the program was only accepted

by a narrow margin in a faculty vote before the opening of the second academic year, the margin of acceptance being accounted for by the vote of some American and British advisors. Students were unaware or unaccepting of the program's purpose, however, viewing it as a *further* encroachment upon the time they could devote to their principal fields of study. Students in political science, where there was considerable faculty opposition to the program, at first boycotted registration, yielding only in the final minutes when it became clear the University intended to stand firm on its decision (Hanson 1968 p.26).

This view may have been retained by those who opposed it and subsequently the general studies requirements were reduced, while its objectives were retained. Similar reactions were noted elsewhere. In Colombia, South America, for instance opposition to the newly introduced general studies in certain universities was motivated by political forces, rather than degree completion rate. According to Pelczar (1972 p. 242)

The addition of new units (e.g. department, institutes, etc) to old academic structures aroused confusion about their objectives and functions. This was true particularly of attempts to institute general studies programs. Few Colombian administrators, professors, or students appreciated the intents or potentials of this reform...Unfortunately, students viewed general studies as a Northern American import and an unnecessary extension of secondary school that could only prolong their embarkation into professional studies.

Any opposition in educational reform process serves to underscore a fundamental issue facing reforms: harmonization. For there has been little harmonization between the new practices and their currency with existing premises about the values of university education in the country. In essence, opposition to the general studies are borne out of uncertainties about the extent to which the labor market would value such qualification as it was not aimed at a specific job training, and has limited skill acquisition facilities.

Further, the problem associated with teaching general studies — lack of staff who had experience in presenting their areas of specialization from an interdisciplinary perspective, lack of written materials which the students could easily refer to, even though many of these events are excellently documented in the mass media — contributed to only a token attention given to the general studies curriculum, and place a considerable question mark on the future of the program in Nigerian universities.

The Course Unit System in Nigerian Universities

The need to standardize the admission requirements of students from high school to the university, coupled with the need to create a mobile mechanism in a diversified system led to the creation of the *credit* as a unit of measurement of learning experience in the United States. Such degree of synchronization between the secondary schools and the universities does not exist in Nigeria. Nor are Nigerian university students extremely mobile, constantly transferring from one university campus to another. The credit system would therefore be advantageous in situation where all the universities in the country offer similar programs, or have mechanisms which makes it possible for students registered in a specific program to *convert* to another if they have to change their residential locations.

On the face of it, therefore, there does not seem to be an abundant evidence for the system−wide policy imposition of the credit system in Nigeria. As Burn (1973) pointed out,

the advantages that adoption of the American credit system may appear to offer to foreign higher education systems should be carefully assessed. *In the United States, the benefits are probably related more to the underlying premises on which the credit system operates than to the credit system itself.* The American credit system could therefore only be usefully exported to foreign higher education systems if these systems were founded on or moving towards values similar to those which the American credit systems tries to implement (Burn 1973 p. 139, emphasis added).

Indeed, the credit unit as a means of evaluating university education was not easily accepted even in the revolutionary Nsukka when it was first introduced in 1960. For instance, Ike (1976 p.14) noted that

The adoption by the University of the system of credit hours with the confusion it brought to employers and sponsors who were not used to credit hours and cumulative grade point averages...and the idea that the university was based on an American−land grant philosophy all fortified the image of Nsukka as an American university.

The NUC panel that recommended the implementation of the credit system did acknowledge the disadvantages that could be associated with the system. For instance, the panel noted that “the full implementation of the course credit system is necessarily expensive in terms of staffing and resources to mount courses every semester. In this regard, the Panel wishes to stress that

> in addition to regular teaching staff, the positions of part−time teaching assistants (graduate students, professional practitioners, etc) are indispensable to the effective implementation of the course credit system [sic].
>
> adequate teaching and research facilities, and material resources as recommended by the minimum academic standards should be provided." (NUC 1989b p. 5).

Differences exist, of course, between what a panel might suggest and what is actually obtained in the universities. The data generated by the field work undertaken for this study shows clearly that adequate arrangements were not made for the effective implementation of the system, years after the reform was to have started. In a system where regular, fully qualified faculty are leaving in what is often described as exodus, it was extremely difficult to get similarly competent personnel to be employed on a part−time basis, as suggested by the NUC. If the regular faculty, despite their overseas training and nodding acquaintances with the system could find it problematic, then there is no reason to suppose those not so well exposed to various academic traditions could handle it effectively, no matter their enthusiasm or how highly valued their skills are; for the system involved more than just teaching: its main engine is evaluative skills of the faculty.

Thus it was a tragic development that a labor intensive system was introduced into the universities at the time that the universities faced the greatest manpower shortage in their history. It would seem, therefore, for other systems wishing to implement this sort of strategy that funding mechanism to increase not only the manpower strength of the universities, but also the ability of the university system to retain them would be the first priority, *before* a labor intensive reform such as the course unit system is introduced.

And despite the revolutionary attempt at university curricular reform in Nigeria, perhaps the most striking observation about the reform is the *mixed tradition* that underlies its implementation. In a sense it retains many elements of the classic British university structure with tightly codified system of external examiners, individual board of examiners in each department, superimposed on an American superstructure. An American observer of the whole change process when it was being implemented in 1981 at the Obafemi Awolowo University noted in his diary that

> At the end of the terms, there were British−type comprehensive essay examinations, supervised and administered by a university−wide examinations office. Throughout their university careers, students took courses and accumulated credits toward graduation in an American fashion. The entire [Faculty of Education] sat down as a group to decide which students would pass and fail courses of individual lecturers in a British fashion (Hector 1983 p. 35).

Further, a very distinct feature of the Nigerian degree structure was the *external examiner* system which as been with the university system since its inception in 1948. While individual university staff set their questions, these questions will have to be *moderated* by an external examiner, normally from another university system, and appointed by the university on the recommendations of a department for a maximum of four years. The marked scripts are again moderated by the same external examiner. Such moderation

normally involves either reducing or increasing the grades of the scripts by the external examiner. Unusually, as the practice developed over the years, targets for reduction and addition tended to be scripts in which the students scored either extremely high marks or just−above−failure marks. This situation is not without its dramatic moments as some faculty argue that the externals have no right to reduce or add to the grades they (the faculty) have issued to students they have personally taught.

The purpose of this system was to ensure that the questions and answers conformed to the course content, but most importantly, to maintain the *gold standard* by making sure that the questions reflect the most appropriate state of knowledge for the intended target group of students, and also ensure that the marks awarded to the scripts were fair and appropriate. This was a throwback from the *special relationship* days of Ibadan and London University. Fafunwa (1955 p. 232) describes such relationship quite vividly:

While London University grants the Ibadan faculty the privilege of preparing first examination drafts based on the London University curriculum and the first marking of the scripts, London University has the absolute right to reject in totality the Ibadan faculty's first examination drafts and substitute its own; London University also decides who succeeds in the degree examination and who fails, even though Ibadan's grading may be to the contrary.

The effects of the external examiner system were so powerful in the Nigerian university structure that even the radically innovatory University of Nigeria, Nsukka was forced to adopt the system in 1964, even though it was initially shunned (Umeh 1986 p. 127).

The external examiner system gradually evolved into a fellowship network with colleagues in different universities nominating each other for the post in their respective universities, especially as it is regarded an academic distinction to be appointed an external examiner; not to mention the generous remuneration and visiting privileges given by the host institution. As Ike (1976 p. 106) pointed out,

It is common knowledge that professors tend not to invite as external examiners persons they fear may report adversely on their departments. It is not unusual for a professor to invite a friendly professor from another university, who in turn reciprocates by inviting his host to be his own external examiner. It is also known that some professors tone down adverse comments to enhance their chances of being invited the following year.

In some cases an external examiner goes on a *round* of such visits, traipsing from one university to another, which calls to doubt the degree of attention he gives to each script. Further, the external examiners exert a powerful influence on the outcomes of a result, although this situation was not without its problems, as for instance, Ike (1976 p. 103) reported of an incident at an unnamed Nigerian university where in 1963

an external examiner reported that the entire degree curriculum of one department...was so inferior that he did not consider anybody passing through it fit to receive a degree. Regardless of the individual performance of each graduating student in the finals he recommended that none of them should be allowed to graduate. Since as an external examiner had no veto power, he was outvoted at the board of examiners by the departmental

representatives and the students graduated, some with honours.

Incidents like this place a serious doubt on the usefulness of the external examiner system as a means of evaluation, more especially in a fragmented multi−program course unit system. In other cases, external examiners give glowing reports of the scripts they have examined, and subsequently of the curriculum and its teaching so that they can be nominated again in future.

Even in Britain, where the system originates for Nigerian educational system, the fellowship network operates with regards to the external examiner system. In a survey of British universities, it was reported that "the system could too easily fall into the habit of an old boys' club" (*External Examiner Crisis*, The Higher: The Times Higher Education Supplement, March 6, 1992 p. 1).

Some universities, in responding to a questionnaire sent to them by the NUC (see NUC 1988) prior to the system−wide implementation of the course unit system in Nigerian universities complained about the external examiner system under the course credit system. It would only seem logical that if resit examinations are considered irrelevant in the new scheme of things, then the issue of external examiner should also be reviewed under the new system. The response from the University of Lagos provides not only an effective summary of how the old and new affect the institutions, but also a classic lesson in introduction of innovations, where it states,

The university has found some conflict between the flexibility of the unit course system and the rigid structure of panels and boards of examiner system. The possibility of phasing out the external examiner system has been discussed from time to time, but since the use of external examiners is prescribed in the University of Lagos Act, it has not been generally considered practicable to think of abolishing the system, unless a decision is taken to abolish the system in all Nigerian universities (NUC 1989b p. 10).

Thus while the universities were expected to carry out sweeping changes in their structure, yet the legislative constitutions that defines the universities remained virtually the same. The end product was that the universities have made themselves open to any act on the part of the students or faculty who may feel that there is an inconsistency between their current demands and their constitutions. Despite these potential problems, the NUC strongly endorsed the use of external examiners by recommending that

External examiners should be used only in the final year of the undergraduate programme to assess final year courses and projects, and to certify the overall performance of the graduating students, as well as the quality of facilities and teaching (NUC 1989b p. 8).

Indeed, earlier on, the National Policy on Education had also strongly endorsed this British academic structure, especially the concept of external examiner while at the same time introducing the credit unit system where it states:

National standards of performance will be maintained by strengthening the system of external examiners among Nigerian universities and by the exchange of teaching staff (Nigeria 1981 p. 27).

Thus by the time the Nigerian universities embarked on their curricular reform to the credit system of evaluation, they maintained two distinctly different, if not often contradictory methods of evaluation the undergraduate degree. It is rather interesting that the concept of external examiner is strengthened in Nigerian university system when in Britain, from where it came from, it is being challenged. The British university itself underwent through some reforms in the late 1960s leading to the emergence of a modular degree system in many universities and, by late 1980s, the abolishing of the binary system of higher education. The external examiner system was considered inhibitory to this system since it involves repeated moderation of examination papers in the year. For instance, a survey discovered that

The external examiner system — on which universities rely to guarantee degree standards — is in crisis as academics refuse to take on "onerous, disgracefully low−paid and thankless" tasks...The system had operated on goodwill in the past but was now breaking down...Many externals were doing the job "superficially" because of lack of time (External Examiner Crisis, in *The Higher: The Times Higher Education Supplement*. Number 1009, March 6, 1992 p. 1).

These difficulties were reflected further in the refusal of many academics to act as external examiners in many British universities; a state of affairs reflected in the fact that

40% of departments had to approach "several" academics before finding one who agreed to act as an external examiner (*The Higher*, March 6, 1992 p. 1).

The reasons for this were the increase in the student population, as well as the increasingly modularity of the British university degree; which meant repeated external examinations. In an analysis of the British situation, which applies quite well to the Nigerian context, Professor Sheldon Rothblatt of Berkeley's Center for Studies in Higher Education has argued that

It would take vast resources and considerable ingenuity, as well as relentless career pressure on busy academics, to combine external examining as it now exists with a fully or heavily modular curriculum, even a form less extreme than in the United States. Resistance to assuming external examiner duties is consistent with the logic of the situation...Abandonment of the system, should that come about, does not mean lower standards across the board. It means different standards by institution and module, an intensification perhaps of what already exists but a striking change in principle nevertheless upon which other changes will inevitably rely ("A big howdy to the modular revolution" *The Higher*, April 3, 1992 p. 14).

The Management of Reform

The course unit system as operated in Nigerian universities from 1988 has a fairly straightforward structure; it is its operation that is immensely complex.[27] As discussed in Chapter 6, the reform of the curricular structure had already started in some universities, while others had reformed the programs only in selected academic units. In Bayero University Kano only the Faculty of Science, and the Department of Geography — shared by both the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Social and Management Sciences — adopted the course unit system in 1978. The other units of the university retained the British structure in their academic programs.

When the NUC directive came in 1988 that *all* the universities must adopt the course unit system, the first task embarked by the faculties operating the old system in Bayero (as well as other universities in the same position) was the conversion of the old degree program into the new *course unit system*. This change over created a transition zone where the faculties tried to reconcile their old programs under new formats, and took over a year (1988 to early 1990). It was only in 1990 that the NUC distributed its *minimum academic standards* guidelines containing the complete list of courses, their credit values and their year distribution which the Commission recommends for all the Nigerian universities. The universities were therefore forced to abandon their programs (the old ones, as well as the hybrid ones being converted) and adopt those formed by the NUC.

Under the new system, students register for the number of credits allowed and take the examinations in the courses at the end of each of the two semesters dividing the session of nine months. When the results are compiled, they go before the two boards of examiners (department and faculty) before finally being approved by the university senate business committee and finally the senate; upon which they are released to the students. Those who fail are expected to carry over that particular failed course, although theoretically, they should be able to retake the course in the next available opportunity. This inevitably means next *session* because due to shortage of staff not all the courses are mounted all year round.

Therefore under the course unit system, with as many as over forty courses offered per department per semester, maintaining the system of examiners where the results of *every* student in every course has to be approved at no less than *four* meetings became a mammoth task that characterizes not only the nature of the reform but also its survival capacity.

However, the most convenient guideline to the evaluation of the *management* of the course unit system in Nigerian universities would be in its stated advantages as given by the National Universities Commission. To recapitulate, these were that the system

> allows a thematic structuring of the programmes of study, i.e. ability to break courses into convenient and manageable concepts;

> allows for the introduction of new degree programmes without necessarily creating new departments;

allows inter−departmental and inter−disciplinary collaboration in curriculum planning, formulation and teaching, and minimizes duplication of courses;

provides students with greater flexibility in taking elective courses from outside their area of specialization, thereby broadening their educational base;

permits a diagnostic approach to students' learning as well as a continuous examination of students in each subject area;

allows students within limits to move at their own pace;

facilitates inter−university transfer, thus enhancing student mobility (NUC 1989 p. 5).

These points provide clusters of analytical frameworks which will be considered in terms of how the system was actually implemented in Nigerian universities. The main points have already been used as an analytical framework in a closer analysis of the structure of the new minimum standards guidelines (see Chapter 7).

Program Structure

The first significant presence of the course unit system in Nigerian universities manifested itself in the fragmentation of the courses. Under the previous British oriented system, students study a single subject — in combination with other subjects for either one, two or three years (see Chapter 3). Although there were sub−divisions within the subjects, they remained monolithic entities. Indeed it is this monolithic specialization that led to the agitation for the course unit system in many universities.

With the course unit system, the individual divisions with each subject were emphasized and each carved out as an independently assessable *course unit*, thus the *course unit system* lexicon given to the system. The method of attaching a credit value to each unit was a decision by the NUC, and no *guidelines* were provided by the NUC about the criteria to be used to determine, for instance, under what circumstances a course was allocated *x.credits*.

During the 1988/89 academic session when the Course Unit System was first initiated on a mass scale, the most striking problem that manifested itself was lack of awareness, on the part of both faculty and students, of what the system entails, especially in academic units that have never encountered the program in any form. Faculties that have been using the system for many years felt that their autonomy was being taken away from them with the "imposition" of the NUC course outlines.

Possibly the greatest problem faced was lack of clear understanding of what the term *credit* is and what it stands for. While most Departmental brochures defined a credit as a grade obtained in an assessment of a programme of 15 contact hours, this was not sufficiently clear to either tutors or their students. A common query was, if a course is allocated three credits, should it be taught three *times* per week per semester, or should it be taught for three *hours* per week per semester? In the former situation the course could be taught over three separate days each of one hour duration. In the latter situation it could be taught on the *same* day for three hours; which ever way, this constituted a problem for class scheduling, especially in situations where the number of students far exceeds the capacity of the lecture theaters. Also introduced into the picture were the considerations of whether a course has a *semester* value in which it is examined at the end of the semester only, or *sessional* value in which it is examined at the session only.

There were no ready answers for this, and by the time the students sorted out their credits from their courses — with very little information serving a guideline on what to do — a lot of time has already passed. As such most of the students rarely get the full 15 contact hours required of a credit in any given semester.

Facilities where students can spread themselves across the courses in the faculty were restricted by the courses selection. Course selection was necessarily regimented and confined since core courses in all faculties became compulsory and in some cases, only courses. Indeed, despite the course unit philosophy attached to the reform, students are still registered as offering *subjects* of study, with all courses clustered into individual subjects, just as in the old system. The consequences of codifying the new course unit system under the old framework meant that the *breadth* philosophy of the system was never achieved. As an American observer noted in the initial stages of the full reform in Bayero University Kano,

The major problem that we anticipate stems from the fact that the “new system” adopted in many instances may just be the old system with a new name. Specifically, one Faculty has maintained a program where all of the courses are compulsory, and these courses are spread out into many 1 credit or at most 2−credit courses. The timetable has been set to manage this, with the assumption that large blocks of students will offer the same set of courses at the same time, and only limited sets of combinations are possible. What will shortly happen, however, is students will fail a variety of these compulsory courses and those responsible for scheduling courses will be faced with the impossible task of trying to accommodate the ensuing bedlam (Jamar 1990 p. 6).

Further, there were restrictions in course combinations between some departments even in the same faculty. For instance, Bayero University Faculty of Education students were not allowed to register for any program in Library Science or Adult Education, even on elective basis — although *all* three departments are in the same Faculty of Education. For example, the Faculty brochure advises students that

Candidates must register for a minimum of 28 credits: at least 8 credits from Education courses; at least 10 credits from each of TWO teaching subjects. Any two of the following teaching subjects (or any additional subject approved by the department) may be selected; *except Political Science and Sociology or Political Science and History, which cannot be combined by Education students* (Bayero University Kano Revised Calendar 1989 p. 232; emphasis added).

The restriction incidentally was brought by the difficulties in scheduling times between the Departments of Education, Political Science and Sociology. Later on, a decision was also made to restrict the number of Education students graduating in Political Science and Sociology because, it was argued at the Departmental level, such courses are not taught at secondary schools where the graduates of Education department are expected to go and teach.

While this sorted out problems of clashes in lecture and examination scheduling *within* the faculty (and very importantly, ensured that much scarce rooms are easily available) it does not provide for much widening of the students' academic experiences within the broad discipline of Education.

Thus with many courses being described as core (or compulsory), failure in such courses led to automatic carry over, a situation where the student is required to re−take the entire course at the next available opportunity. This available opportunity is normally *next session*, rather than *next semester*, as courses are rarely offered twice in the same session. Since all the courses in both semesters in most cases are compulsory core courses, students inevitably ended up with many carry over failed courses. At the initial conception of the course system, it was envisaged that students who fail to pass any course after carrying it over to the next level would be required to withdraw. This drew a stream of protests from students which led to a hasty amendment of this ruling by Bayero University Senate in 1990 and created a situation where students can continue carrying over courses throughout their university stay. This has many consequences which will be discussed eventually.

A particular situation in Bayero University was the scheduling of classes for B.Sc (Education) students which illustrates the problem more vividly. The B.Sc (Education) students of the university have to take courses in both the Faculty of Science and Faculty of Education. The two faculties are located on different campuses about 10 kilometers apart.

The other faculties where Education students take their supplementary courses are also located on the New Campus (Faculties of Arts and Islamic Studies (FAIS), Social and Management Sciences (FSMS). This would have sorted out time−tabling problems in the sense that the largest faculties — Education, Arts, and Social Sciences are located on the same campus. Yet the relatively small number of science education students of the Faculty of Education (average of 60 per year or *level*) makes time−tabling a problem. This is because it became imperative to avoid providing lecture slots in Education where Education students offering courses in FAIS, FSMS and Science have to attend.

Thus although there could be as little as five science education students, scheduling had to take into consideration that such students have to take their science course in a Faculty located ten kilometers away, and with a very unpredictable and insufficient transportation system, it was considered unduly stressful for the students to attend two lectures on the two campus on the same day. An interesting formula was worked out to sort out this.

This involved creating special *Education Days* for each level (year) of Education students, and faculties are requested to skirt Education students on such Education Days. For instance, in 1990 Tuesday was slotted as a Level II Education Day. This means that other Faculties where Education students take courses were required to adjust their lecture time−tables in such way that courses offered to students on Tuesdays are only those that Level II Education students could not take (e.g. faculty specific courses). This arrangement was reluctantly accepted by other faculties even though it makes it easier for the time−tabling officers since they now know which courses to slot for which days. As a result of this formula Monday to Friday became Education Days in the University spread out to Level I (Monday), II (Tuesday), III (Wednesday), IV (Thursday, and Friday afternoons). This became necessary simply because it is the only way the system could be made flexible enough for students offering courses on different campuses. It *does not*, however answer the problems of students, at whatever level, having to *carry over* failed courses of lower levels.

This, however is not without its problems. In the first instance, it over−crowds each day for Education students, with lectures beginning from 8.00 a.m. and stopping at 6.00 p.m. with a break of often less than three hours (the break in lecture often slotted during Muslim prayer times (1−4 p.m.). Although the 6.00 p.m. shift is as well attended as the 8.00 am shift (indeed, due to transportation problems, the early morning shift is not often always a full house), the students by then have become so weary and bored that the essence of the lecture is often lost on most of them.

Thus because of scheduling difficulties, it became virtually impossible to use the same lecture times for examination purposes. This was because in reality, each lecture time presents a time conflict for a carry−over student. Huge chunks of the semester — as often as three weeks — therefore had to be carved out purposely for *examinations* — which in turn means that the length of the semester — especially when the registration, which could extend up to another three weeks is taken into consideration — is actually less than the 15 weeks expected by the NUC guidelines.

The minimum standard guidelines do not solve the problems caused by *core* and elective courses. This was because unless such core and elective courses are within the same faculty, many faculties still retained the old practices of limiting access to some programs either to their own students to students from other faculties. Thus the *flexibility* of the course unit system as a distinct advantage did not emerge effectively so in Nigerian universities. Neither does this arrangement makes for inter−departmental collaboration in curriculum development. In any event, since the curricula being implemented in the Nigerian universities was completely designed by the NUC, there is little room for improvement. Attempts to alter it would certainly have to go through a whole range of administrative procedures that most departments would rather put up with the programs as mandated by the NUC.

The restrictions were also caused by an insufficient number of lecturers to make the system flexible under ideal circumstances, and this is in addition to the tremendous amount of *extra demands* on the faculty. In the first instance, lecturers had to cope with increasingly large numbers of students, and smaller colleague reliance. By late 1980s, the brain drain syndrome has hit the Nigerian higher education so badly that the Nigerian government set up a panel to investigate the phenomena and make recommendations about retaining university lecturers. What emerged was a packet of financial incentives that did little to stem the outward tide from the universities. Lack of manpower to implement the system effectively afflicts all other universities, especially those in the North. In Ahmadu Bello University, for instance,

the situation was so bad that some courses had to be dropped entirely. Statistics and Computer Science have been abandoned while students offering Statistical Inference are now forced to offer Abstract Algebra in its place. The Department of Economics in the university appears to be the worst hit. Between 1988 and 1992, the Department has lost one professor and 11 senior lecturers to the private sector and governmental organisations. Only five permanent lecturers and eight graduate assistants are now left to teach economics ("Universities Under Lock" *Newswatch* Magazine April 13, 1992 p. 21).

In some cases the very same government that maintains the universities is responsible for the brain drain by large scale appointments of university academics to very lucrative civil service posts. With such attractive job prospects, it becomes quite difficult to retain interest in maintaining a behemoth system that is grossly under−funded. Thus as a consequence of the brain drain, there were few lecturers to deal with a large load of students. In the meantime, courses were not reorganized to reflect considerable reduction in the manpower strength of the academic staff of the universities.

Further, although the NUC did acknowledge that running such system is “necessarily expensive”, the extent of the financial commitment required to sustain the system was rather underestimated. As a British expatriate observer in Bayero University Kano, and who was charged with a responsibility for the change−over noted,

The credit−unit system is most successful in a well−resourced system with plenty of staff, buildings and time. In those circumstances it may be an improvement on the previous degree system. All these conditions are lacking at Bayero: insufficient staff to repeat courses in the same session or to run long vacation courses; insufficient lecture theaters to allow timetable flexibility...insufficient trustworthy administrative staff to handle the record−keeping, so this is left to a few competent lecturers; no procedure to allow students to spread their degree programme over several years. The result is that we run into increasing problems of getting students through in 4 years...[Leading to a] a system with few of the advantages of the credit−units, increased record−keeping difficulties, and the lowering of standards by lecturers so as to avoid large numbers of repeaters increasing their already large marking loads (Dr. Brian Hurst, *Personal Communication*, Bristol, England April 14, 1992).

It was in the midst of this over−stretched situation that the course unit system dropped. With it came fragmentation of courses. Whereas in the past both lecturers and students were used to dealing with aggregates of courses as *papers*, especially for assessment purposes (continuous assessment and examinations), now lecturers were required to deal with each course as a single unit carrying a minimum credit value of 1. By the time the aggregated courses of the past were fragmented into the course unit structure, more lecture loads emerged. This meant more continuous assessments to mark; and worse, more examination scripts to mark at the end of each semester. Inevitably, the marking of the continuous assessment assignments almost always catches up with the examination; i.e. by the time the actual examination was taken, lecturers were still busy marking the continuous assessments.

This has an unpleasant side effect in that lecturers became too busy marking continuous assessment records for many courses; and the greater the credit value of the course, the more the continuous assessments (mainly in the form of assignments), as well as the more scripts the lecturer had to mark. This leaves considerably little time for the lecturers to make effective preparations for their lectures — go to libraries and consult books, carry out field research for incorporation into their lectures, and so on. This, of courses, further stagnates their knowledge and makes it difficult to contribute to the development of the field in the form of specific and concrete research findings.

Students, Political Stability and the Course Unit System

The most crucial aspect of the successful implementation of the course unit system in Nigerian universities is timing. This was not acknowledged by the NUC because there appeared to be little co−ordination between the NUC, the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) responsible for conducting school to university transfers, and the universities with regards to the implementation of the course unit system.

Since a fixed number of weeks are expected to be spent in teaching — ideally 15 weeks per semester, which excludes 2 weeks for registration — it becomes imperative that teaching starts at the time it should. This is almost always not the case because of the method of transition from the Nigerian secondary schools to the

university.

The admission pattern of Nigerian students to the universities (see Chapter 5) is through the Joint Matriculation Examination (UME) conducted by the federal Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB). The mechanism of operation of the UME itself has adverse effects on the university programs scheduling. This was because according to the arrangements made for the UME, senior secondary school students (the bulk of those taking it) take the examination *while still* in school, and *before* they take their final year Senior School Certificate Examination which is *mandatory* before they can be admitted to universities. The SSCE is normally taken in June.

Thus the typical timeline route is: students register and take the UME in February. In June they register and take the SSCE. However the results of the UME would not be released until sometime in August; and by then they still have *not* got the results of the SSCE, which is often released in December! So even if they pass the UME, they still *cannot* proceed directly to the university because they would still be waiting for the results of the SSCE. This means therefore they have to reapply for admission in the *following* session after they graduate from the senior secondary school when they would have got the results of *both* the UME and the SSCE. By then the chances of getting admitted have gone down slightly more, since every year the number of applicants keep increasing. One advantage of the extra year they spend waiting for results, though is that if their UME results were not good enough to get them selected into the university of their choice, they could always take it again for the *second time*, this time being more confident that they have their SSCE results ready with them which will facilitate their selection. If their *SSCE* results are not good, however, they have to start the whole circle again.

The “pass mark” for the UME is determined by the universities themselves, though individually, rather than collectively. Thus a certain pass mark acceptable in one university might be considered low in another.

These results were normally sent to the universities in September, and the admitted candidates notified of their admission by October (although due to communication problems, realistically until November or December). What is sent to the universities is not the tape containing the data for the students, but the paper printout — which often looks worse for the wear by the time the final selections were made, normally by just ticking off the names, followed by making copies of the names ticked to ensure that those ticked are those actually sent admission letters by the JAMB. The list of those selected is sent back to the JAMB in Lagos where the students are issued admission letters. This was a process that takes considerable time, and by the time students actually receive the admission letters, the semester had already well started. By the time they report, register and start lectures, half of the semester had already gone. A typical illustration of this situation is vividly noted by *West Africa* (1992) which reported that

There is a big confusion over the academic calendar for new university entrants (1991/92). Two weeks ago, some university authorities were preparing for first semester examinations while thousands of prospective students who should be taking part had not even received their admission letters from the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board. Many of the universities only opened their doors to new entrants in the first week of January [1992]. But already, some are talking of setting the first semester examinations (*West Africa* 27 January−2 February 1992 p. 156).

The universities blame JAMB for sending them the students too late, and JAMB blamed the universities for taking too long to select the admitted students. As Dr. Muhammad Sakiwa Abdulrahman, the JAMB Registrar explained

As far as JAMB is concerned, we have never failed in conducting examinations on the date set for them; we have never failed to release results on target dates. What happens after the release of results is a function of each and every university. For example, this year [1992] we said the results will be available at the end of August, the results were released as scheduled, but the universities were not ready as a result of the ASUU (Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities) strike which meant that the system was completely blocked because we cannot go ahead and admit without the due reference and the participation of each of the universities. Our target was that by the end of September, the bulk of the admissions would have been done but now it has extended beyond that....Each of the universities also sets its own timetable and it is so chaotic and the problem begins even at the university level (*Our Educational Problems,* an interview with the JAMB Registrar, Dr. M. S. Abdulrahman, in *Newswatch* Magazine, November 30, 1992 p. 48).

Consequently it is only the students who are caught in the cross−fire. Thus an effective and well worked out co−ordination between the universities, the National Universities Commission, the JAMB, and the West African Examinations Council (in charge of the SSCE) and JAMB would have created a common frame for actions and perhaps provide a more seamless transition mechanism. If a second reform of the Nigerian university system is to be initiated, then obviously the transition mechanism between the schools to the university would have to be re−analyzed; for problems of implementation of the course unit system may have more to do with this procedure than operational peculiarities in the universities.

However an even more inhibitory factor to the effective implementation and management of the course unit system in Nigerian universities deals with the volatile way in which national political processes interfere and interrupt the smooth running of the universities, and consequently affect the extent to which the semester instruction could be given to the students. The interruptions are caused by both student and staff strikes. According to Mustapha (1994), the peak phase of student strikes in Nigerian universities was between 1981 to 1990. Each time a strike occurs, the university affected is closed. The decade started with the University of Ife (Obafemi Awolowo University) students boycotting classes in January 1981 to protest the university senate's decision to extend the session to December so as to make up for days lost due to late resumption.

In February 1981, the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria was also closed for some weeks when the students protested what they claimed to be the high rate of corruption, poor catering services and shortage of accommodation. This in turn also led to the closure of Bayero University, Kano because the students had expressed desire to go on "solidarity strike" on the behalf of their colleagues in Zaria. In March 1981, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka was also closed due to student rioters protesting poor facilities and services in the refectories, classes and hostels.

In 1984 many Southern universities, especially Universities of Lagos, Benin, Jos, Ibadan, Ife, Ilorin, Nsukka and Federal University of Technology, Enugu were closed because the students complied with the directives of National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) which was protesting against the reintroduction of fees in educational institutions, particularly post primary schools.

International politics also provide a convenient vehicle for student protests, leading to university closures in Nigeria. In 1986 the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria was closed due to the student protests on U.S. air strikes on Libya and their demand for the removal of the Nigerian Minister of External Affairs over his comments on the incident. Similarly, Bayero University Kano was closed for over ten days following violent student protests over the American involvement of the Gulf Crisis in January 1991. Similarly, as Mustapha (1994 p. 90) further noted,

In 1987, the second week of March witnessed a violent clash between members of the Muslim Student Society (MSS) and some Christian students that led to the closure of Bayero University, Kano. In April (1987), the Federal Government's decision to have some students suspended for their role in the 1986 ABU Zaria nationwide solidarity protests led to students boycott of lectures and demonstration in the University of Lagos. Commemoration rallies were held in Benin, Jos, and Nsukka in May (1987)...In the same month of May the University of Ilorin was added to the casualty of closed universities when its students staged peaceful demonstration in the campus demanding for the provision of water, electricity and other facilities.

The year in which the course unit system was introduced on a system−wide basis did not fare particularly well with regards to smooth teaching in the campuses. In April 1988 students all over the country protested the government removal of petroleum subsidy. These riots spilled over to May 1988 when further violent demonstrations were held by students against the government's introduction of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP). Nearly all the institutions of higher learning in the universities were closed in May 1988. The Government announced that some institutions were to open in August, others in October and the rest to remain closed for a year. This decision was heavily criticized, eventually forcing the government to order the opening of all the institutions before the end of the year. Interestingly, in June 1988 the University of Benin was also the first university to be closed down because the students protested the decision of the university to cancel resit examinations on the grounds that such examination was incompatible with the newly introduced credit system. As Fabunmi (1990 p. 114) noted,

It remains to add that most of the major student crisis have led to the closure of the University either by the Institutions or by Head of State. The result is that academic programmes were often disrupted, so much so that the quality of degrees awarded during the period is not unlikely to have been adversely affected.

In Bayero University, Kano strikes and subsequent school closures take on a more unusual turn; they are mainly among students and on either religious or moral issues such as preventing female students from visiting male students in their hostels. Specific incidences of closure of the university in recent years are as indicated below:

CLOSURE	RESUMPTION	AGENT
March 13, 1987	April 5, 1987	Students
May 27, 1987	July 8, 1987	Students
April 17, 1988	July 18, 1988	Students
February 6, 1992	February 20, 1992	Students

May 26, 1992	June 14, 1992	ASUU
July 17, 1992	September 7, 1992	ASUU
February 1, 1993	March 23, 1993	NASU[28]
May 3, 1993	October 7, 1993	AUT/ASUU

As a result of a closure of July to September 1992, the 1992/93 academic session actually started on January 11, 1993, instead of October 1992. On May 3, 1993 the newly created Academic Union of Teachers (AUT) embarked on a nation−wide strike lasting several weeks to back up demands earlier agreed with, but later abrogated by, the Federal Military Government. However, on Thursday May 6 1993, the Nigerian military authorities, mainly in reaction to this strike by university teachers, issued a decree titled *The Teaching Etc. (Essential Services) Decree 1993*, which puts education as an essential service within the meaning of Trade Dispute (Essential Service) Act of 1977. Under the new decree,

where a member of staff continues or persists in industrial action for more than one week, he will be deemed to have resigned his appointment. [The decree was aimed at] checking industrial actions calculated to disrupt the smooth running of teaching or educational services in any of the tertiary institutions...Our children go to school for one month in nine months. I am not saying the academic staff are not entitled to air their grievances, but I feel that dialogue is the answer. And our children should not be made pawn [sic] in the chess board. (The Nigerian Secretary of Justice, quoted in *Vanguard* Saturday May 8, 1993 p. 6).

The Union directed its members to return to classes only after the Federal Military Government has conceded to some of its demands, including un−banning the Union[29]. The universities resumed to complete the first semester of 1992/93 on October 7, 1993. The individual universities were asked to work out the modalities for completing the session. Thus in Bayero University Kano, for instance, the 1992/93 academic session actually ended in March 1994, and the 1993/94 session started in April 1994 — creating a stilted school calendar that will take years to return to “normal” timings.

Even with the observation of the fact that the school calendar for the 1993/94 was severely disrupted nation−wide by strikes, early in 1994 many universities in Nigeria were closed again due to various reasons. In January 1994 the University of Lagos was closed down for a number of weeks as a result of clash between conventional students and their fellow colleagues who were members of “secret cults” on the campus. Such cult societies normally existed to provide similar range of social services like the Greek letter fraternities on U.S. campuses. In the Nigerian university environment, however, they resort to more esoteric and often gruesome practices often reminiscent of bizarre primitive rituals.

A month later, precisely on February 28, 1994, the University of Abuja students went on rampage of wanton destruction against the university, destroying the Vice−Chancellor’s office in the process and leading to temporary closure of the university for some weeks. And in March 1994, clashes between Muslim student “extremists” and their more “liberal” counterparts led to the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria being closed for weeks to restore order on the campus; about 20 students were injured in the two days of fighting between the students. Similarly, in April 1994

almost all the institutions of higher learning in Ogun State are shut. The University of Agriculture, Abeokuta has had its academic activities paralaysed due to the withdrawal of services by its ASUU branch. The teachers were protesting lack of rules and regulations for the institution, a similar case as University of Abuja....However, there are indications that if the closures and strikes continue for a considerably long time, some of these institutions may risk losing a session...Some institutions are yet to conclude the 1992/93 session almost six months into what should have been the 1993/94 academic year ("Again Tremors in the Campuses", *The (Nigerian) Guardian,* Tuesday April 12, 1994 p. 28)

The protests were endless, and every year one reason or other was sufficient to ignite teachers' and students' protests — often leading to deaths in clashes either among the students or between students and security agents. The effect of this was lost time and inability to process admissions, results and conduct teaching within the proscribed period of time. It calls to question the ability of the system to sustain an extremely fragmented, labor intensive and time conscious learning evaluatory mechanism like the course unit system under these political circumstances.

Examinations, Tradition and the Course Unit System

Closely connected with the fragmentation of the subjects into self contained courses was the increased burden of examinations. During the 1988 graduation ceremony of the Bayero University Kano (held in 1989), the Vice−Chancellor of the University announced what was the first clearly enunciated policy concerning the Course Unit System:

I am happy to announce the successful take−off of the Course Unit and Semester Systems this academic year [1988/89]. The Course Unit System has several advantages especially for students. It...reduces the rate at which students fall casualty to that dreaded monster, examination. Under the system, students repeat course, not years of study. From the point of view of standards, the system ensures uniformity of the criteria by which courses within the University and between universities may be assessed. The Semester System, which goes hand in hand with the Course Unit System, ensures that students do not accumulate all their examinations to the end of the year. By splitting the academic year into two equal halves, it gives students the opportunity to study many more courses than was possible under the old dispensation (Graduation Day Speech of the Bayero University Kano Vice Chancellor, February 11, 1989).

And yet under the same system, students still fall casualty to examinations. This was because while under the subject system students would take not more than five examinations per session on average, under the course unit system they take as many as ten. This is a definite characteristic of the course unit system, no matter its operating climate. For instance, a former student at the University of Ibadan recalled how the increase in the number of examinations affected student life when the course unit system was introduced in Ibadan in the early 1970s:

The introduction of this system easily killed campus life at University of Ibadan. It became difficult for students to spare time for politics, sports, social events and club activities. The new pattern was: hall of residence−classroom−cafeteria−library−classroom−hall of−residence−sleep. Hitherto, students would defer serious studies until June but now, it was examination−consciousness all year round. In the first full year of the course unit system, many candidates for Student Union offices were returned unopposed, since no one had the time for politics (Laotan, 1981 p. 231).

The situation remained the same in 1989. With each course being an independent unit, it comes complete with its examination and course assessment. Failure in each examination was as much a nightmare for the students as for the tutors and the scheduling officers. This was because contrary to the classic tenets of the course unit system, not all the courses are available for retaking in the following semester. This led to the dreaded practice of *carry over*, under which students are required to take the course they failed at the next available opportunity, which in most cases, was the *next session* rather than the *next* semester because the courses are not repeated each semester; rather they are taught *once* a session.

Interestingly, while the grading system was completely changed with the course unit system, the examination system retained elements of its former orientation. For instance, the *resit* examination where a student is given a chance to retake failed papers after the sessional examination metamorphosed into *supplementary examination* in the universities where the course unit system was already in operation before its legislative introduction in 1988. Also the *external examiner* system where, based on inherited British tradition, the examination questions written by the lecturers are submitted to another lecturer at another university for moderation, is also retained. The NUC banned the resit examinations in its minimum standards guidelines by stating that

In view of the fact that Resit Examinations are incompatible with course credit system, it is approved that they should be abolished in the Nigerian university system (NUC 1989b p. 7).

The external examiner system was retained, even though some universities — e.g. Lagos, and Bayero — have indicated to the NUC that the concept is irrelevant under the course credit system. Nevertheless, the issue of resit continued to be a characteristic feature of Nigerian higher education well after the reforms. Three years after the NUC directive on resit examinations, some universities — examples include the Obafemi Awolowo University (Ife), and the University of Jos — still conduct the resit examinations, prompting the NUC to issue out a circular in August 1991 asking the universities to stop conducting such examinations (*The Guardian* (Lagos) August 11, 1991 p. A3). The reasons given for abrogating the resit examinations were that first it was incompatible with the course unit system — as noted in the original directive above; and secondly, the resit examinations were claimed to be expensive as they involve all the procedures of semester examinations. And to prevent any possible student incident over the resit, the Bayero University Kano issued a circular to all its students stating that:

in line with the approved National Minimum Academic Standards and Government decision on Course Unit System, Resit examinations are considered no longer relevant. Attention of all student is therefore drawn to

the fact that *with effect from 1990/91 session*, resit examinations have been abolished by the University. This is in line with an NUC circular to that effect fully endorsed by the University Senate at its 166th Meeting (*Bayero University Official Bulletin*, Vol XV No 5 Friday January 31, 1992 p. 2, including emphasis).

Prior to this, in the embryonic stages of the reform, the university's regulations provided for a resit examination under certain conditions. For instance, the examinations regulations of the Bayero University Kano (1990) stipulated that

Only students who require less than 12 credits of the highest level courses to graduate would be given Resit opportunity (Bayero University *General Examination Regulations for First Degrees, Diploma and Certificate Programmes* Revised, 1990 p. 28).

With the 1992 directives in force, this facility was therefore closed down. This was more so since it was assumed that under the course credit system, courses should be available *all year round*, making it easy for those who failed a course the first time to repeat it at the earliest opportunity. However, there may be a problem in this, as acknowledged in the Bayero University *General Examination Regulations* where it was stated:

A student can repeat failed courses in the following session or semester *provided it is offered by the Faculty* and the student can schedule his or her time−table accordingly (The General Examination Regulations 1990 p. 28, including emphasis).

Thus students who failed any course in any Nigerian university are expected to *carry over* the course to the next available opportunity "provided that the total number of credit units carried during that semester does not exceed 24, and the Grade Points earned at all attempts shall count towards the CGPA." (NUC 1989b p. 7). In any event, the minimum number of years to be spent on a standard undergraduate education was streamlined at four years,

and shall not exceed an additional 50% of the duration of the programme if he/she fails to graduate within the minimum number of years. For a programme of 4 years duration, a student shall not spend more than 6 years in completing the program (NUC 1989b p. 9).

The heavy emphasis on examinations in a fragmented system such as the course unit system in Nigerian environment has other unpleasant side−effects, the most noticeable of which was the rising incidence of examination malpractices. With such societal and parent pressures to succeed in the examinations and obtain jobs, students resort to any means necessary to ensure they have passed the examinations. A *Newswatch* Magazine case−file on examination malpractices in Nigerian institutions of higher learning

revealed a sharp increase over the years, especially immediately after the introduction of the reforms. Specific incidences included dismissal in June 1991 of 24 students of the University of Calabar, and 32 students at the University of Jos for examination malpractices. In mid April 1991, the University of Lagos dismissed 54 students for the same crime. As Newswatch reported,

Some few years ago, examination malpractices were rare and isolated occurrences in Nigerian universities. Now it is, from every indication, the norm. The statistics in University of Jos, for instance, tells a story. In the 1988/89 session, only three students were suspended and a student warned. The following session, the number rose from four the previous year to 52. Among them, four were expelled, 47 suspended and three warned. In the current session (1991/92), 36 students have already been punished, while more than double that number of cases are pending in disciplinary committees. Among the 36 so far punished this year (1991/92), 23 were expelled, nine times more than the number expelled in the last three years (*Newswatch* Magazine case−file on Examination Malpractices, July 1, 1991 p. 15).

Innovative Communications: Information Technology and the Course Unit System

The course unit system came to Nigerian universities with all its accessories: grade point, grade point average and cumulative grade point average. It also came accompanied with increased bureaucratic procedures, and administrative chores. The demands of such fragmented system are reflected in a consideration of the structural modalities of the British modular system. Sheil (1993 p. 26), for instance, observed that

Modularisation relies heavily on administrative systems and infrastructure to achieve its effect. For instance, in the modular system the ease of movement between institutions and coulees of various types and on various levels calls for the existence of information systems capable of recording and indeed facilitating such movement.

In 1988, at the beginning of the reform in Nigeria, calculation of the Grade Point Average (GPA) and other associated concepts caused considerable problems because not all staff were clear on what a GPA is, how it can be calculated, and most importantly *who* should be responsible for it, especially as it seemed rather too administrative. And there were certainly no computers to help in the process. At one stage an impasse was reached between staff and administration in Bayero University. The faculty insisted that such administrative chores should be the responsibility of either the university administration or the Registrar’s office. The university administration countered that the faculty did not have complaints about doing such tasks in the old system. Moreover, security considerations makes it necessary to ensure that only *internal examiners* (i.e. all academic faculty) should handle student results.

Although a series of directives were issued from the university administration regarding the importance of these records, no detailed tutoring on how it could be done was provided by the universities, or the NUC which initiated the whole process. This, perhaps not unexpectedly, caused considerable problem in that accurate student records became difficult to keep, and tracking of students achievement even more difficult to maintain.

The whole situation would have gone quite well if before the reform an administrative support unit is established, and comprising of academic faculty to process the system on a permanent basis in each university. Rather belatedly, the NUC created the office of *Director of Academic Planning* in every university in 1990. Interestingly, Academic Planning, as a division of the NUC was established in 1975 after the NUC became a statutory body. Of its 13 listed functions, only one dealt with *helping to set up Minimum Academic Standards for the academic programmes currently being taught in the Universities.* (NUC 1992 p. 197). The rest of the functions dealt with either gathering statistics or deciding when and how to dole out capital grants to the universities. Consequently, when the post of the Director of Academic Planning was amplified in 1990, the office, under pressure from NUC as well as the World Bank, became quagimired in collecting masses of data on student and staff strengths, creating master plans for expanding or curtailing the university buildings, determining the reading requirements of the faculty and libraries and procuring furniture to grace the offices of the various administrative officers of the universities that it became ineffective in providing a specific support function in the implementation of a radical reform such as the course unit system.

In the universities, one of the first problems with regards to course evaluation faced was *carry over results*. While it is relatively easy to keep track of results for a students in their current level (i.e. year), it becomes more tricky when the same student has a string of courses to carry over in lower levels — and the higher the current level of the student, of course, the more the possibilities of such lower level carry−overs. Keeping tracks of all these courses and results was problematic. For the student, in trying to cope with a lecture time−table that schedules a current year course with a lower level carry over course at the same time, and in different places either on the same campus, or on separate campuses creating severe time conflicts. The choice was inevitably easy for the students to make: they almost always forego the carry over classes and attend the current year class. During counseling discussions with most of such affected students, they provided similar rationale for foregoing the carry over classes — namely that they were already familiar with the material, and can therefore afford to give it a miss.

It was also problematic for the examination officers who have to keep track of every course the student registered and sat for. While students are required to provide such information at the beginning of the sessional registration exercise (there was no facility for registrations each semester), getting carry over results for the students is also problematic; in some cases because students were not aware they were required to carry over any course, while in other cases students were not sure whether a missing result on the result sheets (and there were many missing results) was caused by either a failure on the part of the student in the course, or a failure on the part of the examination officers to record the result for the appropriate course.

To sort out these issues, in Bayero University Kano, for instance, the Department of Education grouped the lecturers as level coordinators where each lecturer became responsible for a certain group of students for each level, by keeping comprehensive records of the students in all courses — both *regular* and *carry over* — at each level. This made it possible for a lecturer to concentrate on a group of students — the number allocated to each lecturer being determined by the total number of students at that level — and keep tracks of their records right from entry into the university until graduation. The lecturer also became responsible for all categories of calculations for each student at all the levels. This, in the absence of any specific computer program to enable doing this, turned out to be the best course of action to the initial strategy where the *examination officer* of the department was expected to do all the record keeping.

With this zonation of students into levels, and the student records left in the hands of the level coordinators, series of forms had to be designed for the appropriate entries to be made. Since the NUC did not produce a standard form at the beginning of the reform process which will be uniformly used in all the faculties, each University was left to its own devices, and as such a number of forms were designed in different ways by different Departments in the same University — yet serving the same purpose: that of keeping as accurate as possible student records. Such lack of central co−ordination was not necessarily desirable, but at least a degree of autonomy was maintained by each Department. The diversity became a problem only to the

members of the university Senate who were faced by a bewildering array of different result formats during the final senate approval of examination results.

The time gap between the semesters is normally two to three weeks (depending on whether there are any religious or national holidays in the interval which often go beyond just the day of the event), and all of it was normally taken up with marking, recording, collating and preparing the results for submission to the various university examinations Boards and eventually to the Senate for approval. By the time the results were ready for posting on the students notice board, it is well into the middle of the *second semester*. On the average about 40% of the university term time is spent by the lecturers on marking assignments and scripts, collating and synthesizing the results.

And because the results are all entered manually on numerous forms, another 10% of the time is spent on verifying missing results, or rectifying incorrect result entries against courses for students *before* the results are submitted to a departmental meeting for approval.

The actual semester examinations are normally taken — in theory, but never practically done, in the first three years of reform — 15 weeks after the commencement of the semester. The semester examination time is usually dreaded by every examination officer, not least because of the sheer complexity of manually preparing an examination time table with numerous possibilities of clashes between the courses in the same level and across the levels. The spread of the students amongst faculties created a situation where examination and lecture time−tables were to be produced in a way that avoids clashes either within the Departments in the same faculty, or with other departments in other faculties.

However, the clashes were brought about because students carrying over courses from one Level (i.e. year) to another, find that they have been slotted to take two or more totally different examinations, in different departments at the same time. To illustrate, it is very common to find a Level IV History student carrying over a Level III course in the Department of English, as well as a Level II course in the Department of Education. It is of course, not uncommon for all his three courses to be scheduled for examination at the *same time*.

During examination time−tabling, there is no way the individual examination officers could keep track of who is carrying over what course without a global view of the entire registration scheme. This is because registration lists are never accurate because many students carrying over courses from lower levels often fail to register their carry over courses. And even if the students do register such courses student attendance list does not reflect the accurate number of students who actually registered for such courses. This is because due to possible clashes with other courses, students inevitably prefer to attend their current level courses than their carry over courses. It is only during tests, or assignments that lower level classes get full attendance.

And since examination time−tables for each Department or Faculty are designed *independent of* other Departments (although the allocation of examination times for the whole university are done collectively at a committee level), or Faculties, the end product of course, is that within half an hour of the time the first draft of the examination time−table is published on the notice board, streams of students troop to the examination officers in all departments reporting clashes. These clashes are normally sorted out by making adjustments on either times or dates of the affected courses leading to more clashes. To sort out the issue, unorthodox examination times became imposed into the system. Examinations then start as early as 8.00 am and finish as late as 12.00 am of the following day. This is because it was discovered that by moving courses that clash to unusual hours (after 7.00 p.m.) a considerable number of the clashes will be reduced. But there was a considerable anxiety in giving out examinations beyond 6.00 p.m. because of the erratic nature of electricity supply. In 1991 the Bayero University Kano authorities had to make a special arrangement with the local power utility company to ensure a regular power supply for at least two weeks at night to the sectors which included the campus, just so that the examinations can be conducted at night.

To minimize examination clashes, the University Examination Time−Table Committee adopted a formula where each Faculty was allocated a number of *priority days* during the examination period. This meant that for about three days, a specific faculty would have priority in its scheduling of examinations. If any clashes occur between the courses of that faculty and those of another, then the other, non−priority faculty must shift its examinations to either its own priority day, or to other days.

All these point to a very obvious and crucial issue: the need for a well developed information management system to handle the course unit system. For despite the complexity of the system as operated in Nigeria, it remained a manual, and consequently labor intensive process in the first five years of its introduction. The needs for a well developed management information system with regards to the record keeping in the course unit system were acknowledged even a less complex system such as the modular system as operated in some British institutions. In providing a case study of the management of the modular system in Oxford Polytechnic, Coghill (1989 p. 117) noted that

The record−keeping and office procedures implications of the Modular Course when it started in 1973 with an intake of 75 students were modest but have since grown with the Course. There is now the need to keep track of thousands of individual student module programmes, termly timetables and assessments and of applications for places across hundreds of field combinations. This growth would have been strangled by the paperwork involved if new computerized systems had not been introduced and *continuously developed*. The foresight of the Course founders, in using a computer for a range of student records applications *from the very first intake*, set the pace for subsequent information technology developments. That original range was surprisingly wide and included personalized student records, timetables and class lists (emphases added).

With these in place, it became relatively easier to handle the fragmentation of the programs introduced under the Modular Course System in Oxford Polytechnic. African countries taking on the course unit system without providing the necessary information management substratum to support the upper level complexity of the system were forced to revise the system almost immediately after introducing it. For instance,

At the National University of Lesotho an earlier effort to combine aspects of British academic requirements with a modified academic credit system created a hybrid program that proved cumbersome. Students were hindered from undertaking a coherent program of studies, and faculty time was absorbed in administration and paper−work at the expense of tutorial and research activities. The system is now being revised (Saint 1992 p. 81). (See also Regel 1992 for fuller discussions of the strengths and weaknesses of the credit unit system and its applicability in developing countries).

Other countries were more cautious in their approach — getting to the course unit system in a more systematic manner. An illustration of this is the strategy taken by the newly created Bouake campus of the Université Nationale de Côte d'Ivoire whose structure included full incorporation of the credit system through the use of common core curricula and class across disciplinary courses for first year students, establishment of computerized management information system for student records, decentralization of some management responsibilities to faculty and department levels and so on (Saint 1992).

The first steps towards the introduction of Management Information Systems (MIS) to handle the management of the course unit system, among other things, in the Nigerian universities were taken in 1987 at a joint seminar held by both the National Universities Commission and the British Council, which has suddenly developed interest in getting more involved in Nigerian higher education beside providing few "technical aid" sponsorships for Nigerian academics to spend anything from two weeks to nine months studying at a British university. Naturally, since the British were to provide the computers, there were expectations that the computers to handle the system in all Nigerian universities were to be from British companies.

At the joint NUC−British Council MIS seminar in 1987, a clear statement of aims and objectives were formulated with regards to the function of the MIS in Nigerian universities, and which include:

1. to develop a viable computerized MIS as to maximise the effective use of resources.

2. the need for modern data approach to University management practices;

3. it is envisaged that it will assist management and indeed operating personnel, by producing timely and accurate information, not only to plan and control present and future operations, but also to pinpoint potential problems that need to be rectified.

The objective of the (National Universities) Commission in embarking on the MIS project include the following:

a) to standardise the system of obtaining reports and statistical information from the various universities on:

i. students

ii. staff

iii. financial matters

iv. library

a) to record such information on diskettes or tapes at the user universities and send the diskettes or tapes to the NUC for budgetting, information storage, analysis and retrieval purposes.

b) to ensure that such information are accurate and timely

c) to organise information for planning, budgetting and decision making.

d) to help the Universities put in place effective management system and improved utilization of resources. (NUC 1992: *Address by the Executive Secretary Professor Idris Abdulkadir at the Opening Ceremony of the University MIS Workshops of the Nigerian Universities at the Lomay International Hotel, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria on April 27, 1992*, p. 2−3).

In 1989 the MIS project for Nigerian universities took off officially. The NUC in conjunction with British Overseas Development Administration (ODA) consultants selected four pilot universities for the MIS project (the University of Lagos, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Federal University of Technology, Minna and the University of Ilorin) and a workshop for academic planners, bursars of Nigerian universities was held at the University of Lagos. In March 1990 a special Technical Committee on Software Design and Development was established to design the programs to be used for the MIS project. The ODA organized a training program on University MIS in the U.K. for one MIS Chairman from each of the pilot universities from January to April 1992. The whole idea behind the MIS therefore was to network all Nigerian universities eventually using Personal Computers ("386−486 models"; NUC 1992 p. 17). "By the time all Nigerian universities are networked to a central hub possibly via satellite, the gains of the system will be so overwhelming as to overshadow in no small measure, the cost of its development, installation and commissioning.: (NUC 1992 p. 64).

It is of course interesting that inspiration for the MIS to manage the Nigerian variant of the distinctly U.S. course unit system should come from Britain, rather than the United States. Further, the *support services* needed to manage the MIS even within the universities, especially with regards to effective communication networks, have not been established while all these grand plans were being debated — at workshops. Indeed it is instructive that the report of the team sent to the U.K. by the ODA on MIS in British universities acknowledged the evolutionary, incremental and utility support function of the British industry and commerce by noting that:

All British universities have efficient information systems which they have developed over the years out of their own initiatives. Their computers are linked to the Universities Central Council on Admissions[30](UCCA) computer by telephone cable and this facilitates the updating of applicant's records at both ends simultaneously by either party. In addition to efficient and large central computer systems, many have administration computers dedicated to payroll, personnel data and students' records (NUC 1992 *Pilot Stage Implementation of MIS in Nigerian Universities: Concepts, Perceptions, Problems and Prospects* p. 4).

The minimum infrastructural facilities for MIS were outlined by the Report of the Chairmen of the Pilot Universities MIS as below:

Computers	20 of 386 machines with printers for each pilot university
Software	WP51, Lotus 123, Dbase III+, dBase IV
Training	Prepilot training including data collection techniques
Security	Secured housing against fire, theft, damage
Storage	Storage in dust−proof environment
Support	User−support services

Maintenance	Central maintenance depot
Power supply	Backup power plant

The chairmen further noted that

In suggesting these requirements, careful thoughts have been given to the reality of the compelling nature and risks of introducing MIS in the Nigerian university environment in terms of meeting the challenges of large data requirements; the extensive nature of data sourcing such as in cases where some universities have two or more campuses and nation−wide extension programmes and public functions; user expectations in satisfying their information requirements vis−à−vis the usefulness of an MIS may be seen by some as an expensive venture that should succeed; as well as the need for a sound initial and continuing commitment and management support (NUC 1992 p. 10 of Pilot Chairmen's Report).

The MIS project was to be partly externally funded by the British Council and the Overseas Development Administration. At the preparatory MIS workshop held for Registrars, Academic Planners, and Bursars in April 1992, the workshop resolved that

1. The computerised MIS project is desirable and timely and should be introduced in all Universities, Federal and States.

2. The NUC should provide a minimum of four (4) out of the ultimate twenty (20) computers for all the Federal Universities at the initial stage of MIS. The NUC should request the proprietors of other universities to procure same for their institutions and assist these Universities to obtain external funding to do so.

3. All Universities should make budgetary allocations for MIS as from 1992/93. All participating universities must ensure local input into the project is provided as a reflection of their commitment to MIS (NUC, 1992 p. 21)

Thus although all Universities in the country must conform to the NUC minimum academic standards guidelines, yet the NUC would not provide MIS support for non−Federally established universities, even though they will also be accredited and graded on the same basis as the Federally funded universities. The MIS project, as envisaged by the NUC has a significantly wide scope, as stated in the Workshop proceedings,

Initially, computerised MIS in Nigerian universities should start with a few stand alone Personal Computers (PCs) without networking, to deal essentially with students, staff and financial records. It is noted that one of the main problems with this arrangement, will be the slow rate of input and retrieval of data. Also, inputting of data at different locations could lead to inaccurate output. Centralised data preparation was proposed to address the above problem, and the need for back up was emphasised (NUC 1992 p. 22).

In a general circular to Nigerian Vice−Chancellors (NUC/MIS/2/92 of September 2, 1992), the Chairman of the NUC Management Information System (MIS) provided the first outline of the proposed structure of MIS units in Nigerian universities. All this flurry of activity was being undertaken at a time when the course unit system, for which the MIS was to provide the vital support function, had already been in operation officially since 1988. Up to mid 1994, there has not been a system−wide implementation of the project in all the Nigerian universities, nor have the computers been provided. It is clear, therefore that if there is to be a more effective management of and implementation of the course unit system, then a more interactive approach to data processing — taking into consideration the Nigerian environment — should have been a first priority in the reform of the Nigerian university system to a credit system.

However, even in this development, outside political forces quickly emerged as stumbling block to the effective usage of the MIS in the management of the credit unit system of curricular evaluation in Nigerian Universities. This was because since the computers were to be provided by the British Council and the ODA, both organizations, in possible response to the attitude of the Government, balked at continuing the project in mid 1994 to register British displeasure at the controversial annulment of the June 12th 1993 Presidential election results by the Nigerian Military Authorities, and the subsequent sustainment of Military rule in Nigeria.

Coda to the Reform Movement: The Accreditation of Nigerian University Curricula

Having introduced the course unit system as well as minimum academic standards (MACS, as the NUC prefers to acronym them) in thirteen recognized disciplines in Nigerian universities, the next stage for the NUC was an accreditation exercise. To aid in the accreditation, the NUC produced a *Manual of Accreditation Procedures for Academic Programmes of Nigerian Universities* (NUC 1989a) which provided detailed objectives of the exercise. Copies of the document were sent to all the Vice−Chancellors of Nigerian universities for distribution to each department in the institution.

The exercise, curiously enough, seemed to be aimed at determining the extent to which the universities conform to the MACS guidelines, rather than how they are managing the reforms, although a significant part of the accreditation focused attention on the resourcing needed to implement the MACS expectations — every aspect of the accreditation exercise seems to emphasize this. It is significant that these expectations were not in place *before* the accreditation began. As stated by the NUC (1989a p. 3)

The objectives of the accreditation of academic programmes in Nigerian universities are to:

(a) ensure that at least the provisions of the Minimum Academic Standards documents are attained, maintained and enhanced.

(b) assure employers and other members of the community that Nigerian graduates of all academic programmes have attained an acceptable level of competency in their areas of specailisation; and

(c) certify to the international community that the programmes offered in Nigerian Universities are of high standards and their graduates are adequate for employment and for further studies.

The NUC also provided three levels of accreditation of Nigerian undergraduate degree programs as distinct categories. These were:

Full Accreditation: This shall be granted to any degree or other academic programme that has satisfied the Minimum Academic Standards (MACS). Full Accreditation shall be granted for a period of *six (6) academic sessions* with a mid−term appraisal after three years. After the six academic sessions, there shall be a Re−accreditation visit.

Interim Accreditation: This shall be granted to any degree or other academic programme that has minor deficiencies that must be rectified within a stipulated period. Interim Accreditation shall be granted for a period of not more than *two (2) academic sessions.*

Denied Accreditation: Denied Accreditation shall apply to any degree or other academic programme which has failed to satisfy the approved Minimum Academic Standards (MACS). Request for Re−Visitation for the purpose of Accreditation shall come from the university concerned (NUC 1989a p. 5 including emphasis).

Each of these levels of accreditation has legal implications for the Nigerian university system. According to the NUC, if a program is *denied* accreditation, the Commission will inform the appropriate Vice−Chancellor of this and the reasons for the denial, and the steps to be taken to bring the program "*up to the Minimum Academic Standards* required for Accreditation" (NUC 1989a p. 9, emphasis added). When this decision is communicated, the university should then stop admitting students for that program with effect from the next admission exercise, and no more funding will be provided for the program. The general public will also be informed by the NUC about the denied status of the program.

Programs granted *interim accreditation* which fail to rectify any identified deficiencies within the stipulated maximum period of time will automatically be converted to denied status at the end of the period and suffer the same fate, although during the period of interim accreditation the university may continue to admit

students into the program affected. However,

Any student that graduates within 2 years after the programme would have been granted Interim or Denied Accreditation, should not be denied recognition of his/her certificate (NUC 1989a p. 10).

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the accreditation was the criteria used by the NUC to determine what should constitute an acceptable degree program in Nigerian universities. The criteria were nine, although two stand out. These were: *philosophy and objective of the program to be accredited*, and *curriculum*. With regards to the philosophy of the program to be accredited, the NUC *Manual of Accreditation* expects that

there shall be evidence that the programme to be accredited has clearly defined philosophy and objectives. Panel members will judge the quality of the programme in terms of the efforts being made by the University to achieve the stated philosophy and objectives of the programme. *The minimum expected will be similar to those laid down in the NUC approved Minimum Academic Standard (MACS) for the programme* (NUC 1989a p. 10, emphasis added).

Similar expectations of conformity with the NUC designed MACS guidelines were also stated with regards to the *curriculum* of the program to be accredited where the *Manual* states that

The curriculum of the programme to be accredited should be adequate to prepare practitioners at an appropriate level in the particular field. It should include adequate theoretical knowledge and skills to fulfill the requirements for specific job objectives, and to equip the graduates with adequate communication skills (written and oral) and a sound knowledge of the social, political and economic environment in which the graduate shall live, work and make useful contributions as citizen. The Panel will require evidence that the curriculum of the programme to be accredited meets the above requirements. *The minimum expected will be those prescribed in the NUC Minimum Academic Standard (MACS)*(NUC 1989a p. 11).

The emphases above give the impression that the MACS were guidelines and that universities can create their own curricula agenda so long as they operated within these as *guidelines*. Subsequent results of the accreditation indicated that this was not so. The other accreditation criteria include teaching staff quantity and quality; student admission, retention and graduation; standards of degree examinations; financial support; physical facilities; administration of department; and employers' rating of graduates. Some of these aspects tended to be difficult to measure and would not have had much input from the individual universities. An example is employer's rating where the *Manual* states an expectation that

As evidence of meeting the philosophy and objectives of the programme, the Accreditation Panel will require a displayed employers' satisfaction that graduates of the programme are performing well at their various

levels of employment. The evidence should be the result of a survey of graduates' employers to ascertain that there is a rating of satisfactory performance of graduates in their chosen field (NUC 1989a p. 16).

It is not clear who will do this survey — the NUC or the universities — and who should provide the funds for such survey. Further, it was also not clear whom the NUC will blame if these criteria were not found satisfactory: the employers for not providing sufficient stimulating environment for the employees to realize their potentials; the universities for not appropriately training the employees; or the employees for having relatively low motivation to learn and work. Thus the Minimum Academic Standards guidelines were more than *recommendations* of the future directions for Nigerian university education: they became the *only* path on which the Nigerian university student will tread. This is subsequently made clear in the results of the NUC accreditation of various programs of all Nigerian universities.

With the accreditation documents already circulated, the NUC's Standing Committee on Accreditation (SCA) drew up a composite time table of the accreditation. From this, personalized copies were extracted for each university showing specifically the programs to be accredited. Along with this, the SCA also prepared a breakdown of the program groups within each discipline area. This was done to indicate the programs available and peculiar to each university. With this breakdown and their personalized timetable, the universities were able to know the specific program due for accreditation on the stated date in the timetable. The membership of the accreditation panel was intended to be in the same way that the minimum standards panels operated. To this end, all the universities were contacted

to furnish the Commission with a list of their senior staff...from which the SCA would select the members of the panels for the exercise...The selected panelists would however be contacted and their consent sought before they are finally invited to serve on the panel. This is a call to national duty which we hope the respected experts so call upon would respond favourably (NUC 1990 p. 9).

On December 15, 1989, the NUC wrote a letter to all the universities forwarding the time table and programs for accreditation. The exercise itself began on March 19, 1990 and ended on March 22, 1991. Each visit lasted about three days during which members of the accreditation panel met members of the various departments and asked questions regarding the operation of the implementation of the minimum academic standards.

According to the scoring process developed by the NUC for the accreditation status of the programs, full accreditation was awarded to programs that scored 70 and above, with interim accreditation given to programs whose score was 60−69, and finally any program whose score was 59 and below is denied accreditation. Three further criteria, *academic content, staffing,* and *physical facilities* actually determine the accreditation status: programs that satisfy all the three are recommended for full accreditation, those that satisfy one of the three are granted interim accreditation, with denied accreditation given to programs that fail to meet any of the three criteria (NUC 1991 p. 22).

The results of the accreditation exercise, released in 1992, were startling. According to a report,

An alarming number of university courses are said to have been found to be below the standard set by the National Universities Commission (NUC)...Only 185 out of the existing 836 courses have been found by NUC to measure up. As many as 572 were found deficient in one or more aspects...The NUC had warned universities running sub−standard courses to 'clean up their act' or have accreditation withdrawn within the next four years (*West Africa* 27 January − 2 February 1992 p. 156).

While a global analysis of all the 836 programs on the basis of the three criteria (academic contents, staffing, and physical facilities) would have been a cumbersome undertaking, a sub−sector analysis of the accreditation outcome in a second generation university (established 1977) provides an insight into the nature of the expectations of the accreditation exercise, especially in the framework of these criteria. The full details of the analysis are tabulated in Appendix 2.

Of the 27 programs offered in the university, only 5 were given full accreditation, 17 were given interim accreditation, while 5 were denied accreditation. A further analysis of the accreditation reports for all the 27 programs shows that full accreditation is not given in almost any case in which the panel believed there were deviations from the Minimum Academic Standards guidelines designed by the NUC for that particular program, either in its structure or admission requirements. And even if the accreditators scored the program on a full status, the NUC management changed it to interim status on this basis. An example is *Accounting* which scored 70.0% and was awarded full accreditation status. However, in noting the deficiencies of the program, the NUC accreditation team reported that:

Curriculum is deficient. Programme does not include Introduction to Computer Science, Use of English, Introduction to Logic and Philosophy, History and Philosophy of Science, Application of Computer MIS, Research Methods, Public Sector Accounting, International Accounting. *Remedy*: Curriculum to be planned to bring in all the omitted courses in line with MACS guidelines (NUC 1991 p. 25).

Thus on the basis of this observation, the Commission changed the full accreditation status recommended by the panel to interim status. And from other accreditation meetings between the NUC and various faculty, it was clear that the Commission was more interested in compliance with its minimum academic standards curricula guidelines than helping the faculties determine the quality of education. For instance, one of the problems faced with the minimum standards directives in the Faculty of Education Bayero University Kano was lack of staff to handle the compulsory research essay the NUC guidelines insist all final year students to take. During the accreditation of the Faculty in 1991 this point was brought to the attention of the NUC team. The solution given was that the Faculty should adopt a group essay approach with about twenty students writing the *same* essay and supervised by one lecturer. This simply led to the lowering of standards to conform with the directive.

Similarly, the NUC minimum academic standards did not take into consideration the internal academic arrangements of the universities in some disciplines. For instance, teaching practice has been a traditional component of teacher education programs in Nigerian universities since their inception. In many universities, the teaching practice is normally done during a time zone just before the universities close for summer — and while the secondary schools are open. Other faculties normally arrange their programs for education students in such way that the latter students are released for this purpose without adversely affecting the rest of the faculties' programs.

The NUC reaffirmed the importance of the teaching practice by allocating six weeks to it. However, this is under the new minimum academic standards which harmonized all programs throughout the universities. It would therefore mean that education students would have to be free from other departments to enable them to do the teaching practice for at least three weeks. This was a situation no department agreed to in Bayero University. Their argument was that they cannot provide different programs for their own as well as education students, especially under the new reformed structures. But education students cannot attend their regular courses in other departments, and do the teaching practice at the same time as the teaching practice schools were normally outside the university. A suggestion made at the university senate was that education teaching practice should be done during university vacations. But due to the problems of starting and closing the semesters on time in the universities, by the time they close, the secondary schools where education students are normally posted for the teaching practice are also *closed*! This issue was also raised to the NUC team during the accreditation of the Faculty of Education, but the faculty was told to try to work it out with the rest of the university.

Indeed even in cases where academic program deficiencies were not the result of non−conformity with the MACS, the programs are given relatively lower scores. Examples of such incidences in the accreditation of some programs as indicated in Appendix 2 are:

Deficiencies	Remedies
Classrooms and offices ill−equipped	Classroom and offices should be provided with necessary equipment
Funding is grossly inadequate	Funding should be improved
Current books and journals are in short supply because of financial constraint	Efforts should be made to procure current books and journals
The classrooms and drawing rooms are not adequate in size	There should be provision of classrooms and drawing rooms with adequate size
Staffing is inadequate	Recruit more qualified teaches, typists and technical staff

Conversations I held with various deans and heads of departments affected by either interim or denied accreditation status in various universities revealed a rather ambivalent attitude to the accreditation outcomes. While some regarded it as an intrusion and a challenge to their autonomy, others curiously enough, were happy with their either interim or denied status because, as many of them pointed out, they can use this status to negotiate for higher funding for their units which have hitherto been neglected either by their native university administration or the NUC management.

The accreditation of the various programs in Nigerian universities by the NUC brings to end the first cycle of the reform of the Nigerian university curricula, a process that started effectively with the establishment of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1960 and ended in 1991. The picture that emerges is still hazy, but it is quite clear that more needed to be done if the reforms were to achieve their goals.

CHAPTER 9

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM: TOWARDS A SYNTHESIS

Theoretical Perspectives and Nigerian University Curricula Transformation

The 1960s heralded the era of innovations in all sectors of education all over the world, principally motivated by the embers of the Cold War. Out of this stampede for innovativeness were the beliefs that the construction of a comprehensive theory and methodology of innovation would only be a matter of time (van Vaught 1989 p. 47). van Vaught further claims that there existed a certain optimism and enthusiasm about the possibilities and the usefulness of such a theory and methodology. The general social theory of innovation would soon enable planners and policy−makers to design and implement successful changes.

However, since then, doubt and disappointment have grown. The comprehensive theory and methodology did not arise. The growing number of empirical studies offered a picture of extreme variance among its findings, as suggested in this book. The conceptual frameworks therefore remained fuzzy. As Downs and Mohr observed,

the record in the field of innovation is beyond interpretation. In spite of the large amount of energy expended, the results have not been cumulative. This is not to say that the body of existing research is useless...Perhaps the most straightforward way of accounting for this empirical instability and theoretical confusion is to reject the notion that a unitary theory of innovation exists (Downs and Mohr, 1976 p. 701).

Innovations can be seen as products and processes. Innovations as products focus on specific programs or courses which may or may not be adopted by individuals or organizations. Such innovation often appears as a problem solving. On the other hand, innovations as processes focus on the decisions and interactions between the various components that can be identified in the system where a new idea or approach is developed, discussed and implemented. The process itself, as in the case of this book, is the object of the analysis. The inability to separate these different roles often leads to mismatch between policy expectations and implementation realities with regards to innovations in higher education, especially in the centralized, and bureauctratized systems of higher education in most developing countries.

This book has attempted to focus attention on the higher education reform mechanism in Nigeria both as a product (the evolution of the course unit system) and as a process (management of reform of the course unit system) . However, no matter the attempts to apply any emergent theoretical framework in the literature to the reform process in Nigerian higher education (e.g. Davis et al, 1982; Cerych and Sabtier, 1986; Dill and Friedman, 1979; Hage and Aiken, 1970) the core of the matter is that Nigerian higher educational system reform was the product of a centralized non−liberal machinery, and consequently does not fit any specific model of linear progression from initiation to implementation.

Further, it has also been argued that understanding of public policy−making and policy implementation should be based in terms of interpretation of the data based upon models of organizational choice (March 1981, Olsen 1983, Clark, 1984). And one of the more explicit analysis of this position emerged out of the UCLA 1982 summer conference on *Systems of Higher Education: Eight Disciplinary and Comparative Perspectives*. The event provided opportunities for various perspectives of management of change in higher education to emerge, although with a principal focus on Western and Central Europe. Nevertheless, a universalized picture of the theories of change was synthesized from the deliberations of the conference (see Clark, 1984). In a paper presented at the conference[31], Ladislav Cerych arguing from the perspective of higher education in a policy implementation and analysis perspective presented a case for implementation analysis where

such analysis means essentially an assessment of the extent to which policy objectives have been achieved and of the reasons explaining achievement, non−achievement or distortion of original goals as well as unintended effects of a given policy (Cerych 1982 p. 1).

Thus before looking at the outcomes of the implementation of the Nigerian university curricula efforts, the entire exercise will be theoretically contextualized so that clearer judgments can be made with regards to the potency of the reform process.

Developing his arguments further, Cerych (1984) has pointed out that it is difficult to say whether a comparative view of higher education policy implementation provides a strong support for any one of the

theoretical models of policy implementation, and further contended that

no single model among those available is really adequate for describing the process. Either the latter can be reflected through a combination of several existing models...or new models developed. The third possibility of course is that no models in the policy sciences can fully describe reality as they can in the natural sciences. Their purpose may be merely to serve as more or less appropriate analytical tools, drawing attention to particular relationships and interactions between the various factors determining the nature of a given process (Cerych 1984 p. 23).

Three higher education policy change perspectives were identified which provide a convenient analytical focal point for determining the outcomes and management of the general reform of the Nigerian university curricula, which certainly qualifies as a policy change. These perspectives are depth, breadth, and level of change.

With regards to *depth* of change, Cerych (1984) argues that implementing higher education reforms depends largely on the degree of consistency (congruence) or inconsistency of a given reform with rules and values already prevailing in the system. This argument offers a different handle when applied to the Nigerian context. This was because although the change being contemplated (departure from the British to American educational structural framework) was considerably incongruent to the existing pattern, nevertheless it was openly accepted. This was because the changes in Nigerian universities curricula were spontaneously initiated by the universities themselves and in almost all cases, while quite conscious of the fact that the change departed from the existing rules and values; indeed a considerable impetus of the change was the deliberate attempt to break the existing rules and values.

Thus, it is not always the case that changes departing from the traditionally accepted practices will be resisted. Indeed, what the Nigerian universities *resented*, not resisted, was the apparent imposition of such change from a central authority. However, Cerych (1984 p. 26) does admit that

it is not true that policies which postulate a radical departure from existing rules cannot be effectively carried through [when referring to the *breadth* of change]...such radical departures can be implemented provided that they are limited to one or a very few areas of the higher education system, while most of the other prevailing traditions and standards are rigorously respected. Such reforms entail a great depth but a narrow breadth of change (Cerych 1984 p. 26).

Again this does not seem to apply particularly well to the Nigerian situation. The *unlimited* and radical departure from the existing rules formed the core rationale of the transformation of the Nigerian university curricula in the 1980s. Thus, the only “prevailing tradition” retained and respected was the external examiner system whose retention provided a basis for consideration of the Nigerian university curricula transformation as an *adaptation* of the American curricula ideal, rather than outright adoption.

Finally, as far as the level of change is concerned, Cerych (1984) observed that it is commonly assumed that a reform can succeed more easily if it concerns the institutional level rather than the system as a whole. This is quite obvious, since the higher the level of implementation, the more complex the system. The Nigerian

reform of university curricula seems to support this perspective, because when the curricular transformation started on individual faculty and administrative unit basis, it seemed to have been managed more effectively than when it became a system−wide policy directive, affecting not only the entire university, but also linking all the universities in the country in the same reform and implementation matrix. However, at the same time suddenly novelty became nuisance, and even the units that voluntary started the reform came to resent their lack of control over the pattern of the reform after it has been taken over by the National Universities Commission.

Aid Agencies and Nigerian University System: Towards a Synthesis

There is no doubt that the present character of Nigerian universities derives significantly from the efforts of the American aid agencies, particularly the Carnegie Corporation. At the same time there is little evidence to show that the American aid agencies insisted on a specific structural curricular pattern to be followed. If anything, the activities of the aid agencies seemed to have diminished at the time the Nigerian university was slowly undergoing a reform (from 1975 to 1985). True enough the agencies did emphasize certain disciplines at the expense of others. For instance, in analyzing the strategies adopted by the American Foundations, Berman (1979 p. 156) argued that they

emphasized the development and strengthening of social−science departments, particularly in the related field of human resource development. This was accomplished by placing in social science departments a Foundation representative or carefully selected American or British academic charged with guiding and directing the department during its formative years, and by choosing African nationals who showed professional promise for advanced graduate training in a limited number of elite American institutions. These social scientists, indigenous as well as expatriate, often divided their academic responsibilities between a social science department and a Foundation supported research institutes linked to the department.

In this way, the Foundation was continuously fed information about social behaviors of African populations and provided efficient strategies for understanding the behaviors of indigenous peoples. Thus, a strong view emerged that the over−riding motive behind the aid agency involvement went beyond philanthropic and humanitarian intentions; it was also ideological. Arguing in a similar vein, Enarson (1965 p. 144) also believed that

Much foreign aid is not designed to promote the development process. Money and propaganda and arms go for the support of short−term objectives that are deemed to be in the U.S. national interest. For the most part this has nothing to do with the development process.

Further, curbing the communist expansion in Africa became a very strong motive behind aid agency efforts which could be accomplished, as some of the Foundations apparently believed, by

"appropriate activities supported by a private American Foundation which could contribute to African confidence in the United States and the free world" (Don K. Price *in* Berman 1979 p. 158).

However, as stated earlier, the emphasis of this book is not the ideological underpinnings of American influence on Nigerian higher education, although such is acknowledged; but the extent to which any American−inspired reform can be effectively managed to achieve a measure of its objectives, taking into consideration the nature of the fundamental differences that exist between Nigeria and the United States.

It would seem, in any event, that the possible ideological overtones of American aid agencies in Nigerian higher education has never constituted a barrier to acceptance of either American aid or ideas. For instance, there was no organized resistance to the increasing diversity of the Nigerian university undergraduate curriculum in the mid 1970s when the reforms started on an institutional basis. American funding and expertise were clearly welcomed in the establishment of various experimental schools (e.g. Aiyetoro Comprehensive High School) curricular reforms (e.g. the Nigerian Secondary School Science Project) and a whole university (the University of Nigeria, Nsukka). Further, the Ashby Report, seen as a classical strategy for university planning in post independence British Africa and considered a central icon of Nigerian educational development, was entirely initiated and sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Similarly, there was no organized protest regarding the system−wide implementation of the reform in 1988 in all Nigerian universities by the National Universities Commission, even by the academic thorn in Government's flesh, the powerfully vocal Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU). The point being made therefore is that Nigerian universities accepted to implement the reforms well aware of their external primary source (United States) and their local intermediary source (the National Universities Commission).

Although American aid funding was what shaped the present form of Nigerian higher education, right from the Greenbrier Conference declarations in May 1958, to the number of students trained in U.S. institutions, and the higher number of Nigerian academics trained in the U.S. compared to the United Kingdom, and finally to the complete adoption of the American university structural framework in Nigerian universities, the universities were free to choose and adopt those aspects of whatever system they feel had something to offer over the system they were using.

The American educational system prides itself on its diversity. But more than that, it is an ultimate reflection of what the American society feels are important learning issues. This social maxim extends from the elementary schools all the way to the university. Throughout the educational spectrum, every attempt is made to highlight important social issues and provide avenues through which their solutions could be sought, or their phenomena more effectively understood by students.

Nigerian education, on the other hand, is the product of a centralized bureaucratic process. Whether this is good or inimical to the development of education in a developing country is not the issue. The issue is whether such tightly structured system can sustain a philosophy with different depth of social input. The extent to which such centralized control can be operated within an educational setting with a radically different political origins must be questioned.

However, transplants often fail to work effectively, whether in politics, economics or education, simply because the interface between grafting and grafted institutions do not share the same meanings and purposes

regarding the entire transplanting process. What is therefore important with regards to the Nigerian university system is whether the transplant has *worked*, what was *responsible* for its current status, and more significantly, whether it has proved *beneficial* to its receivers. And an additional query that could be set up is: what *lessons* can be drawn for other systems contemplating such transplanting process?

Accreditation of the Nigerian University Curricula

Although the course unit system has been bubbling under in almost all the Nigerian universities for almost two decades in one form or another, it was a self−initiated reform by individual departments with the wherewithal not only to cope with it in relation to their resources, but to also sustain it. Yet, when the NUC decided to harmonize the system while at the same time introducing its own curricular guidelines, such act appeared as an imposition and raised significant issues about academic autonomy. Further, it raises a controversy between what the universities feel they should teach, and what the NUC believes they should teach. However, it is significant that the NUC did not determine under what conditions the universities operated their own versions of the course unit system before the Commission created its own. Equally significant was the fact that the NUC had not determined the optimum conditions necessary for the full *system−wide* implementation of the system. This oversight was certainly one of the factors responsible for the problems associated with the implementation of the course unit system in Nigerian universities.

On top of all this, was the issue of timing. How long does a program have to be operative before proceedings to accredit it should begin? The NUC does not appear to have a ready answer. The conduct of the accreditation of the new curricular guidelines by the NUC, virtually immediately after such guidelines have been introduced in the universities, clearly leaves little room for the universities to make the adjustments necessary to cope not only with a curriculum they did not create, but also its extra resource demands (which even the NUC acknowledged). Thus, the NUC expected too much in too little period of time.

First, the universities were asked to harmonize the course unit system in 1988/89. They have hardly finished doing that than the NUC created the minimum academic standards guidelines — complete with program structure and credit values — in thirteen recognized disciplines — and requested the universities to implement the harmonized curricula. Dr. Sailah Jamar, an American expatriate, and one of the faculty members given the task of converting the old subject system into the course unit system in the Faculty of Education, Bayero University Kano in 1989 recalled the problems she faced in the process:

NUC didn’t give us much room to maneuver. We had to take what we had already, and CUT and PASTE it to fit the new requirements. One major problem was in translating our courses as they existed before into the credits that were required, because no one had thought of the courses in that way previously. For example, papers had to be divided into separate courses. It also became evident through this process that we had too many individual courses in little small packages (1−2 credits) and it was difficult to rethink that process. And then they came up with some mega−courses (4−5 credits) without full realization of the implications of that in terms of the number of contact hours per week, and the number of papers and exams (Dr. Sailah Jamar, *Personal Communication*, Yonkers, New York, February 21, 1992).

Then secondly, the NUC went on a round of inspections to accredit these programs less than a year after introducing the reforms — quite well aware (the teams were all made up of university faculty) that the issue of resources was not adequately addressed by the Commission (e.g. in terms of extra subvention to the universities). Consequently, it is hardly surprising that the NUC found so many of the programs lacking in whatever expectations NUC had for them.

Furthermore, no training program was created by the individual universities which could have been funded by the NUC to familiarize the faculty with the mainly administrative procedures of implementing the course unit system; for the greatest problem faced concerned the maintenance of accurate student records in a fragmented system. As Dr. Jamar continued in her reminiscences,

All in all, it is always difficult to go into new and untested ground, and hindsight is always much better than foresight. I think the NUC should have tried to capitalize more on the experiences of those who were used to the system to help the inexperienced ones to avoid as many pitfalls as possible, through proper planning. I ALSO greatly fault the NUC for not realizing that without computerization of student records, this whole process would be a fiasco. They should have had the computers AND the programs ready for each university, as well as trained personnel who could show each university how to utilize them. So it seemed as though the poor planning started from the top and spread, like a virus, throughout at least one university.

All this pointed to the need to have established an *administrative support service unit* to exclusively handle the issue of student records in a system that lacks computerization. Rather belatedly, the NUC created the office of *Director of Academic Planning* in every university in 1990. But given its other, and more pressing functions (especially disbursement of capital grants), the office can hardly generate the amount of effort needed to implement a system such as the credit unit system in a Nigerian setting

Labor Market and the Nigerian Graduate

It may be recalled that one of the catalysts to the system−wide reforms in Nigerian university curricula was the Government view that university education in Nigeria was not preparing the students for effective employment in the labor market. Yet, it was not explored whether unemployment of university graduates was the result of deficiencies in the curricula or rapid changes in the labor market placing new expectations on prospective employees. This is more so as there were significant changes in the employment patterns and labor market structures in Nigeria in the early 1970s and 1980s. For instance, technological unemployment can be caused by the introduction of new machinery and processes. The fortunes of the business community can become bleak as a result of recession which could result in loss of output and greater unemployment (Tomori 1979 p. 7). These are external factors whose effects could not possibly be blamed on the university curricula, especially in places where innovation and experimentation are discouraged and initiative is expected to be from central *funding* authority.

Also, sometimes unemployment is not a factor of a type of education, but due to government policies. Between 1984 to 1987 thousands of workers in all sectors — both professional, managerial, and technical — lost their jobs as a result of massive purges and retrenchment in Nigeria (Bello 1988) following a Military coup. It is hard to fault the curricula for whatever their inadequacies might have been. But surprisingly, since

it was not clear in what ways the new curricula are different from those taught before the reforms, it is difficult to determine in what respects the reforms might have made the new curricula more labor market oriented. Certainly this would considerably help in revising the rhetoric about the relevance of university curricula to economic development.

Nowhere, Now Here: The Future of Nigerian University Reform

Finally, what set of lessons can we draw from this investigation of the introduction of the course unit system in the Nigerian university system? Obviously not all the aspects of the reform have been considered in this study — for instance, faculty and student views of the reform, detailed analysis of subvention to the universities before and after the introduction of the reforms — but it is hoped that enough has been presented to provide a fair idea of the nature of the reform and its possible direction for the future. What remains now is the generalizability of this system of academic development strategy for other systems.

Perhaps the first lesson deals with the needs analysis for the reform. The main reasons given for initiating the reform — making the curricula more responsive to labor market needs — do not provide a comprehensive rationale to such a massive system−wide transformation requiring specialized personnel and enormous resources in a dwindling economy. But significantly, the failings, as they were, of the old structure of university education have not been adequately identified, analyzed and noted. And unless the factors that led to the inability of the former system to make education more responsive to the labor market have been removed from the picture, they will keep recurring under the new reforms. In the end, it would not be clear whether failure, or success, of the reform was due to implementation machinery or recurrence of the factors that led to inadequacies of the previous system.

Secondly, in searching for a new system to borrow, it was not clear what informed the decision of the policy makers to adopting a course unit system fashioned along American university academic program structure (or indeed any other country). This is more so as the connecting interfaces of the lender and the borrower are totally different. The course unit system evolved under radically differing social, political and economic climates in the United States, is subjected to individual interpretation by the various universities, and devoid of centralized control. Its method of implementation is supported by an evolving technology which the system adapts as it goes along. This situation is certainly not so in Nigeria where attempts are made to unify a diverse philosophy and bring it under a central control and given a uniform understanding.

It is significant, as argued earlier, that philanthropic organizations that have helped shaped the present nature of the academic programs of Nigerian universities have not, explicitly, advocated for an outright adoption of any model of academic organization. That Nigerians who have benefited from training sponsored by these organizations have come back to the country advocating an American academic structural virtues must be seen as an inevitable outcome of internationalization of knowledge.

Thirdly, the course unit system in the United States has all the supportive public utility services necessary to make it function at minimal efficiency level. Management information systems, extensive communication networks were all facilities that facilitated and sustained a very complex system. This does not mean that even in the U.S. information technology is an enthroned operational icon in all colleges. For instance, Bogard (1972) has discovered that

Institutions of higher education in general have not put substantial effort into institutional research (IR), computerized management information systems (MIS), and planning−programming−budgeting systems (PPBS). This phenomenon in itself is not an indictment of institutional effectiveness, for the technological dimensions of management exemplified by these techniques is but one of three closely interrelated dimensions of effective management. Nevertheless the state of the sociopsychological and structural dimensions is determined in large part by the state of the technological dimensions; hence, one must question the capacity of institutional administrators to manage effectively in the face of mounting social and economic pressures for accountability.

In the Nigerian case this is more since both the need to manage a new innovation and the absence of supportive structures to manage it, both from technological as well as sociopsychological perspectives, arrived at the same time. Effective management was therefore likely to be inadequate.

Finally, lack of political stability is a variable that must also be taken into consideration in reforms of such magnitude. In Nigerian political settings, policies change as rapidly as their makers. Every new policy maker sets himself the first agenda of discarding any inherited policies and implanting his own. Between 1987 to 1994 at least five different Federal Ministers of Education were appointed — Professor Jibril Aminu, Professor Aliyu Babatunde Fafunwa, Professor Ben Nwabueze, Professor Abraham Imogie, and Dr. Iyorchia Ayu — and each set about the task of either discarding or undoing what his predecessor has done. Thus with each of change of guards therefore comes new, and often contradicting policies. Reactions to this change of guards from the beneficiaries of the system — faculty and students — often leads to work−stoppages and sustained strikes. This interrupts the implementation process and puts a question mark on the quality of knowledge generated under such circumstances. A further contribution of the political instability to the system is lack of linked integrity between the various arms of the education service, and lack of synchronization in getting students to move from one stage of the education chain to the other. This ultimately affects the efficiency of the management of any reform at the terminal point of the educational system.

Thus the flexibility of the course unit system of curricular organization under any setting comes at a price, mainly in terms of the sophisticated information systems required to record assessment results and credit, produce academic transcripts, assist in the enrollment, registration and time−tabling processes. Part of the price also includes social and political stability, a sharing of purpose between users (employers and students) and policy makers and a commitment to a positive result oriented outcome by faculty, administrators, students and policy makers. It is up to the policy makers to determine whether it is worth paying the price — or coming up with a more indigenous and reality−based solution to development through effective university programming than copying mis−matching systems on top of each other.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

TABLE 1A

FOUR YEAR DEGREE PATTERNS IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

PROGRAM	Listed Minimum Credits for Level				
	100	200	300	400	TOTAL
Human Anatomy	42	39	43	44	168
Mass Communications	36	44	38	38	156
Classical Studies	38	31	47	31	147
Physiology	39	36	36	36	147
Physiotherapy	36	36	36	36	144
Psychology	36	36	34	34	144
Fine Arts	36	36	36	36	144
Political Science	36	35	35	36	142
Economics	34	35	34	38	141
Geography	36	34	34	34	138
Home Economics	34	31	32	40	137
Modern European Languages	34	32	34	32	132
Biochemistry	33	35	33	30	131
Microbiology	32	36	33	30	131
English Language	27	36	39	27	129

Geology	32	32	33	30	127
Zoology	32	35	30	30	127
Chemistry	32	33	30	30	125
Archeology	34	30	30	30	124
Physics	33	30	30	30	123
Botany	32	30	30	30	122
Mathematics	32	30	30	30	122
English Literature	31	30	30	30	121
Music	30	30	30	30	120
Computer Science	30	30	30	30	120
Statistics	30	30	30	30	120
Education	30	30	30	30	120
History	33	30	22	29	114
Public Administration	30	30	27	24	111
Industrial Relations	24	33	27	27	111
Arabic	21	16	39	34	110
Marketing	24	36	24	24	108
Management	24	33	21	27	105
Insurance	24	33	27	21	105
Acturial Science	24	30	27	24	105
Banking	24	27	27	27	105
Accounting	24	27	21	27	99
Business Administration	24	30	24	21	99
African Languages	28	32	20	18	98
Linguistics	25	26	26	18	95
Islamic Studies	20	10	30	30	90

Philosophy	20	12	28	20	80
Theatre Arts	22	18	14	08	62
TOTALS	1298	1325	1311	1261	5199

TABLE 1B

FIVE YEAR DEGREE PATTERNS IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

PROGRAM	Listed Minimum Credits for Level					
	100	200	300	400	500	Total
Industrial Engineering	59	36	42	32	57	226
Management Technology	32	40	51	30	52	205
Law	36	38	41	38	41	194
Mechanical Engineering	59	36	37	19	38	189
Pharmacy	56	33	33	33	33	188
Agriculture	34	31	33	30	36	184
Water Resources Engineering	36	36	42	21	40	175
Civil Engineering	36	36	42	21	40	175
Structural Engineering	36	36	42	21	40	175
Mining Engineering	36	36	36	25	36	169
Automotive Engineering	36	36	36	24	36	168
Refrigration	36	36	36	23	36	167
Agricultural Engineering	36	36	38	20	36	166
Marine Engineering	36	36	36	22	36	166

Forestry	34	31	32	30	36	163
Wood Products Engineering	36	36	38	18	34	162
Food Science and Technology	36	36	36	17	37	162
Chemical and Petroleum Engineering	36	36	36	18	36	162
Petroleum Engineering	36	36	36	18	36	162
Polymer Technology	36	36	36	18	36	162
Electrical Engineering	36	36	54	20	16	162
Polymer Engineering	36	36	36	18	36	162
Building	36	36	36	18	36	162
Estate Management	36	36	36	18	36	162
Quantity Surveying	36	36	36	18	36	162
Urban & Regional Planning	36	36	36	18	36	162
Surveying	36	36	36	18	36	162
Fisheries	34	31	32	30	34	161
Nursing (Medicine)	42	10	29	34	35	150
TOTALS	1106	1006	1090	670	1079	4971

TABLE 1C

SIX YEAR DEGREE PATTERNS IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

PROGRAM	Listed Minimum Credits for Level						
	100	200	300	400	500	600	TOTAL

Human Medince	49	38	67	66	43	53	319
Dentistry	43	38	48	41	41	42	253
Optomentry	31	41	34	35	35	32	208
Veterinary Medicine	25	25	29	32	34	58	203
Architecture	36	36	36	36	30	26	200
TOTALS	184	178	214	210	183	214	1183

[Source: Computed from the listing of the courses and their credit requirements as outlined in Minimum Standards guidelines for the 13 disciplines in Nigerian Universities].

NOTES ON THE COMPUTATIONS

Computing the actual credit listings for each of the subjects proved to be quite a difficult task, principally because of the inconsistency with which credit listings are given in the individual guidelines. In some guidelines, such as Social Sciences, every subject has its own credit requirements per year tabulated. In others, one has to go through the individual course outlines to get the actual credits. In yet others, a three column credit distribution was adopted. For instance, in History, there are columns for Lecture (L), Practical (P), and Tutorial (T). And yet in Music, grouped in the same discipline of Arts, such columnar distribution was not given; nor was it adopted in most of other Arts subjects. In some other cases, the first year credit distribution is not given at all. The two computer education components of General Studies also were listed inconsistently in the programs. In some cases, e.g. Education, the second component (Application of Computers) did not appear at all.

These figures should therefore be taken with caution. They would need to be verified as against the actual credit listings as given by individual departments in Nigerian universities. However, if the credit listings for each course in the *minimum standards guidelines* is followed, the figures here are as accurate as possible.

APPENDIX 2

THE ACCREDITATION OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS IN A TYPICAL NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY BY N.U.C. (1990)

(on Academic Contents, Staffing, and Physical Facilties Parameters)

	Academic	Staff	Facilities	Program	Accreditation Status
Minimum Scores	28	13	18	Score	
Department					*Panel* *NUC*
1. Islamic Studies	34	16	12 (11)	83.3	Full Full
2. Hausa	31	17	11 (11)	81.1	Full Full
3. History	31	13	13 (11)	77.0	Full Full
4. Library. Science	29	15	22	76.0	Full Full
5. Arabic Studies	35	16	12 (11)	73.0	Full Full
6. Education	25 (21)	11	20	71.0	Full Interim
7. Chemistry	32.9	14.5	16.8	70.9	Full Interim
8. Accounting	30	14	15	70.0	Full Interim
9. Business Admin	29	15	15	70.0	Full Interim
10. English	31	15	16	70.0	Full Interim
11. Applied Biology	27	19	15	68.0	Interim Interim
12. Zoology	27	19	15	68.0	

						Interim Interim
13.	Electrical Eng.	29.57	12.73	16.22	67.9	Interim Interim
14.	Civil Eng.	28.84	11.89	17.07	66.8	Interim Interim
15.	Medicine	27.25	11.2	21.6	66.1	Interim Interim
16.	Mech Eng.	26.96	12.72	16.97	65.8	Interim Denied
17.	Geography	26.83	13.4	15	65.8	Interim Interim
18.	Botany	27	16	15	65.0	Interim Interim
19.	Mass Comm.	30.5	11	19.5	64.4	Interim Interim
20.	French	26	12	18	64.0	Interim Interim
21.	Physics	28.6	10.4	16.8	62.1	Interim Interim
22.	Mathematics	25.3	13	15.7	60.2	Interim Interim
23.	Economics	24.73	10.7	10 (11)	60.2	Interim Denied
24.	Political Science	25.39	11.3	9.83 (11)	60.2	Interim Denied
25.	Sociology	26.3	14	6 (11)	60.1	Interim Interim
26.	Law	19	10	15.5	50.0	Denied Denied
27.	Microbiology	17 (19)	7	12	43.0	Denied Denied

Note

Full Accreditation: 70 and above

Interim: 60 to 69

Denied 59 and below

Source: National Universities Commission (1991)

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[1]. Two schools sharing the same American inspired *general education* philosophy were actually initiated. The first was at Aiyetoro in Ibadan in Western Nigeria. The other was located at Port Harcourt in Eastern Nigeria. Like the Aiyetoro school, the comprehensive school in Port Harcourt was also set up with funding from USAID. The Port Harcourt school, however, was affected by the Nigerian Civil War (1967−1970) and was not apparently continued after the war. See Newbry and Ejiogu (1964).

[2]. A post script to the development of Aiyetoro Comprehensive School provides an interesting linkage to university development in Nigeria. During the partisan political years of 1979−1983, the school was on November 28, 1981 proclaimed "College of Agricultural Sciences, Ogun State University — even though not a block had been added to the existing structure of the comprehensive high school. Thus the school was taken over by the State government and the comprehensive school relocated." *National Concord*, March 15, 1987 p. 13. However, on December 31, 1983, a military coup prevented the conversion of the school to the proposed Ogun State University, and the university was eventually established at a new campus at Ago−Iwoye.

[3]. A high school ***unit*** refers to a year or two semesters of instruction in a particular subject. In the year specifications that follow, the University of California minimum high school unit requirements are: 1 (U.S. History) + 4 (English) + 3 (Mathematics) + 1 (Laboratory Science) + 2 (Foreign Language) + 4 (College Preparatory Electives), giving a total of 15 ***units***.

[4]. Transcript of an interview with Ms. Shirley Dong, International Admissions Specialist, UC Berkeley, November 14, 1991, Berkeley

[5]. According to Shirley Dong, International Admission Specialist, UC Berkeley, the total number of applicants for 1990/1991 to UC Berkeley ***alone*** was 20,350 for 8,200 spaces. Interview, November 14, 1991.

[6]. Dong, Berkeley, November 14, 1991

[7]. Ibid.

[8]. Ibid.

[9]. Taken from the transcript of an interview with Dr. Robert Bailey, The Registrar, University of California at Berkeley, held in his office on December 19, 1991. Berkeley. Incidentally, one of the computer programs used to calculate the admissions index at Berkeley in 1991 was Microsoft's *FoxPro* 2.0 databse.

[10]. Ibid.

[11]. Ibid.

[12]. Ibid.

[13]. The Nsukka experiment seemed to have generated a flurry of interests in such institutional transfer and is thus well documented; see also Hanson 1968; Johnson 1963, 1966; Obiechina et al 1986; Ojiaku 1968; Ukariwe 1984, and Zerby 1965, 1971.

[14]. May be it is just the MIT that the Ibadan faculty did not like, for despite this reluctance to accept American *training*, nevertheless Ibadan university authorities were not too aversive to *accepting* American aid in general. For instance, according to Berman (1979), of the 117 Nigerian fellows supported for training in U.S. by the Rockefeller Foundation in 1975, "73 were then on the Ibadan staff. The Foundation also provided 107 man−years of teaching for the University by carefully selected non−Nigerian expatriates." (p. 162). Similarly, the Ford Foundation also allocated $5 million for university development to the University of Ibadan (Berman p. 159).

[15]. The Ahmadu Bello University was the only northern university for quite a while and all other "modern" universities started out as either its affiliates or had some of their programs supervised by ABU. Slow reforms at ABU therefore reflected themselves in other universities in the north, although the newer ones adopted a more enthusiastic approach to curriculum review (e.g. Usmanu Danfodiyo University). In my analysis I use ABU as the northern central icon that sets examples.

[16]. Despite this, however, some northern leaders have given what is often a devastating attack on the western educational system as practiced in Nigeria. For instance, in a very fiery speech at the 1971 convocation of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, the ***Wazirin Sokoto*** [Grand Vizier for the Sultan of Sokoto] Alhaji Junaidu questioned the relevance of modern educational structures to contemporary life in northern Nigeria by telling the audience that

...your university, like all others in Nigeria, is a cultural transplant whose roots lie in another tradition...our universities appear to belong to us only in their location and in their names...our universities should arrest the process of endorsing our personality out of our lives, education and up−bringing (*in* Brown and Hiskett, 1975 p. 469).

[17]. A limitation of the figures was that the *nationalities* of the expatriates was not indicated.

[18]. These are not the only linkages between Nigerian universities and overseas institutions; but are highlighted here in relation to the theme of this book — the American influence on the transformation of the Nigerian university undergraduate curricula. Links between Nigerian universities and other institutions included: Ibadan, Nsukka, Akure, ABU and Center for Tropical Veterinary Medicine, Scotland and Institute of Veterinary Medicine Berlin, Katholiek University, Leuven, University of Surrey, RVB, Netherlands respectively.

[19]. And this may very well be an incomplete picture. The figures were computed from the listed names of all Nigerian university teaching staff as contained in the Commonwealth Universities Year Book 1990. Only those teaching staff whose source of highest qualifications, a masters or doctorate degree, obtained from universities in the United States and the United Kingdom were listed in the table. The total number for each university, of course, is far more than the figures listed in the table. However, this was because although the full qualifications of all the teaching staff were listed against each individual, not all have their *sources* of highest degrees indicated. Nevertheless this table is used to buttress the argument of the greater preponderance of American trained academics, than UK. trained in Nigerian universities. If this trend is to continue, it is quite likely that many of those whose sources of highest qualifications were not indicated against their names in the Year Book may also have obtained their highest degrees from the United States.

[20]. The geographic configuration of Nigeria underwent some changes from independence in 1960 to 1990 which affected the autonomy and location of Nigerian universities. From 1960−1962 there were *three* regions (North, West, and East); in 1963 a *Midwestern Region* was carved out of the Eastern region. However, in March 1967 prompted by the threat of the outbreak of civil war, more states were created bringing the total to 12. From February 1976 again more states were created, based on historical events in the individual localities to a total of 19. This stabilized until August 1991 when the total states in Nigeria was made to 30. With the establishment of new states, *each* had planned an agenda which included a State University in addition to any federal university already located in the State. See Chapter 3.

[21]. These enrollment figures *exclude* post graduate students or non−degree programs.

[22]. The newspapers consulted were *The New Nigerian* (Kaduna), *The Daily Triumph* (Kano), *The Guardian* (Lagos), *The Daily Times* (Lagos), and *The Daily Concord* (Lagos). The news of the private universities were reported in issues dated from April to December 1983 of these newspapers.

[23]. This university may have nothing to do with Dr. Nmandi. Azikwe, a Nigerian elder statesman, and the first President of the country in 1960, and who was extremely instrumental in the establishment of the University of Nigeria Nsukka modeled on Michigan State University. However, the Anambra State University of Technology, a university owned by the then Anambra State government, was renamed **Nmandi Azikwe University** in 1991 and taken over by the Federal Government.

[24]. In April 1994, US$1.00 = N22.00, officially.

[25]. The ASUU had been banned several times in its existence by the Nigerian Military authorities. In 1992, it was banned again over various issues, including demands for greater autonomy and academic freedom in Nigerian universities. It however metamorphosed into Association of University Teachers (AUT) in the same year, an association the Government refused to officially acknowledge for quite some time after its creation, thus breaking down the ability of university teachers to collectively negotiate with the Government. The

Association was unbanned in 1993 after a protracted series of negotiations with the Military authorities.

[26]. The Report of the Committee (NUC 1988) indicated that the following books reflecting education in other countries were consulted: Barnes, G A (1984) *The American University − A World Guide*; *The University of Adelaide Calendar, 1988*; *Undergraduate Studies Handbook, University of Technology, Perth, Western Australia, 1988.* From the subsequent contents of the report − which dictated the policy in Nigerian universities and was the *definite* policy on the course unit system in Nigeria — it would appear that the American views given by Barnes (1984) provided the guideline in determining key structural concepts in Nigerian university curricular to its reformers.

[27]. The account given in this chapter is centered around the implementation of the Course Credit System in Bayero University, Kano in general. A fuller discussion of the implementation of the course unit system in Bayero University Kano as a case study is given in Adamu (1994).

[28]. The University did not close even though the Non−Academic Staff Union was on strike. But since they control the registration procedures, the admission and registration of students was extremely chaotic — leading many students to either missing lectures completely, or start lectures rather late.

[29]. And this happened *only* after the Minister of Education, Professor Ben Nwabuezue during whose time the ASUU went on suspended strike, was replaced by the Military Government with Professor Abraham Imogie in August 1993.

[30]. Following significant changes in the British higher education system in 1993, the UCCA was merged with the Polytechnics Central Admissions Systems (PCAS) to form Universities Central Admissions Service (UCAS).

[31]. I would like to acknowledge my gratitude to Janet Ruyle, the former Deputy Director of the previous Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley, for drawing my attention to the actual conference papers, many in their draft form, from her personal archives.