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Theme: “Role of Postgraduate Research in an Efficiency Driven Economy”

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Extended Abstract

Title: Conflict Studies and Postgraduate Studies in Nigeria: Missing Links

Introduction:

The nation-states of the world through ages have striven to embrace wealth by all means and decimate poverty. This urge has seen movement from the simple agrarian societies to mercantile trades, the industrial revolution and the globalization-information technology era. Landes, (2008) in this sought to explain why some nations are rich and some so poor and maintain the status quo infinito. The developed nation-states thus pursue knowledge-driven societies with the intent to enhance their economic, political and social status with trickle-down effects in order to maintain global dominance.

This paper seeks to examine the priority given postgraduate studies and research and its affiliates to foster efficiency driven economies within comparative lens of developed and developing countries with specific reference to Nigeria in terms of short and long term implications. This is as it borders seeking connections between postgraduate research ameliorating violent conflicts, insurgency and terrorism within and amongst nation-states as practiced in knowledge-driven societies. Arguments abound that developed nation-states have thrived on higher pedestals of development given their synergy with researches from universities-cum-research organizations and other factors. Hazelkon, (2005:22), cited in UNESCO Report, (2008) concur that higher education in developed countries strive to match research priorities with national priorities.

Research Problem:

This paper seeks to examine the problem of coherence and coordination amongst state and non-state actors as it borders linkage of postgraduate studies and research in violent conflict prevention, post-conflict recovery and peace building interventions. De Coning, (2007); Lotze, et al (2008) in adding voice to this, posit that consensus amongst academics, policy makers and practitioners is vital to sustain the mechanism that guaranty security in the restoration of governance and economic stabilization in conflict ravished nation-states and even stable societies. Within this paradigm are the different challenges to “multi-dimensional development” within the whole gamut of healthcare,

infrastructural growth and access, security and peace (i.e. new wars - terrorism and insurgencies), agriculture, socio-economic, political, and environmental issues.

Hence within this context, higher education which drives postgraduate research and the expanding of the frontiers of knowledge has witnessed quantum growth across the world towards addressing this and other global challenges. This quest according to the UNESCO report (2008 cited in Kearney, 2008) has seen African students account for the second highest group of International students in the UK since the new millennium. In particular terms, Nigeria postgraduate students are ranked the 19th largest source of International students in the United States of America (US. Embassy, Nigeria, 2012) amongst other places.

The National Universities Commission(NUC, 2008) in Nigeria which is the institution mandated to regulate and manage university education in Nigeria acknowledge that there are over 70 public and private universities undertaking postgraduate studies and research in Nigeria currently. Herein, the argument of lack of synergy between the postgraduate research and socio-economic and political realities in Nigeria is the crux of this paper.

The specific problems are:

1. Less priority given to conflict studies at the postgraduate level in Nigeria
2. Most empirical and theoretical studies on internal violent conflicts in Nigeria are internationally driven, especially by non-state actors.
3. Weakness of connection between postgraduate research and various problems which confront Nigeria. i.e. conflict studies to mitigate violent conflict.

Objectives:

The main objectives of this research study are to identify the factors responsible for the missing link between conflict studies at postgraduate level and the violent conflicts which persist in Nigeria. The other objective is to ‘deconstruct’ two selected postgraduate research based reports within the ambit of conflict studies on Nigeria’s political and socio-economic future stability. This is with intent to draw attention to international research playing a substitution role.

Research Methodology:

This research is qualitatively focused with the intent of using documents from library by means of literature review, official reports, print media and other documents. This interrogation would be within a narrative and interpretative context with the systems theory (Easton, 1965) and public choice theory (Buchanan and Tillock, 1962; 1980) adopted and applied within this study.

Key Findings:

Most postgraduate studies undertaken in developing nation-states compared to developed societies are stereotyped to fulfill career requirements. The argument here is postgraduate research ought to fulfill the idea of the “greater good” for public interest. In specific terms, the disconnection identified between postgraduate research and conflict studies towards applying mitigating measures on the persistent violent conflict in Nigeria is manifest as seen in the limited programs in terms of rigorous research at masters and PhD degrees offered. The research reports emanating from postgraduate research are international driven (external) and they are initiated to pursue anticipated fallouts of armed/civil wars in terms of humanitarian crisis and other narrow economic and political interest of ‘world powers’.

Conclusion:

The paper highlights the gaps in postgraduate research in Nigeria as it borders the conflict studies domain with comparative frameworks. It posits that if conflict studies is anchored on rigorous research at the higher education level, and primed to connect the public administration and governance framework, an obvious panacea would be found for the reoccurring violent conflicts in Nigeria. The reliance on external postgraduate driven research would invariably trickle down.

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