



Roles of Alumni Association in The Development of Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria: The Need for Urgency

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Abstract

This paper examined the roles of alumna in tertiary institutions development in Nigeria. The paper adopted secondary data in the paper. The secondary data were collected from print and online publications. The paper identified the provision of financial support, the establishment of endowment funds, infrastructure facilities development, research development, provision of support for internal management, enhance students' scholarship and support of community service development of the institutions as some of the critical roles and functions of alumna association in the development of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Based on the findings of this study, the paper hereby recommended as follows: Alumna associations in Nigeria's tertiary institutions should be given a constitutional role in the management of tertiary institutions. Tertiary institutions' managers in Nigeria should collaborate with alumna associations in the development of tertiary institutions across the country.

Keywords

Alumni association, Tertiary institutions, development, community development

Introduction

Tertiary institutions have been conceptualized by different scholars to mean different things. Tertiary institutions encompass diverse institutions of higher learning that extend beyond universities (Ogunode & Ayeni, 2024). For instance, tertiary education is defined by National Policy on Education (2013) as the education given after Post Basic Education in institutions such as Universities and Inter-University Centres such as the Nigeria French Language Village, Nigeria Arabic Language Village, National Institute of Nigerian Languages, institutions such as Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs), and Colleges of Education, Monotechnics, Polytechnics, and other specialized institutions such as Colleges of Agriculture, Schools of Health and Technology and the National Teachers' Institutes (NTI). Tertiary education or higher education constitutes the university, which is a subset of higher education. However, in some contexts, higher education and university are used interchangeably (Assié-Lumumba, 2005). Ogunode, Edinoh & Okolie (2023f) defined tertiary education as a planned and organized educational system designed for the total development of man/woman and the total transformation of society through the utilization of teaching, research and provision of community service. Tertiary education is post-basic and secondary school education that embraces advanced teaching, research and community service.

Alemu (2018) opined that tertiary education or Higher education covers a wider range of higher learning institutions including the university. These higher learning institutions could be organized in different ways, commonly within a university and in a separate institution as university and other tertiary learning institutions. Tertiary institutions are an organized fraction of the whole society carved out for teaching programmes, research and provision of community service. The tertiary institutions can also be seen as a subset of the general society that is made of the collection of different people, different cultures, different lifestyles and different values (Ogunode & Odo, 2023).

The goals of Tertiary Education shall be to: Contribute to national development through high-level manpower training; provide accessible and affordable quality learning opportunities in formal and informal education in response to the needs and interests of all Nigerians; provide high-quality career counselling and lifelong learning programmes that prepare students with the knowledge and skills for self-reliance and the world of work; reduce skill shortages through the production of skilled manpower relevant to the needs of the labour market; promote and encourage scholarship, entrepreneurship and community service; forge and cement national unity; and promote national and international understanding and interaction (FRN, 2013). The other goals or objectives of tertiary education include; aiding the production of manpower; ensuring national unity; ensuring technological development; fostering national unity and international peace; increasing production through research; providing post-secondary school education; preparing students with quality knowledge and reliable skills for independent living

and the world of work (Ogunode, et al 2023f). The realization of tertiary institutions' goals depends on effective collaboration and partnership with other critical stakeholders in the tertiary institutions. The management of tertiary institutions requires the participation of all stakeholders in tertiary education. Oduwaiye and Famaye (2023) and Ogunode, Ayoko, & Orifah (2023) observed that the participation of stakeholders like alumna associations in the development and management of tertiary institutions is key and cannot be underestimated. Ogunode, Obioma, and Belloh (2023); Marks (2017) and Lee (2021) acknowledged that one of the crucial roles of stakeholders in the administration of tertiary institutions is to help solve problems facing the institutions. Babatola (2015) noted that during a 2013 visit of the Chief Richard Oma Ahonaruogho led-Conference of Alumni Associations of Nigerian Universities (CAANU) to Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, the then Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Olugbenga Aribisala, who represented the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Oladipo Aina, noted that Alumni Associations in Nigeria should participate actively in the development of their various institutions like their counterparts in developed countries. He asserted that great Universities in Europe were lifted by their alumni. He, therefore, urged the Alumni Associations in Nigerian institutions to follow the examples of their European counterparts. It is based on this, that this paper is aimed at discussing the roles of alumni associations in the development of tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Methods

This study employed the participatory theory of development. The theory was propounded in the 1970s as part of the basic needs approach to development. The theory holds that meaningful social development initiatives cannot be achieved only by external experts' involvement in the development process and that everyone needs to be involved in development decisions, implementation and benefits (World Bank, 1996; Claridge, 2004). In essence, the participatory theory of development advocates for the participation of the local people who are directly affected by government programmes (Asaju & Ayeni, 2021).

This theory is relevant to the subject matter under discussion because the alumna is former students who have been affected and who will still be affected by the good (or bad) will of the tertiary institutions they have finished from. The provision of financial support, the establishment of endowment funds, infrastructure facilities development, research development, provision of support for internal management, provision of students' scholarships and support for community service development of the tertiary institutions are the critical roles and functions of alumna association in the development of tertiary institutions for national development. These roles of alumna associations will go a long way in complementing the roles being performed by government (for public tertiary institutions), and corporate organisations among others.

Results and Discussion

Concept of Alumni

Alumni represent the framework of enviable academic traditions and culture which the institutions represent to society and its continued existence. What the Alumni therefore signify is the character, linkages and advancement of every institutional framework, end-product and relationship. No institution can survive without allowing its alumni to thrive and play a significant role in its affairs (Babatola, 2015). Alumni are the past graduates of the University, College or Schools University Advancement is the bonding relationships between the university and affinity groups including the alumni that contribute to the University's vision and mission - positive relationship building aligned with the university's strategy (Alumni Varsity Focus, n.d).. The alumni members as individuals who have passed through these universities and colleges are best placed to offer advice on the relevance of the curriculum to the demands of the professional workplace. They can volunteer their services for seminars and workshops. The alumni members are expected to play a significant role in the evaluation of the reforms' outcome. They can assist in monitoring and evaluating educational reforms. In doing this, the public relations planning circles can be applied as adapted from Danny Moss's (1990) lecture notes at the University of Sterling, Scotland (Ajala, 2001:47). The Vice-Chancellor, University of Lagos, Professor Oluwatoyin Ogundipe, FAS, has identified Alumni Associations as indispensable partners in the growth, development and advancement of academic institutions as well as education at any level. Babatola (2015) defined alumni as a body of old or former students (*alumnus for the male and alumnae for the female*) of an educational institution.

Alumni feelings according to Babatola (2015) create the atmosphere, belief system and behavioural pattern which sometimes result in a return of subsequent generations of alumni to the same institutions as a family tradition. Alumni spirit therefore revolves around the existence of a body of committed and responsible individuals who share common identities as graduates of the same institution and who upon the completion of their studies or graduation come together to join or form themselves as an organization of alumni stakeholders or a community of ex-officio members of the academic community or institution. The relevance and role of the alumni in every academic community typifies the stages and degree of scholarship and social attainment in the given society. Alumni bodies in the last century have grown into major stakeholders and indeed a permanent feature of scholarship and affinity in any academic institution, chartered or professional association. From the above, Alumni associations in this paper can be seen as groups of professionals who are past graduates of institutions like Universities, Colleges or other tertiary institutions that have come together to form a union or association meant for the development of their respective institutions. Alumni associations are graduates of institutions that have decided to invest back in their respective institutions by advancing development programmes to improve the quality of the institutions.

Alumni exist in association to be able to realize laudable programmes for their respective institutions. So, alumni exist in different tertiary institutions with different objectives but similar aims and goals of ensuring development in their respective institutions. The following are examples of Alumna associations:

Ekiti State University Alumni

The first set of graduates of the University graduated with a Bachelor's degree at the first Convocation Ceremony of the University held in 1986 at the University campus, Ado-Ekiti. On

30th August 1988, 9 graduates of the University led by Mr. Stephen Bulla Akinsipe, Prof. Samuel Sunday Asaolu and Dr. Ayan Adeleke met at the University campus to form the University Alumni Association Group, with Prof. Joshua Kayode presenting 1st draft of the Constitution of the Association. The Constitution of the Association provides for election into National Officers; a Board of Trustees headed by a Chairman with distinguished members was later elected. The aims and objectives of the Alumni Association are to pursue programmes and activities as follows:

1. To provide a link between the University and its graduates and through them, the public in general.
2. To initiate and execute programmes/activities aimed at accelerating the overall growth and development of the University.
3. To promote mutual understanding, cooperation, and fraternal understanding among the graduates of the University.
4. To provide advice to the University Authorities, State and Federal Government on such spheres of academic activities demanding specialist advice on the improvement of academic matters about the welfare of the University community in general.
5. To forge useful links between persons, associations, societies, institutions or bodies of persons established in Nigeria or elsewhere having similar objectives.
6. To establish a general fund for the maintenance and promotion of scholarship and scientific research in the University as well as provide any necessary assistance in the University.
7. To deal in any real or personal property and acquire rights and privileges in any part of Nigeria or abroad which the association may consider necessary or convenient for the promotion of these objectives and the objective of the University.
8. To create a forum for honouring members who have distinguished themselves in their fields of endeavour and their contributions to the life of the university and the Association (Babatola, 2015).

Ahmadu Bello University (Abu) Alumni

The Ahmadu Bello University Alumni Association started in the early 60s in Lagos. Pioneer members were Architect (Chief) Fola Alade, the Late Architect Lai Balogun and the Late Professor Awojobi. The aims and objectives are as follows:

1. To promote the welfare, standard, prestige and good name of the University;
2. To encourage a close relationship between the University Authorities, the staff, the students, the Association and the General Public;
3. To assist the various components of the University;
4. To provide services and donations to Charities, Religious, Educational Organizations and other non-profit making bodies;
5. To explore co-operation with Organizations that have similar aims and objectives within and outside the Federal Republic of Nigeria;
6. To institute a scholarship scheme and provide financial assistance to the needy, but educationally outstanding students;
7. To encourage members to individually and collectively support teaching and other scholarly activities in the University;

8. To promote cooperative spirit amongst members and encourage mutual self-help; Organize from time to time, seminars, conferences, workshops, symposia, lectures and other similar activities for the articulation of common problems relating to the development of the society;
9. To undertake all such other things as are lawful, necessary and conducive to the attainment of the ideals of the Association and the development of the Federal Republic of Nigeria ((Babatola, 2015).

The general objectives of alumni associations include;

1. Provision of financial support;
2. Provision of technical support
3. Participation in internal management;
4. Provide suggestions and recommendations;
5. Support infrastructure facilities development;
6. Promote accountability and transparency in the institutions;
7. Involvement in the institution's committee;
8. Support students' service and promote mentorship
9. Invest in the research programme of the institutions;
10. Support effective implementation of community service programmes of the institutions;
11. Mediate in government and institutions' union disagreement;
12. Support curriculum reform and development;
13. Promote quality education and project the institution's programme and image.

Roles of Alumna Association in the Development of Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

There are many roles and functions of alumna associations in the development of tertiary institutions. Some of the roles of the alumna association include; the provision of financial support, establishment of endowment funds, infrastructure facilities development, research development, provision of support for internal management, enhancing students' scholarship and supporting community service development of the institutions.

Provision of financial support

Alumni Associations in tertiary institutions have critical roles to play in fixing the financial gap in most of the public tertiary institutions across the country. This is because money is the lifeblood of every organisation (Ayeni, 2017). Alumni Associations of different tertiary institutions in Nigeria can come together and raise funds for their respective institutions. Alumni Varsity Focus (n.d) noted that government funding and student school fees are not sustainable methods for advancing higher education in Africa, there is a need to cultivate a third stream of income given that higher education will be a key driver towards social economic development in Emerging Africa. The above is corroborated by Ayeni and Ezirim (2023) when they noted that University education enhances the social and economic development of a nation. This is where University Advancement comes in. Advancement includes alumni relations, fundraisings, public relations, communications and marketing. The higher institutions should leverage other funding sources, such as from alumni, friends, the private sector, institutional linkages, and research grants, to attract additional revenue for infrastructure, research, and development, Adebayo

(2016) submitted that the school administrators in Nigerian public universities should organize strong alumnus associations of the Universities to get their financial support for the development of the universities, get suggestion for improvement of internally generated through consultancy services and mounting of sub-degree courses to generate more revenue for necessary expansion (Adekunle Ajasin University, 2011). Akinsanya (2016) and Akomolafe and Aremu, (2016) concluded that the universities can use the Alumni Association to raise more funds for the management of the universities in Nigeria.

Establishment of endowment funds

The University Endowment fund is the best investment that Alumni can ever make for the University. Endowment Funds provide steady financial support for the university's academic programmes and other needs. Endowment funds are invested for the long term, and earnings from those investments help support outstanding faculty, innovative programmes and student scholarships. A university's endowment is essential to sustaining academic quality because it provides a guaranteed, never-ending source of income to support professorships, student scholarships, innovative programs and learning opportunities. Donors don't support institutions that have needs but those that meet needs! This is why Ogunode and Ayeni (2024) argued that tertiary institutions perform certain roles for the orderly functioning of Nigerian society. Donors who contribute to the endowment do so because they want to support the university and positively impact students and academic programmes 25, 50 or 100 years from now (Alumni Varsity Focus, n.d). Gambo, and Fasanmi (2019), and Ogunode, Attah and Ebute (2023) noted that Alumni associations in universities can help their universities set up endowment funds to raise sustained funds for the universities' development. NOUN (2009); NOUN (2012); Nwafor, Uchendu, and Akani,(2015) and Ifeanyi, Ogunode and Ajape (2021) remarked that Alumni institutions can be part of fundraising teams of the institutions and ensure that institutions generate adequate funds to support their programme implementation.

Infrastructure facilities Development

Alumni Associations in tertiary institutions have a role to play in the development of infrastructure facilities. This is because infrastructure reduces human vulnerability (Ayeni, Andeshi, & Uzoigwe, 2022). Infrastructure is the operational input of every instructional programme and constitutes elements that are necessary for teaching and learning (Ehiametalor, 2001). Such infrastructure includes buildings, laboratories, machinery, furniture and electrical fixtures. These infrastructures must be functional in other aspects of the community, such as health centres, libraries, and good roads and must be large enough to occupy students. According to Ogunode (2020), infrastructure facilities are very important to the development of tertiary institutions. Akomolafe, and Aremu, (2016) and Ahaotu, and Ogunode (2021) noted that infrastructure facilities aided the implementation of teaching, research and community services. As absence of it hinders effective job creation, hence the presence of it creates and sustains jobs (Ayeni, Sani, Andeshi, Ibrahim & Adamu, 2020; Ayeni & Beji, 2018). The Alumni Associations in tertiary institutions can help to fix the problem of shortage of infrastructure facilities in the various tertiary institutions. Ogunode, Abubakar, and Ajape, (2021) and Ogunode and Obiakor (2023) opined that the Alumni Associations in tertiary institutions or the body of old students are major financiers of capital-intensive projects, programmes and endowments. Ishaya and Ogunode (2021) attested that Alumni Associations in Nigerian tertiary institutions can contribute to the

development of infrastructure facilities by donating infrastructure facilities or helping their former school to complete abandonment projects. Blueprint (2023) reports that Aliyu Bappa Misau, a lawmaker and a guest speaker in Abuja in a keynote address at the 2023, 3rd Quarterly Conference of the Association of Nigeria Universities Alumni, held in Abuja, submitted that the alumni associations as stakeholders play a critical role in enhancing quality education in Nigeria infrastructure development, they often contribute to the development of educational infrastructure by funding construction projects, renovating existing facilities, or providing resources and equipment. According to Ogunode and Ayeni (2023), training aids enable university administrators and managers to improve the quality of their work and boost productivity across universities. Blueprint (2023) further reports that Aliyu Bappa Misau observed that by improving the physical infrastructure of educational institutions, alumni can enhance the learning environment and create a conducive atmosphere for quality education, scholarships and financial assistance,” he stated. He added that alumni associations establish scholarship programmes and financial assistance schemes to support deserving students who face financial challenges. These scholarships can help talented students access quality education that they might not have been able to afford otherwise.

Research Development

Alumni Associations in tertiary institutions across the Country can help in the development of research programmes. This is because university education is created to provide teaching and research (Ogunode & Ayeni, 2023). Research is generally understood as creative work undertaken on a systematic basis to increase the body of knowledge. The knowledge in turn is used to devise new applications and improve the standard of living (Currie-Alder, 2015). Okeke (2004) further observed that research is an activity that involves the observation and description of the characteristic properties of objects or events to discover relationships between variables and develop generalizations that may be used to predict future occurrences. At its core, research involves the identification of problems, gathering of new data, and finding solutions to extant problems through carefully designed procedures and logical analysis. According to Osualla, (2001), research is an intensive and extensive search for solutions to societal problems, and it is oriented towards discovering the relationships that exist among the varying phenomena that exist in the world. According to Ogunode, Ayeni and Olorundare (2024), tertiary institutions are saddled with responsibilities to carry out research to solve challenges for the country and humanity at large. Research is useful for both academic staff and students and the institutions. The academic staff needs to conduct research to secure promotion in tertiary institutions. The students need to submit research to the school before graduation. The tertiary institutions need research to get good ratings nationally or internationally. Research programme in most tertiary institutions in Nigeria is poorly developed because of poor research funding (Donwa, 2006; Chen, & Huang, 2016). Echono (2023) noted that research funding plays a crucial role in the advancement of science, technology, medicine, social sciences, and other fields. Funding enables researchers to carry out their work, which often involves field work, costs such as equipment, materials, personnel salaries, and facility usage. Without adequate funding, many valuable and potentially groundbreaking studies and projects might not be possible. Research funding can be complemented by private individuals or associations like Alumni Associations. Ogunode and Ade (2023) and Brown, Smith, and Okafor (2022) asserted that the private sector and non-

governmental organizations like Alumni Associations among others have a lot to contribute to the development of research in the Nigerian higher institutions. The public universities should collaborate with industries and Alumni Associations to carry out research for them. There is a need for a collaborative effort from the government, corporate organizations, and international organizations to aid researchers' work through regular training and financial assistance. Ogunode, Jegede, Adah, Audu, and Ajape (2021b) agreed that Alumni Associations in Nigerian tertiary institutions can contribute to research development by granting research grants and supporting students' research programmes and investment in research facilities.

Provision of support for internal management

Alumni Associations in tertiary institutions can also participate in the administration and management of their respective institutions by giving pieces of advice and recommendations for the development of the institutions. Soeze's (2012) alumni associations represent a significant and vocal constituency. Alumni associations openly exhibit the ethereal affiliation between themselves and the institution that moulded or built them. They are strong voices which could exert a considerable amount of influence on the policy direction of education reforms. As a member of an alumni association, your contributions to this association are an overt expression of concern and regard for the future of the institution and its survival.

Enhance students' scholarship

Alumni can make a significant impact on students and higher education by providing mentorship, networking opportunities, financial support, expertise, advocacy and professional development support. The mentorship that members of alumni are supposed to provide is referred to as mentorship integrity - which means having an experienced person to act as an adviser (Ayeeni, 2018). Alumni engagement and contribution can enhance the overall educational experience for students, prepare them for successful careers and strengthen the relationship between alumni and their alma mater (University of Canada West undated). University of Canada West (n.d) listed some strategies to include:

1. Alumni Mentoring Programmes: Universities can establish formal alumni mentoring programs that pair alumni with current students based on career interests, fields of study or other relevant factors. Mentoring relationships can provide students with valuable guidance, advice and insights from alumni who have successfully navigated similar paths.
2. Career Services and Networking Events: Universities can organize career services and networking events where alumni can participate as speakers, panellists or workshop facilitators. These events can provide students with opportunities to learn from alumni's career experiences, build professional networks and explore career opportunities.
3. Guest Lectures and Workshops: Universities can invite alumni to deliver guest lectures, workshops and seminars on relevant topics related to their expertise. Alumni can share their knowledge, experiences, and insights with current students, enriching their learning experiences and exposing them to real-world perspectives.
4. Alumni Associations and Networks: Universities can establish and maintain active alumni associations and networks that facilitate engagement, collaboration and networking among alumni, students, faculty, and other stakeholders. These associations can organize events, workshops, and social activities that bring alumni and students together, fostering a strong sense of community and mutual support.

5. Alumni as Ambassadors: Universities can leverage alumni as brand ambassadors who promote the institution's reputation and achievements within their professional networks and communities. Alumni can serve as advocates for their alma mater, participate in marketing campaigns, and share their success stories, helping attract prospective students, faculty and resources.

6. Feedback and Input: Universities can seek feedback and input from alumni to inform their strategic planning, program development and improvement efforts. Alumni can provide valuable insights based on their experiences as former students, helping the institution continuously evolve and adapt to the changing needs of students and the broader higher education landscape.

Support Delivery of Effective Community Service Programme

Alumni associations in tertiary institutions can support the effective implementation of their institutions' community service programmes. Ogunode, Iyabode, and Olatunde-Aiyedun (2022) observed that the Community service programme is the third cardinal programme of tertiary institutions. A community service programme is an organized and planned service programme of higher institutions for the benefit and betterment of their host communities. Community service programmes of higher institutions are community-inclined services initiated by the institutions to develop the communities. Community service of higher institutions is service provided by institutions to benefit the community people. Community service programmes are done near the area where the institutions are located so that the host community can enjoy the benefits of the institutions. University education focuses on teaching, researching and providing community services (Ayeni & Andeshi, 2023). Community service in higher institutions includes all kinds of services that are meant to improve the well-being of the people and society in general. Community service is an essential service designed by institutions to provide socio-economic development to the community. Alumni associations in tertiary institutions can partner with their institutions by providing more funds to increase the institutions' community services. Alumni associations in tertiary institutions can sponsor research on community social economic programmes and present recommendations to public and other private institutions for actions and policy formulation to address the problems. Alumni associations of tertiary institutions can embark on community service in youth empowerment programmes, sanitation and provision of free health service and capacity building for the host communities.

Conclusion

This paper examined the roles of alumni associations in the development of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The secondary data were collected from print and online publications. The paper identified the provision of financial support, the establishment of endowment funds, infrastructure facilities development, research development, provision of support for internal management, enhancing students' scholarship and supporting community service development of the institutions as some of the critical roles and functions of alumna association in the development of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Based on this discovery, the paper hereby recommends that alumna associations in Nigerian tertiary institutions should be given constitutional roles in the management of tertiary institutions. Tertiary institutions' managers in Nigeria should collaborate with alumna associations in the development of tertiary institutions

across the country.

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