

A Microscopic Examination of the Educational system between China and Nigeria: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

The article uses a comparative approach to analyse the educational systems of China and Nigeria. It examines the present approaches involved in Chinese and Nigerian educational systems. And in the final analysis, it also compares the education of Chinese students and Nigerian students. Secondary qualitative data were used in both explanatory and descriptive approach. Empirical studies that are related to education system in both China and Nigeria were also assessed. These types of data are mostly used in both survey type and case study analyses. Thus, case study research method is used in the article. Data gathered were presented to compare the education system in both China and Nigeria. The gathered data were used to juxtapose and compare the education systems in both China and Nigeria. The article is expected to: provide better understanding of China and Nigeria education systems; provide a vivid comparison of educational systems of China and Nigeria; show comparisons of Chinese and Nigerian students and give suggestions as to the ways by which the education systems of both countries could be enhanced.

Key Words: Chinese Education system, Nigerian Education System, Comparisons between Chinese and Nigerian Education Systems.

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Introduction

There is no doubt that education is the foundation of growth and development in any developing countries like China and Nigeria. Since education is all about cultural activity of the people, it can be said that every cultural system has its own educational process and the yardstick for measuring educational quality and standard varies from culture to culture. Nigeria has witnessed a series of change in its educational policy making and implementation before and after independence. China, on the other hand has also tackled educational reforms and has excelled in some of her educational policies and has made tremendous breakthrough in areas of information technology, biological engineering et cetera. In Nigeria not much has been done to save the deplorable state of educational system. The Chinese people according to China Intercontinental Press (2007 Edition) have since ancient times been cherishing the tradition of respecting teachers and prioritising education. They honour Confucius (551 -479BC) and respected him as a great thinker and educator because, about 2000 years ago, Confucius initiated and advocated freedom to education, a move that broke the monopoly of education by the government and made it possible for ordinary people to have access to education. For these reasons China named the institute in charge of Chinese language spread worldwide after the great educationist "Confucius Institute". In Nigeria the 6-3-3-4 system was introduced by Professor Babatunde Fafunwa primarily to train people to be self-reliant and to separate students with academic capabilities from those with technical abilities so as to be able to create employment opportunity for themselves when they leave school. Another professor and former vice chancellor of the University of Ibadan, Professor Ayo Banjo pointed out that no Government has erected gateway to separate students of technical abilities from those with academic acumen. (Nigeria tribune, June 2012:26).

Rationale for Comparing Chinese and Nigerian Education Systems and its relevance

Globalisation is leading to a greater mobility of students not only going from one country to another but also from one continent to another, and each individual national education system benefits from one another. These benefits more often than not come from either staff recruitment or student mobility. There is therefore need for school admission officers/administrators, tutors, staff and students to be fully acquainted of the qualifications and other inherent benefits that may be offered by applying to other countries. Both China and Nigeria have a high population and as a result, both have a high demand of education. For instance, it may be incontestable to assert that in Asia, China is the most populous nation and in Africa, Nigeria has the largest population. In this regards, it is assumed that both nation will share similar challenges involve in education system. However, as result of globalisation, China/Africa or Sino-African co-operation, student mobility from Nigeria to China is becoming a phenomenon which, in the contemporary, has increased in leaps and bounds. It is however, to all intents and purposes of this treatise that the paper will serve as panoramic background information of both countries educational systems at all levels. Moreover, the political maps in Asian and Africa are constantly changing and this is affecting the educational systems and qualifications offered by potential applicants from one country to another (UCAS, 2015).

Nigerian Education System: Overview

Nigeria got independence in 1960 after going through a colonial rule under the British around 1850 till the period of independence. Nigeria education system accommodated that of American System. For series of years and decades, Nigeria has experienced a frequent political instability; and because of political instability, the education system has suffered a lot setbacks as a result of

shortages of both human and materials resources; inadequate qualified teachers, brain drain, poor school facilities, miss management of funds, poor educational environment, inadequacy of qualified and or required skills, poor student performance etc. However, the Nigerian government is daily striving hard to improve her education system by making it the nation's priority so as to preserve the nation wealth.

The Nigeria system of government allows the control and responsibility of education to be shared among the federal, state, local government, communities and private organisation. The education affairs, regulations, policies, management and principles as regards the education system of Nigeria are controlled and well stated under the National Policy on Education document (NPE, 2014). Be that as it may, it is significant to note that since the responsibilities for education are shared among the Federal, State and Local governments as well as communities and private organisations, education system in Nigeria is placed under the concurrent list in the constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria.

The Nigeria general education system depends much on the National Policy on Educational (NPE, 2014) which some people have described and adjudged as structured and planned system on paper as well as "mere statements in the document". The strategies of Universal Basic Education could only function within the planned system of NPE. Thus, Nigeria has its first basic education within the space of 9 years of free and compulsory primary and junior secondary school education. This free and compulsory education takes between the ages of 6 to 15 years of a child. Unlike other developing nations like China and India, It should be noted that the general language of instruction in Nigeria is English. And in most cases, the academic year goes from September to July. (<http://bffa-online.org>).

Primary and secondary education

Historically, the senior school certificate examination (SSCE) in Nigeria was firstly introduced around 1980s in which the SSCE certificate was established in the year 1989. However, before a Nigeria child would have been set for this examination, it is expected that the 9 years compulsory free basic school system and that of 3 years senior secondary school have been completed. The 9 years basic education is distributed into 6 years of elementary school and 3 years of lower level secondary education. After this 9 years free and compulsory education is completed with at least a pass in the compulsory subjects of the junior secondary school certificate examination (JSSCE), the child will be awarded a JSSCE certificate to be qualified for 3 years of senior secondary school education. Prior to 1999, this system is most time called the 6-3-3 education system in Nigeria which last between ages of 6 to 15 years old of a child.

Progressively, the primary school pupils who went through the first 6 years compulsory elementary education (6-12 year old) is set for the examination called the Common Entrance Examination at either class 5 or class 6. It is then that the successful pupils can proceed to the junior secondary school which takes place with the age of 13 to 15 year old. At these two levels the language of instructions still remains English. Similar to the elementary pupils, student at both junior and senior secondary schools must be on a uniform. And in most cases, mixed education system with both boys and girls is common in the 6-3-3 education system in Nigeria; although, some special government schools in some states still maintain separate schools for boys and girls.

According to the 6-3-3 system, no pupil or student is allowed to proceed to the next stage without successfully passing through the previous stage. At the first successful 3 year system of the junior secondary school (JSS) education, the student is awarded the Junior Secondary School Certificate (JSSC). While the second 3 year system of the senior secondary school (SSS) education, students are awarded with the Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSSC) after the final examination. The SSSC is in two forms; the first is the West Africa School Certificate (WASC) controlled under the 16 west Africa regions (ECOWAS) involving Ghana, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. There are some exceptional cases where students and pupils at both basic and secondary levels of education with high intelligence are allowed to skip classes as permitted by school principal and parents. Nevertheless, the second form of examination which is most similar to that of West African Examination Council (WAEC) is that of the National Examination Council (NECO). This is centralised under the Nigeria educational system and not like that of WAEC that is under West African region. The NECO started since 1999 and it is assumed that it functions below its counterpart - WAEC. In Nigeria, basically these two examinations (WAEC or NECO) grant students access to take the entrance examination to institutions of higher learning. The body that is saddled with this educational task has recently metamorphosed and got its name changed from University Matriculation Examination (UME) into Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME).

Admission into Higher/Tertiary Education in Nigerian Education System

The Nigeria higher education system gives room for different examination bodies to allow interested students who are assumed to have passed through the stage of both basic and secondary levels of education to grant access to higher education in Nigeria. Some of these examinations include: the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE), the General Certificate of Education (GCE) examination, Ordinal and Advanced Level ('O' and A' Levels), examinations, the Ordinary National Diploma (OND) and Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE). All these educational qualifications provided students access to higher education. Meanwhile, the UTME provides a platform through which students who have already completed and met the requirement of subject combination at 'O' level could secure admission into various institutions of higher learning in Nigeria.

In addition to this, Nigeria higher education is not only limited to university but also monotechnic, polytechnics and colleges of education (MPCE), however, the above listed senior secondary education examinations that grant access to university, also does to the MPCE. It should be underscored that Nigeria higher education system has a guided admission process. Besides UTME that grant student access into the first year university (undergraduate), those who also successfully went through the Advanced Level examination are given direct entering into the second year of undergraduate programme. The Ordinary National Diploma and Higher National Diploma (HND) are also given access to second year of university undergraduate programme.

Above all, the University Matriculation Examination (UME) that had earlier served as an entrance examination had between 200 and 250 as minimum score out of 400 total score in admitting students into the first year of undergraduate programme. The body that is in charge of the UME and which oversees to all the affairs in granting access into higher education is the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB). The Board also plays its roles and functions over the MPCE and UME entrance examinations. However, in early 2015, the JAMB merged both the UME and the MPCE to Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME).

University Education in the Nigerian Education System

In Nigeria, the University education training and administration is allowed to be controlled under the affairs of Federal, State and private institutions (public and private). The National University Commission (NUC) Board controls both the private and public institutions. The NUC involves in monitoring, controlling and granting accreditation to both public and private universities that operate at both federal and state levels. The main arm of this process by the NUC is to make sure that all universities operate under the same standard to give quality of educational skills to Nigerian university students. Nigeria higher education system also has some special higher technical profession that give room for some special skills and training to students such as the polytechnics, universities of technology, colleges of education for teachers training and other professional Institutions. Most of the monotechnics provide training in the field of agriculture, industry and engineering.

Higher Education in the Nigerian Education System

As earlier discussed, higher education in Nigeria is not only limited to university but also Diploma or Advanced Diploma programmes. The requirements of entrance examination into the various institutions of higher learning do not only depend on the JAMB but also students' possession of the ordinary level certificate ('O' level) which is the Senior School Certificate. Meanwhile, the Ordinary National Diploma (OND) programme only last for 2 years and 3 years for Advanced Diploma-Higher National Diploma (HND). In most cases, this programme aims at meeting up with the demand of the labour market where graduate are employed directly into the labour market after graduation. Graduate of these two Diplomas may not have direct access to be admitted for a master's degree in the university system. However, in 2015, JAMB had combined both UME and MPCE to form new Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME). Then students who could not make it to the universities might consider either polytechnics or colleges of education. Moreover, the most outstanding students with a distinction who graduated from the two(2) years Diploma (OND) can be given the opportunity to apply directly into the second year of undergraduate university programme. While student with a distinction from the 3 years programme may have direct access into part 3 of undergraduate at university level.

Just like other nations' higher educational systems, the higher education system in Nigeria is categorised into three (3) different stages of degree programmes: Bachelor, Masters and Doctorate. Bachelor degree which is expected to last for 4 years is preceded by the Senior School Certificate. It was initially 3 years but in 1989 the Bachelor degree was extended by an additional 1 year to make 4 years long. Although, in some peculiar Bachelor degree majors/programmes/studies like Medical sciences, Engineering, and Law, it takes a period of between 5 to 6 years depending on the university structure. All these programmes still operate at honour of Bachelor degree award. The next in the higher education stages after the Bachelor degree is the Master's degree also known as a postgraduate diploma which is expected to last for a period of 18 months, 2 years or 3 years depending on the programme. On the second or third year of the programme, it is expected that student will undergo an additional research/project skills as partial fulfillment of the programme. After completion of the Master's degree programme, students are awarded with certificates reflecting their degrees.

The last in the higher education stage that follows after the Master's degree is the third degree called Doctor of Philosophy (i.e., Ph.D.). The Ph.D. in Nigeria usually lasts within the space of 3 to 5 years followed by a Doctorate award after a successful completion of the programme. In Nigeria higher education, many universities makes it mandatory for student to complete a Master degree (Masters of Philosophy- a condition that ought to be met when a student could not make grade that could warrant his/her direct admission into the Ph.D. or MPhil/Ph.D. programme in the university) to be qualified for admission to a Ph.D. programme.

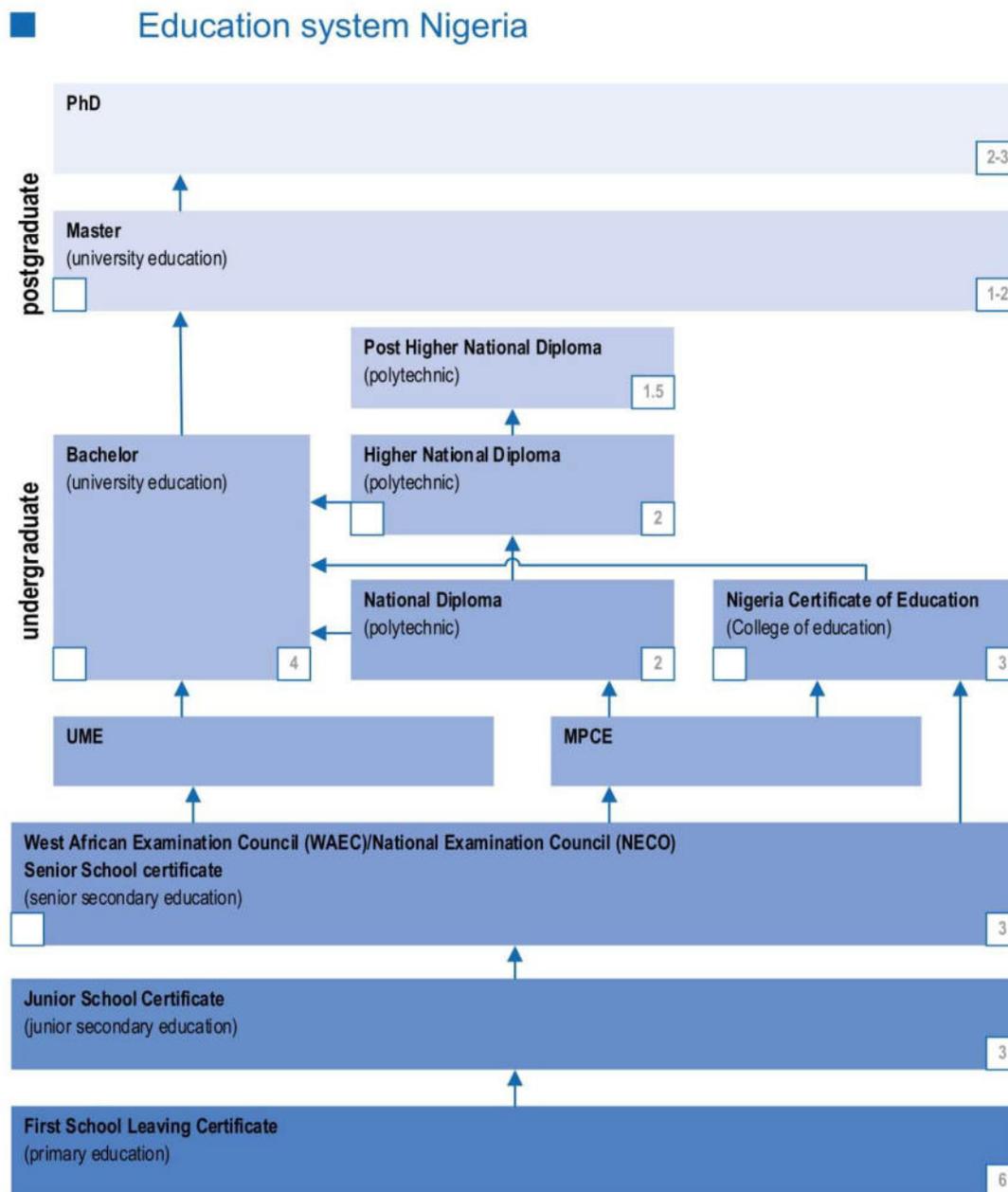
Nigerian Higher Professional Education System

As briefly discussed, it is the successful completion of the Senior School Certificate Examination that grants access to the professional education. At least a credit in about five (5) related subject including Mathematics and English Language will qualify a student to apply. The creation of polytechnics started around 1960 when the polytechnics of Calabar, Ibadan, Kaduna, Auchi, Port Harcourt, Maiduguri, Yaba etc., were founded. The polytechnics were to run for an ordinary degree called National Diploma (OND) for 2 years programme and a Higher National Diploma (HND) for another 2 years. However, every successful completion of the ND student must undergo a compulsory one (1) year industrial training (IT) for a practical experience before proceeding to apply for HND. After the HND, successful candidate may also apply to continue on an 18 months study of Full Professional Diploma called the Post HND. The affairs of polytechnics are controlled under the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE).

Nigerian Education System under the Teachers' Training Programme

The teachers' training programme is called the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) which remains the lowest higher education degree since 1998. The College of Education programme is run for 3 years before a certificate of NCE is awarded to a student after the successful completion of the programme. Since it is the lowest in higher education, student must obtain at least 3 satisfactory credits (pass) in related subject/course of study from Senior School Certificate in order to be qualified for entrance to the NCE programme. Student with a high satisfactory result who has successfully completed the NCE is qualified to proceed to a second year as direct entry to a Bachelor degree in education programme.

Figure 1: Triangular illustration of Nigeria Higher Education System



Source: Education system Nigeria | EP-Nuffic | 1st edition September 2009 | version 5, January 2015

Education System in China: Overview.

The Chinese education system is run under the state and ministry of education that operates as a free education to allow all citizens have the right to be educated. In early 1980s, the Chinese government legalised the compulsory education of the 9 years education for all citizens. Today, the Chinese government has achieved a remarkable record of fulfilling the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) goal of universal basic education. About 99.7 percent of her population has access to the compulsory nine-year basic education (<http://www.chinaeducenter.com>). The citizens attend a compulsory 9 years basic education which is fully funded by the government. The nine (9) years compulsory education consist of six years basic education from age between six or seven year old with a junior secondary school education (middle school) that last for three years for age 12 to 15 years.

In some instances, few provinces (states) operate a five years elementary (primary) education with a four years middle (junior secondary) school. Immediately after the middle school is the three years of senior/high secondary education. Recently, the education ministry in China reported a 99% of all children under the age of 5 to 11 years enrolled into the basic primary compulsory education and about 80% under the age of 11 to 13 years old enrolled into the middle school. It is significant to note that around 1980, the government of China gave room for private organisations and individual to intervene in the education system to enhance educational growth and development of the country. Consequently, in 1995 to 2005, the Chinese education recorded an increasing number of university applicants (Xiufang, 2003).

However, Xiulan, 2011 acknowledged that they are over 100 National key Universities in China including Tsinghua University, Peking University, Renmin University, Beijing Normal University etc. From 1999, the Chinese government spending on education has grown to 20% annually with spending of over \$100bn and with about 1.5 million of engineering and science students graduated from Chinese universities in 2006. To account for one of the progressive achievement in the Chinese education, more than 184,080 papers have been published in top journals since 2008. For instance, The China Digital Times, 2013 reported that China is the top in Asia and among the top countries in the world with the highest enrollment of international student. (China Digital Times, 2013). It was also recorded that the world largest education system is the Chinese education which has about 10 million students qualified every year to sit for the National Higher Education Entrance Examination called *Gao Kao*. The Chinese contribution to education is amount to about 4 percent of her total GDP. Every year, the number of foreign students studying in China is always on the high side. For decades, the Chinese education system has a long history of foreign student studying at the high school level and universities which have enhanced a significant impact on the Chinese Educational system and economy at large. About 811 Chinese universities have the capacity standard to enroll international students every year.

There is no doubt in the fact that when comparison is made with other fast developing nations, the Chinese higher educational system has developed so fast to a very high standard. However, China is still hoping for a better improvement and more effective reform in her curriculum. With the high level of teachers' training system, most Chinese teachers are highly trained. With a high historical recognition, the Chinese teachers today are well respected in the society because they are sound in their subject area. There is also a high level of effective continued training system for teachers in schools. After teachers are employed, they are organised school programmes that are meant to empower teachers through induction, training and development by professional and experienced teaching staff/workers. These organised programmes have added more teaching skills to newly employed teachers (<http://www.chinaeducenter.com>).

It is also amazing that Chinese education system does not only have programmes for international students at university level but the system also covers that of secondary school system. There are different kinds of programmes for the high school international students. These programmes are designed for international high school students to study in Chinese and English-taught programmes (as a language of instructor) and these programmes are also extended up to university level. There is also programme for international students who are learning Chinese as second language to take the courses in Chinese, Mathematics, English and other Chinese cultural courses (<http://www.chinaeducenter.com>).

Primary Education System in China

The Chinese 6 year's compulsory basic education for 6 or 7 year old children has the language of instruction to be Mandarin Chinese. More priority is given to ethnic minority students. The primary school system calendar runs similar with that of the two semesters of university calendar from month of September to July, from Mondays to Fridays. Just like most nations, the daily school system in China also maintains a five day classes in a week with about nine compulsory subjects (at the both primary and secondary) including Chinese, Morality, Mathematics, Politics, Social Studies, Physical Education, Labour Studies, Fine Art and Nature. Most foreign Languages such as English, French etc. are usually taken as electives. It is required that students must pass to standard in all the compulsory courses before they could be graduate. After graduating from primary school, it is expected that student should also pass the 3 years junior higher examination (*chuzhong* 初中) set and administered by individual schools with guidance from local authorities of education (www.classbase.com).

Middle School Education System in China

The Chinese middle school education system is the three (3) years Junior or lower secondary education under the nine (9) years free and compulsory education. It follows after the successful completion of the primary/elementary education system. Certificate is awarded to graduating students who successfully pass and meet the minimum examination requirement. The subjects where student are being examined are: Chinese, Chemistry, foreign Language, Mathematics, Politics and Physics. (www.classbase.com).

Senior Secondary School Education System in China

Following the successful completion of middle school education system (junior/low secondary school) in China is the 3 or 4 years senior secondary school. The senior school system in China is divided into two (2) parts; the general senior secondary school called *gaozhong* 高中 (3 years) and vocational/technical senior secondary school known as *zhongzhuan* 中专 (4 years). The entry into this two parts of senior high school education is determined by student choice and performance of the entrance examinations known as *zhongkao* 中考. Designed and administered by provincial educational authorities, the entrance examination includes the same subjects as the junior secondary graduation examination. Every interested student who desire to proceed from the senior high school to higher education is mandated to take the National higher education entrance examination called *gaokao* (高考 in China) (www.classbase.com).

Vocational Education System in China

The vocational education system in China is a special kind of technical skills education, offered at both senior secondary school level and post-secondary school level. The main purpose of the vocational education system is to provide specific educational skills and training to students who are skillful in art and designing, handcraft, sport, engineering, building, etc. in order to meet the expected needs, desires and interests of the labour market and society. After graduation, most of the graduates already have specific places to be fixed in the workforce. However, since year 2000, the Ministry of Education of China (MOE) under the vocation/technical programme does not grant students the opportunity to directly enroll into higher education. Interested student who desires to continue with the general higher education after a successful vocational/technical programme must take the NCEE (*gaokao*).

Higher technical/vocational education is available at the zhuanke (专科) level, which require two or three years of full-time post-secondary study. It is possible for graduates of higher vocational education programmes at the zhuanke level to obtain a "benke 本科" degree (Bachelor's degree) certificate through an upgrading programme, but in a limited number of fields. Vocational higher education institutions are currently administered at the provincial level (www.classbase.com).

Tertiary Education System in China

Tertiary/higher education system is majorly controlled by the government of China and less ownership is given to private institutions. Today, China has the world largest higher education enrollment with students who seek admission into various kinds of institutions such as, the general and technical universities, medical colleges, normal (education) universities, professional universities, adult higher education etc. Student must score very high in the entrance examination in order to have the opportunity to be enrolled in the best university and also be granted the choice of their course or programme. The process where just a few exceptional and outstanding students who performed excellently in their high school could be exempted from taken the entrance examination is called (*baosong 保送*). They will be recommended and admitted into their desired institution. In addition, student we can pay high rate of tuition fees could also apply to private universities and they are also exempted from taking the *gaokao* entrance examination. (www.classbase.com).

Table 1: Tabular Summary of the Chinese Educational System

Education	School/Level	Grade From	Grade To	Age From	Age To	Years	Notes
Elementary/Basic	Primary School	1	6	6	12	6	Basic education system runs between 5/ 6 years for children aged 6-12.
High School	Junior (Lower) Secondary School	7	9	12	15	3	This system is called <i>chuzhong</i> (初中) in China.
Senior high/Secondary	Senior (Upper) Secondary/ Vocational Senior (Upper) Secondary	10	12	15	18	3	The senior school follows after the successful completion of the middle lower school. Students have two choices to make either to apply to the general senior (<i>gaozhong</i> 高中) or vocational (<i>zhongzhuan</i> 中专). Vocational system lasts between 3 or 4 years while the general high school last for 3 years in China.
Post-secondary	Undergraduate Level - Bachelor's Degree	13	16	18	22	4	The certification awarded after a successful graduation of the 4 to 5 years programmes requiring 4 to 5 years programme is known as (<i>xueshixuewei</i> 学士学位) in China.
Post-secondary	Graduate Level - Master's Degree	17	18	22	24	2	Awarded certificate for the successful completion of master's degree (known as <i>shuoshixuewei</i> 硕士学位, 2 to 3 years of education) depending on the course of study. In China, candidates with age range above 35 may not have the opportunity to apply for a master degree.
Post-secondary	Graduate Level - Doctoral Degree	19	21	24	27	3	Doctoral degree programme that last between 3 to 5 years comes up after a successful completion of a master's degree programme. In some special cases, it most likely possible to combine a master's/doctoral degree programme. In China, this combination programme is called <i>shuoboliandu</i> 硕博连读. At the end of the programme, student will be awarded a doctoral degree rather than a combination of a masters and a doctoral degree.

Source: <http://www.classbase.com>

Table 2: Comparison and Contrast between Nigeria and China Educational Systems

S/N	Nigeria Education System	China Education System
1)	The ownership and control of education system is shared among the Federal, State and Local governments, communities and private institutions/ organisations.	Education ownership in China is mostly controlled at the state level of public education by the Ministry of Education (MOE).
2)	Because of the present educational crisis and instability in the system, there is a decline in the interest of international students to study in Nigeria. Nigeria formally used to be one of the top destinations for international students but that is not so nowadays.	With the speed in economy, technology and educational advancement, China has one of the highest enrollments of international students. Every year, China grants scholarship to students across the world to students in different course programmes including Chinese Language and Culture, Medical, Education, Engineering etc.
3)	Nigeria is the most populous in Africa but not the top destination for international students in the continent.	China is the most popular country in Asia for international students, and ranks third overall among countries in the world.
4)	As result of the high rate of population, Nigeria education still remains the largest education system in Africa.	Similarly, with the Chinese high level of population, China education is the largest education system in the world.
5)	The few International students do not study in local language but with <i>lingua franca</i> which is the English Language.	International students choose to study either in local Chinese language or English as a language of instruction.
6)	Primary education runs between 6 years from age group 6-12 years and ends with a First School Leaving Certificate.	Primary education runs 6 years and it is intended for children aged 6-12 years. Also known as <i>chuzhong</i> (初中) in China.
7)	Nigeria Education system has been on free compulsory education since 1999 when the first 9 years free and compulsory Basic Education was introduced.	The 9 years free and compulsory basic education started in China around April 1986.
8)	The official and language of instruction is English language (<i>lingua franca</i>). And the academic year is splinted into three terms and goes through from the month of September to July.	The official and language of instruction in China is Mandarin Chinese with the exception of the primary schools that mainly admit ethnic minority students. While the academic session comprises two semesters and runs from the month of September to July.
9)	Nigeria lower school education is now divided into the normal general 3 high school education and the special 3 years high vocational education. They both run at the age of 12 years and at the end of this programme, a certificate of JSSCE is awarded.	Similarly, the Chinese lower grade secondary education lasts three years which follows after the completion after the 6 years compulsory free basic education. Every successful student who performed up to standard will also be awarded with a certificate in order to continue to the next high school level.
10)	The next after the middle lower school is the senior secondary school that last for 3 years. The system of awarding candidates with the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) certificate has been in existence since 1989. However, the National Examinations Council (NECO) started around April, 1999.	The general high school education called the <i>gaozhong</i> 高中 in China comes up after a successful completion of the middle school. .
11) T	The senior secondary school consists of about 6 curriculum or subjects that are meant to be compulsory at all majors and they are: English Language, one of Nigerian major languages (such as Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo) Mathematics, one of Physics/Chemistry/Biology, one of English Literature/History/Geography and either an agrarian or vocational subject. Apart from the above listed subjects, there are also three electives, one of which students can drop in their final year. The requirement for the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) is at least a credit (pass) in each of the six compulsory subjects with any two elective making at least eight or at most nine subjects in totals. This requirement will grant students continuation of education into higher education.	In China, after a successful completion of the senior high school, students who are willing to continue their studies in the general (academic) university must not only strive to pass the National Higher Education Entrance Examination, also called National College Entrance Examination (NCEE), commonly known as (<i>gaokao</i> 高考) in China but also score a very high score to enroll into the best university of their choice.
12)	At the secondary school level, there is also a six (6) years technical vocational and commercial education in colleges that train on both labour skills and academic courses. This technical	Similarly, China also has a technical programme that runs through at both the senior high school and post high school

	programme runs through at both the senior high school and post high school levels. The specific purpose of this programme is to concentrate on students who are highly skillful in handy-work, technically intelligent in order to match in with the desire of labour market.	levels. The specific purpose of this programme is to concentrate on students who are highly skillful in handy-work, technically intelligent in order to match in with the desire of the labour force.
13)	University education is provided by universities. There is a distinction between public (including federal and state universities) and private institutions. Both public and private universities are accredited by the National Universities Commission (NUC).	Higher education is provided by institutions of various types including general and technical universities, specialised institutions, professional universities, military institutions, medical schools and colleges, independent colleges, and adult higher education institutions of various types.
14)	Higher technical and professional education is mainly provided by specialist schools and institutions such as Polytechnics, Institutions of technology, Colleges of Education and Professional Institutions. Monotechnics provide education in the field of agriculture and industry.	Some private institutions are exempted from the NCEE (<i>gaokao</i>) and accept all students who can afford the tuition fees. Prestigious universities (key institutions) maintain higher admission standards, and therefore require higher NCEE (<i>gaokao</i>) scores than other institutions. Entry to higher education in China is highly competitive.

Source: authors' computation, 2019.

Apart from the numerous similarities between Nigeria Education and China Education, there are countless disparities in the education system, especially among the students learning in both countries. To start with, Nigerian students are known for poor reading culture. Majority of the Nigerian students display lack of keen interest in education and continuous learning. Chinese students display keen interest in education and continuous learning (www.leadership.ng).

Evidence shows that in the case of a Chinese student, everyone is directly committed to the education of the child. The parent, relatives, government and others are concerned about the child's educational journey; this is not completely so with the Nigerian Student. The Chinese student lives in an education system that tirelessly works and is absolutely committed to the education of the student; this is not so with the Nigerian students.

The Chinese student is aware of the fortune and fame professionals such as scientists, programmers, doctors, lawyers, lecturers, teachers command (to a very large extent!), and other members of the elite professions enjoy in their environment; and so the Chinese student aspires to be one of these. On the other hand, however, the Nigerian student sees how entertainers, comedians, sports people and their likes walk into *Aso Rock*, hang out with the *crème de la crème* of the society and the entire media (traditional and modern) glorify these group of people. The Nigerian student aspires too to be like one of these.

The Chinese student sees graduates been hunted for by agents and talent hunters of Microsoft, Intel, Apple, Alibaba, sometimes even before their graduation; Nigerian student sees his elder brother, sister, cousin etc., many years after graduation, still living under mum and dad. And these unemployed graduates, knowing or unknowingly, weaken the desire for education-related aspirations that the Nigerian student might be nurturing.

The Chinese student hears the government repeatedly talking about how to build more universities, how to churn out more engineers, doctors, brain banks, think tanks, top minds, scientists, and how to turn China into a comprehensive learning society and its plans to build additional world class citadels of learning that will compete against the best in the world such as Harvard, Cambridge, Yale, Oxford and the like. The Nigerian student sees the government investing in Nollywood, multinational corporations sponsoring comedy shows, talent shows, and football academy and so on (www.leadership.ng).

Nigeria's Educational Cooperation with China

The Millennium Development Goals, a set of development goals for the year 2015, was adopted by the United Nations in 2000. With more attention to education — to ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. According to UNESCO (2008), by the year 2000 only 57% of African children were enrolled in primary schools, the lowest enrollment rate of any region surveyed. In Africa, there are several countries in which 40 percent or more of children do not meet a minimum standard of learning by grades 4 or 5. In countries such as Zambia, Ethiopia, Nigeria, half of in-school students have not learned basic skills when they complete primary school (Omoruyi, Olamide, Gomolemo and Donath, 2017).

Under the current model, half of sub-Saharan Africa's total primary school population – 61 million children – will reach adolescence without the necessary skills to perform basic numeracy task, to read or write (Africa Learning Barometer, 2012). More so, absence of support to students who are poor and less privileged could terminate their educational career or reduce the quality of their learning, especially if they are not able to meet the demands and cost associated with learning (Njeuma, Endeley, Mbuntum, Lyonga, Nkweteyim, Musenja and Elizabeth, 1999; Magdalin, 2015). In Nigeria, there have been significant contributions toward the education sector from the West and several multilateral agencies with focuses on basic education. However, in the last two decades, China has been one of the most important donors since it has increased its foreign development assistance to developing countries including Nigeria. The motive for such aid ranges from different developmental, economic, commercial and political perspectives, which seek mutual benefit for both China and Nigeria.

The People's Republic of China and Federal Republic of Nigeria established formal diplomatic relation on February 10, 1971. The bilateral relation between Nigeria and China has expanded trade and strategic economic cooperation between the two countries. China is considered as one of Nigeria's closest allies and partners. According to Odinye, (2015), 2014 BBC world service poll, shows that 85% of Nigerians view China's influence positively, with only 10% expressing a negative view. China - Nigeria relations has been characterised by viable economic and social cooperation. In 2010, Nigeria was among the China's five top trading partners in Africa with a total investment of U.S.\$7.8 billion (China Customs Data Frontier Advisory Analysis, 2011).

Chinese and Nigerian Education Systems: a Panoramic View of Similar Challenges

Education is the most powerful weapon which can be used to change the world, said Nelson Mandela, former South African President (Duncan, 2013). Of all human activities, education is among the highest and noblest that could ensure the harmonious structure of a nation. Education has played a significant part in economic growth, scientific and social progress in China and Nigeria by producing large scale of sophisticated talents for the growth and development of modern society. However, there are still a few challenges that (if overcome) will determine further development and over-all success of the Chinese as well Nigerian education systems in the near future.

In the first instance, educational inequality and inequity have been the cry of all stakeholders in the educational development in every country Uwamahoro and Mcjerry (2017). Meanwhile, China and Nigeria are of no exception. The barriers of education development in both countries are gradually being uprooted by solid and sound policies. That notwithstanding, there are still few challenges that demand a critical look. Under China's and Nigeria's Education Laws on Nine-Year Compulsory Education, primary and middle school is tuition-free. However, a small tuition fee is requested from students after the compulsory nine years of education during high school. Under this circumstance it would be hard for some poor families to meet the cost of education given their weak economy, especially for parents who live in the rural area. Despite the efforts for universal education, there are still equity issues and barriers that may discourage some parents to send their kids to school.

In relation to the foregoing, ensuring access to education and quality education, and reducing educational inequalities are important issues to address. The idea of education equity is that everyone is born equal and is entitled to the rights to quality education, which enables them to develop and master essential knowledge and skills to lead a satisfied life, and as long as one works hard, they have equal opportunities to succeed. For access to education, China and Nigeria have made great achievements in universalising compulsory education. For example, in China a large-scale education expansion has made basic and higher education more accessible. However, acute problems are still prevalent, including high dropout rates in basic education in rural areas, social constraints and barriers to access to school in urban areas, inequalities in access to quality education and in education achievements.

Although China's overall literacy rate has improved significantly in recent decades, there are widening disparities among provinces and within provinces. The coastal regions are richer in educational levels and resources, from both the public and private sectors. The differences in illiteracy among the provinces are huge, with the illiteracy rate of western provinces as high as 21–40 percent and most coastal regions below 10 percent. However, in Nigeria, the differences in the literacy among the so-called elite and the commoners are very conspicuous. One hardly sees the children of the elite in the government schools in all the strata of education in the country. Indeed, the state of decrepitude of most of the public schools testifies to the fact that the government often pay a lip service to the plight of the educational sector in the country. The lacuna in educational attainment of the children of the elite and less-well-to-do is so wide that it seems as though it is practically impossible for the government to wade into the problem and tackle it headlong.

As said by Gao (2014): 'a huge gap in educational opportunities between students from rural areas and those from cities is one of the main culprits'. Gao further noted that some 60 million students in rural schools are "left-behind" children, cared for by their grandparents as their parents seek work in faraway cities. While many of their urban peers attend schools equipped with state-of-the-art facilities and well-trained teachers, rural students often huddle in decrepit school buildings and struggle to grasp advanced subjects such as English and chemistry amid a dearth of qualified instructors (Gao, 2014). Moreover many families are in debt to finance the high school or university of their offspring. That is, the ongoing situation mostly in West and North-West of China where the low investment in poor and rural schooling almost invariably leads to exclusively children from rich families to continue to higher education (Collins, 2016). The reforms reflect a trend in China with regard to its educational system and the number of people who actually benefit from it (Collins, 2016). However, challenges still remain due to lack of funding that is a main focus and other socio-economic issues. In fact, in urban areas almost all children attend school but the school fee and tuition are very expensive.

Moreover, passing the Gaokao is one of the most important goals to reach for Chinese students as its score determines which college or university they can attend (Oyeniran and Uwamahoro, 2017). Gaokao is usually taken over a two-day period in June. The Gaokao was established in 1952 and was suspended during the Cultural Revolution in 1966-1976 (Economist, 2012). Gaokao is the only exam that allows students to be enrolled at a college or a public university in China and is seen as the best option for a brighter future (Rabkin, 2011). The National College Entrance examination and associated rules remain a challenge and barrier to migrant children receiving education in urban schools. Due to this requirement, millions of students have been forced to return to their local residency to take the Gaokao exam (Xinhuanet, 2012).

On the other hand, it has been argued that migrant students, who return to their hometown to sit the exam, are often not competitive as the curriculum and textbooks may be different from what they are used to in the urban area. Hilton (2016) reported that in some provinces of China some educators wish to see even greater changes in the Gaokao system with more diversified university entrance channels. Moreover, the exams are likely to be set in a different way compared to what they are used to and in some cases they need higher marks than their urban classmates to be accepted into a city college or university (China Labour Bulletin, 2012). According to Hilton (2016) most of Chinese people, especially the scholars and educators criticize Gaokao system arguing that education reforms will never be successful unless criteria other than the rote-learning-focused Gaokao are used in university admission. Obviously challenges remain despite numerous efforts that Chinese government has already made.

Similarly, in Nigeria, Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) is the national entrance examination that every Nigerian student needs to take before securing admission into any of the institutions of higher learning. Meanwhile, this entrance examination is seemingly outliving its relevance in the area of conducting examination into the institutions of higher learning. This is not unconnected with the fact that almost all the institutions of higher learning in Nigeria still conduct another entrance examination which is known as the Post-UTME examination. Therefore, despite that the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board was established in the year 1978 to conduct examinations (UME and PCE) that would usher students into any of the institutions of higher learning (universities, polytechnics, monotechnics and colleges of education) throughout the federation, the entrance examination(conducted by JAMB) into the foregoing institutions still have some challenges. One of these fundamental challenges is the non-credibility of the results issued by the Board which make most of the institutions conduct other entrance examinations before selecting the qualified students.

However, the exam-oriented education has always been a problem in China's and Nigeria's education systems and widely criticized by the public. Criticisms include intense focus on rote memorisation and examination, disconnection with everyday life, excessive homework load and exam pressure, teacher-centered learning, neglecting not well-performing students, and failure to

cultivate creativity. According to Wang, 2014 one of the challenges facing the Chinese education most especially at the basic and high school levels of education is that school classes are too heavy, they are hurting young people who are in daily tension. In the meantime, courses could be halved so as to reduce the workloads of the students. It is inappropriate that students read every day; they could participate in productive work and social activities. The current methods of examinations, with strange questions, and the surprise are baffling like strategies used in front of the enemy (Wang, 2014). During the last three decades of education reforms, policies concerning the reduction of burden on school students and improving the quality of education have been introduced but have not yet obtained satisfactory results. The ideology of work by the culture of the result is the one that defined the current situation in China.

One of other challenges that could be said to be confronting the education systems of both the China and Nigeria is the problem of financial constraints on the part of the governments to address lifelong learning. Coping with the world's largest population and the black most populous country in Africa, China and Nigeria still face serious financial shortages in various levels and types of education. It is however significant to note that both countries are confronted with the problem of inadequacy of finance in the educational sectors. For instance, both countries usually allocate less than 10% of their budget to the education sectors. These allocations are quite below the recommended 26% as put forward by the UNESCO. The trend may even persist in both countries under the disguise of financial constraints.

According to Sang (2015) Chinese investment in education is 4% of GDP. This investment is low therefore there is need to increase funding to address these challenges and problems faced by Chinese education system and make on going reforms successful at all levels of education. Therefore, despite the good economic and financial growth of China and Nigeria, the educational realities have certain difficulties which include but not limited to: limited funding from governments and limited professional training opportunities for teachers. Also most of small villages have no kindergartens or the schools are far from the villages. Parents have to send their children in cities for good schools. All these weaknesses are mainly due to the shortage of financing that maintain Chinese and Nigerian educational systems challenges.

In relation to the aforementioned, like basic education in China and Nigeria, there exist several challenges in higher education (HE) development process as there are some inadequate resources and issues of ability for cultivating the top-notch innovative talents is still quite weak. In fact, the graduates are criticized for lack of innovation, practical ability and social responsibility. The criticism seems to be more strident in Nigeria more than in the China. Also, the academic programmes seem not to meet the needs of the society because of the disconnection at time between curricula and the realities of the labour market and the social context. For example, in China, the education reforms do not often take into account the shortage in agriculture, forestry, water conservancy, geology, mineralogy, nucleus science, oil science, and so forth (Sang, 2015) despite the homogeneity of colleges and universities.

Certainly, huge efforts have been made by the authorities for decades to raise the level of education in China and relatively a semblance of such efforts had hitherto been made by the Nigerian government. Reports from the China Development Bank (CDB, 2015) has confirmed the educational progress by mentioning that after introducing a new compulsory curriculum in 1986, the country reached an enrolment rate of 100% in 2011, while literacy was reduced to 1.08% in adults. Likewise, the free compulsory basic education in Nigeria in the last two decades has witnessed phenomenal level of enrolments. Although progress has been made in this phase of education, there are still some difficulties in Chinese and Nigerian education. In this area, there are many problems like inequality, limited funding and high cost of education for the poor.

Conclusion and Recommendation

It may be plausible to underscore that this is the period of accelerated creation and dissemination of knowledge, in what could be called a knowledge revolution. It has important implications for what countries, especially China and Nigeria, must do with their education and training systems. To understand better what China and Nigeria need to do, this treatise helps to elucidate on the challenges facing the education systems of both countries. Hence, these challenges could be put under the rubrics of each of the following: competitive pressure from China's and Nigeria's integration into the global economy; the enormous education and training needs of a very large population confronting both countries in Asia and Africa respectively; low overall educational attainment; large regional disparities and massive structural change, restructuring, financial constraints and rising unemployment rate in each of the countries. In the same vein, while the rapid expansion of China's and Nigeria's higher education (HE) institutions has greatly improved access to HE, there are challenging issues facing the Chinese and Nigerian governments, HE providers, parents and students. These include graduate unemployment, decline in HE quality, unequal access to HE institutions, and decline in government funding. However, the most direct and negative consequence is perhaps the rise of unemployment amongst graduates and postgraduates.

It is often envisaged that perhaps, in the nearest future, both China and Nigeria will be more industrial and service-oriented economy, requiring a labour force with new skills and qualifications geared to a knowledge-based economy. Thus the education systems of both countries need to adapt to this inevitable change and face up the challenges, with multiple pathways and providers, flexible but sound qualification recognition systems, and most importantly develop new curricula and pedagogies that would suitably take care of these foreseeable eventualities. The objectives of the Chinese and Nigerian education systems are clearly stated in their policies of education, and primarily focus on learning training, a curriculum structure adapted to meet the diverse needs of students, a selection of knowledge and skills essential for lifelong learning. However, it would be more advantageous for young people to receive training adapted to the changing global economy and globalisation, in order to give the youth better chances of employability. In this perspective, for example the Nigeria's curriculum as well as China's national exams, known as Gaokao, could be reformed to hatch and encourage more talents.

New curriculum reform could be aptly regarded as a successful part of the quality education that could contribute a great deal to the political, economic and cultural development. China's vocational and technical education system faced problems as many of China's vocational schools have had a narrow curriculum, relatively weak connections to industry, and lower funding than academic education (Stewart, 2017). But in recent years, as underlined by Stewart (2017), China is making a huge investment in vocational education, adopting a series of measures to greatly expand vocational education and training schools and improve its quality. Nigeria's vocational schools are seemingly non-functioning again. Also, most of these schools lack the necessary equipment required for the training of the students. This perhaps might be one of the 'reasons for the low students' intake by the few available

vocational schools. Therefore, Nigeria can cooperate with China on this level of education so as to improve the level of the skills of her middle manpower and thereby improve the vocational education as well as the patronage from the students.

Faced with new socio-economic issues that require globalisation, China and Nigeria should invest more in their education systems to make it more productive and meet the ever-growing needs of their population. In addition, it is necessary to follow up the monitoring and the evaluation of compulsory education to ensure that all areas are covered, particularly in the western part of China as well as the Northern part of Nigeria. The education programme must take account of ethnic minorities and migrants and give them opportunities to higher education. It is equally necessary to strengthen the modernisation of the higher education system through adequate funding, effective administration and autonomy to meet Chinese and Nigerian needs as well as responding to global trends and demand.

In the final analysis, there is a need to develop a dynamic mechanism of educational cooperation between Chinese and Nigerian universities, research institutes, vocational schools, industries and businesses to prepare students for the socio-professional life. Moreover the each of the countries should support the poorest people in taking charge of students with repayable grants from the earliest years of work as is done in other countries such as Canada (Quebec). This, in the long run would encourage private initiative in a formal and regulatory framework by providing graduates repayable funds.

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