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# **AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF TERTIARY EDUCATION AS A VEHICLE FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN GOMBE SOUTH**

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## **Abstract**

The study examined the role of tertiary education as a vehicle for sustainable national development in Gombe South. Tertiary education which is all the formal post-secondary education, including public and private universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, monotechnics, technical training institutes, and vocational schools given to individuals who volunteer for it, is to the education system what the head is to the body. It is through it that proficient and high-skill manpower are produced, with a fundamental base for innovation, growth, and a productive drive for all-round national development. From the stated objectives of the study, four (4) research questions were formulated to guide the study. The study adopted a survey research design with a population of four hundred (400) respondents selected through a simple random sampling technique. That is one hundred (100) respondents from each of the four (4) Local Government Areas. From whom data were carefully collected and generalizations made on the entire zone of the state. A self-developed structured questionnaire titled "An assessment of the role of tertiary education as a vehicle for sustainable national development" was used for the collection of data with observation. Face and content validity were determined thoroughly for the instrument. A simple percentage was used to answer the four research questions raised. The study showed that tertiary education is a catalyst for sustainable national development in the zone. That is, tertiary institutions trigger development where they are sited and the output of these institutions is equipped to cause development also through the training and skills they acquire. The study recommended the expansion and development of existing tertiary institutions in Gombe South and the opening of campuses in Shongom and Balanga Local Government Areas that do not have such to meet the demand for tertiary education, as well as increase the funding of the existing institutions to accommodate more applicant who are unable to be admitted as a result of lack of space and facilities to cater for them.

**Keywords:** Tertiary Education, Institution, National development, Applicant, Local Government

## **Introduction**

It is the vision and desire of every government to achieve sustainable national development, which is the progress and improvement in every sector of the economy which also reflects in the well-being of its citizens. This kind of attainment comes with pride because it leads to a higher

value of influence among the comity of nations, and it also draws citizens to be attached to their government due to the vast benefits they get from it. But no nation can achieve any meaningful progress without education, we believe in Nigeria that “education is an instrument for national development” (FRN,2004:6). This justifies the government huge investment in the sector. And more so, the sector services other sectors of the economy. For sustainable national development to be achieved, tertiary education is the vehicle that must be employed for that journey. The quest for a strong, self-reliant nation as well as a great and dynamic economy full of bright opportunities for all citizens can only be achieved through qualitative tertiary education.

Tertiary education means all formal post-secondary education, including public and private universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, monotechnics, technical training institutes, and vocational schools. In other words (FRN, 2014) says it is the education given after secondary education in universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, and monotechnics including those institutions offering correspondence courses. Wikipedia (2023) defines tertiary education to mean the third level or third stage education given to graduates of post-secondary schools which culminates in the receipt of certificates, diplomas, or academic degrees. However, Unesco (2019) sees tertiary education as those institutions of learning which focus on learning endeavours in specialized fields. To them, it includes academic and higher vocational education. Voga (2022) opines that tertiary education is commonly referred to the post-secondary education or academic pursuits undertaken after high school. He added that you can find tertiary education programmes at vocational schools, community colleges, technical schools, professional schools, colleges and universities.

This advanced level of education is germane in fostering growth, creating employment, averting poverty, enhancing economic prosperity and fast racking development in every region or state. It is through tertiary education that a proficient and high skill workforce is made and produced, with lifelong access to a solid foundational base which is a prerequisite for innovative ideas, sincere growth, productive drive for all-round growth and development of a nation. Tertiary education is not important just for the individual attaining it, but it is beneficial to the larger or entire society as a whole. The relevant job skills that society needs in order to grow and develop are obtained mainly from tertiary education. According to the World Bank Group (2023), graduates of tertiary education possess skills that secondary school graduates do not have and will earn more than twice as much as their secondary school counterparts over a lifetime. When we talk about tertiary education, we are not just focusing on University and Polytechnic education. It equally implies tertiary technical and vocational education and training that is given to seekers for effective and efficient complementary to traditional university skills and knowledge relevant to the growth and development of society. Tertiary education must reflect the social, political, scientific, sports, cultural, agricultural and economic needs of the global knowledge economy, which constantly demands a better-trained, more proficient, and adaptable human capital. Tertiary education is to the education system what the head is to the body it produces high level manpower, develops proper values and intellectual capabilities in citizens, encourages scholarships and also promotes international understanding.

Over the years, the outcry has been that graduates of tertiary education in the country do not possess the prerequisite knowledge technical wherewithal, and relevant skills needed to drive the various sectors of the economy for national growth and development. Experts allege that graduates of tertiary education lack the quality and capacity to effectively function successfully in the labour market and its requirements. No nation can attain National Development outside of education and tertiary education is key to attaining that goal. Gboyega (2003) opines that national

development implies the improvement of a nation, economically, socially and politically to better the living standard or living conditions of the people. Olajire (2022) corroborates Gboyega's view by adding that national development implies the process by which a country improves the social and economic well-being of its citizens through the provision of amenities such as quality education, good roads, medical facilities and other social infrastructure. And these are instrumental in fostering growth, reducing poverty, and boosting shared prosperity, triggering innovation, and growth.

Gombe State which is located in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria, blessed with a number of both Federal and State Tertiary Institutions. But the focus of this investigation is Gombe South which comprises five (4) Local Government Areas of Balanga, Billiri Kaltungo and Shongom. With basically three (3) tertiary institutions established within this zone. They are the Federal Polytechnic Kaltungo, College of Health Technology Kaltungo (state) and College of Education Billiri (state) to assess the reason for siting these institutions in the zone, the roles they are expected to play for the development of the zone and the quality of man-power they are producing; whether they are in line with their core establishment mandates and meeting the expectation of the zone, state and nation at large. Since, Tertiary education institutions produce better better-trained population, and a more skilled and adaptable workforce.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Education is the most important instrument of change and a potent tool for national development. While universal tertiary education has remained the major catalyst for economic, scientific, and technological growth and innovative development, the Nigerian tertiary education sector is faced with a myriad of challenges that impede its contribution to national development. Despite the proliferation of tertiary institutions in the country, the value and contribution of tertiary education has significantly declined. The goals of tertiary education include the contribution to national development through high level relevant manpower training, inculcating proper values for the survival of individuals and society, developing the intellectual capability of the individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments and give self-reliant skills, producing useful members of society, encouraging scholarships and community service while promoting national unity and international understanding can also fast-track the growth and development of the places where they are sited. But these are not being achieved as expected.

Again, because education is in the matrix of politics, Nigerian politicians sometimes wake up to establish some of these tertiary institutions without any recourse to the existing ones. They see tertiary institutions as dividends of democracy. No wonder our tertiary institutions are faced with many challenges such as infrastructural decay, inadequate qualified staff and facilities for learning and research, incessant strike actions, poor remuneration of staff and inadequate funding, poor conditions of service and poor working environment amongst many.

It is in the context of this that this research work seeks to assess the role of higher education in Gombe South Zone of the State to uncover the rationale for their establishment, functionality, challenges and contributions to national development.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main aim of this study is to assess the role of tertiary education as a vehicle for sustainable national development in Gombe South. Specifically, the study is geared towards achieving the following objectives:

- i) To find out the motive of siting College of Education in Billiri, College of Health Technology in Kaltungo and Federal Polytechnic also in Kaltungo in Gombe South.
- ii) To assess how these institutions are meeting the man-power need of the zone
- iii) To evaluate the socio-economic impact of these institutions on the developmental strides of the zone and the state at large.
- iv) To appraise whether these institutions are meeting their establishment core mandates and suggest ways of improving for optimal results and development of the zone.
- v) To determine the extent to which graduates of these institutions are contributing to the development of the zone.

### **Research Questions**

The following critical research questions guided the study:

- i. What factors motivated the siting of the College of Education in Billiri, College of Health Tech. in Kaltungo and Federal Polytechnic in Kaltungo in the Southern Zone of Gombe State?
- ii. In what ways are these Tertiary Institutions serving the manpower expectation of the Zone?
- iii. In what ways have these institutions (College of Education, Billiri, Health Tech, Kaltungo and Federal-Poly) impacted the developmental strides of the zone?
- iv. Are these Institutions (College of Education, Billiri, Health Tech, Kaltungo and Federal-Poly) meeting the core mandates of their establishment?

### **Operational Definition of Terms:**

**Tertiary institutions**- the education given to recipients after secondary education in universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, monotechnics including those institutions offering correspondence courses.

**National development**- all round growth and sustained wellbeing of the citizens

**Vehicle**- is the means for the attainment of national growth and development.

### **Methodology**

The research design used for this research was a combination of case study and descriptive survey research design. Survey research according to Awotunde and Ogunduluwa (2004:11), is the collection of data from a larger population through sampling or representative of members of the studying groups that possess all the features of the larger population. This could be done through the use of a questionnaire, interview, observation and test. The main purpose is to describe the characteristics of the entire population. Survey research in studies provides information on facts, opinions, and attitudes of individuals on educational institutions, problems or objectives. Since this study is about tertiary institutions and the opinion of the people of the zone about the institutions, this design is therefore suitable for the study. The population of this study consist of people from the four (4) Local Government Areas in the Zone. Which are Balanga, Billiri, Kaltungo and Shongom.

Four hundred (400) respondents were selected for this study through a simple random sampling technique within the area. That is one hundred (100) respondents comprising students of the aforementioned institutions from each of the four (4) Local Government Areas to give us a total of 400. Generally, male and female respondents were involved. The selection of the respondents administered with the questionnaire for this study was through the simple random sampling technique. Pieces of paper were folded with yes/no and mixed together and the respondents picked one after the other. The respondents who picked yes were sampled with the questionnaire

while those who picked no were allowed to go. This simple method of selection of respondents was the best approach used in this study as it eliminated chance multiplicity and allowed a chance to determine only those who picked yes to be sampled and to remove the possibility of researcher bias and influence.

The instrument used for data collection was a researcher's self-made and validated questionnaire. The use of the questionnaire became very expedient because of the large size of the respondents and the coverage of the study. The instrument was thoroughly subjected to content-face validity. This determines the reliability of the instrument and validity. To achieve content validity and reliability of the instrument a trial testing was conducted on NCE 3 students of College of Education, Billiri. This gave it the internal consistency reliability estimate determined by using the K-R formula with the internal consistency application at 0.86 which was seen best for the survey. Respondents ticked options that applied to them provided for in the questionnaire with Section-A and Section-B. Section A Captured Bio-data or the demographic information of the respondent while Section B was the Likert Scale proper with options from Strongly Agree –SA, Agree-A, Strongly Disagree-SD and Disagree-D. The descriptive statistical method of simple percentage was employed to analyze the data received from the research questionnaire for the study.

**Research Question One:** What do you think motivated the siting of C.O.E in Billiri, College of Health Tech in Kaltungo and Federal-Poly in Kaltungo all in Gombe South?

**Table 1: Responses on the motive for siting College of Education in Billiri, College of Health Technology in Kaltungo and Federal Polytechnic in Kaltungo all in Gombe South Zone.**

S/n	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1.	Resource availability	159 (39.75%)	141 (35.25%)	49 (12.25%)	51 (12.75%)	400 (100%)
2.	Government policy	181 (45.25%)	129 (32.25%)	43 (10.75%)	47 (11.75%)	400 (100%)
3.	For Local development	170 (42.5%)	149 (37.25%)	36 (9%)	45 (11.25%)	400 (100%)
4.	Population size of the zone	142 (35.5%)	138 (34.5%)	57 (14.25%)	63 (15.75%)	400 (100%)
5.	Educational need and demand	181 (45.25%)	134 (35.5%)	35 (8.75%)	50 (12.5%)	400 (100%)

**Source: Field Survey,2023**

Responses in Table 1 shows that the siting of College of Education in Billiri, College of Health Technology in Kaltungo and Federal Polytechnic Kaltungo must have been motivated by the availability of financial, material and will at the coffers of government. About 75% of the respondents proved in that direction while only 25% responded against it. Similarly, 79.75% of respondents were positive that the siting of the institutions in the zone was for a local drive to develop the region. As most tertiary institutions can transform localities due to their value-ridden

approach. Again, 80.75% of our respondents responded positively that the siting of the institutions within the zone was to meet the educational demand of the region since education was a right of every citizen and that the population size of the zone was enough to attract such tertiary institutions.

**Research Question Two:** In what ways are these institutions (College of Education, Billiri, Health Tech, Kaltungo and Federal-Poly) serving the man-power expectations of the zone?

**Table 2: Responses on the extent to which these schools are serving the man-power need of the zone**

S/n	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1.	By Providing specialized educational training in various fields.	110 (27.5%)	120 (30%)	84 (21%)	86 (21.5%)	400 (100%)
2.	By Providing adequate training and workshops to local workforce.	100 (25%)	111 (27.75%)	89 (22.25%)	91 (22.75)	400 (100%)
3.	By Providing graduates to the workforce of the state.	169 (42.25%)	132 (33%)	47 (11.75%)	52 (13%)	400 (100%)
4.	By Providing skilled employees.	120 (30%)	131 (32.75%)	74 (18.5%)	75 (18.75%)	400 (100%)
5.	Through the Conduct of research to address local issues and provide solutions.	110 (27.5%)	110 (27.5%)	91 (22.75%)	89 (22.25%)	400 (100%)
6.	Through Professional development and collaborative projects.	114 (28.5%)	120 (30%)	82 (20.5%)	84 (21%)	400 (100%)
7.	Through Community services.	128 (32%)	132 (33%)	69 (17.25%)	71 (17.75%)	400 (100%)

**Source: Field Survey,2023**

Responses in Table 2 show the man-power need of the zone is being gradually met because 75.25% of the respondents reacted positively. Only a fraction of 24.75% responded negative. This is very obvious since the 3 institutions in question are not of the same type and do not offer the same type of certificate or run similar programmes. The College of Education produces teachers while the College of Health deals with health-related programmes and lastly the Polytechnic is majorly centred on humanities with a National Diploma as its certificate. Similarly, 55% of respondents' and 65% are positive that the zone benefits from the research conducted by these institutions and other community services they render to address the problems of the zone.

**Research Question Three:** How have these institutions (College of Education, Billiri, Health Tech, Kaltungo and Federal-Poly) impacted the zone?

**Table 3: Responses on the significance and impact of the Institutions in the Zone**

S/n	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1.	In skills development.	134 (33.5%)	126 (31.5%)	75 (18.75%)	65 (16.25%)	400 (100%)
2.	In job creation.	201 (52.5%)	180 (45%)	9 (2.25%)	10 (2.5%)	400 (100%)
3.	Providing access to education.	156 (39%)	159 (39.75%)	40 (10%)	45 (11.25%)	400 (100%)
4.	By providing business opportunities.	165 (41.25%)	130 (32.5%)	49 (12.25%)	56 (14%)	400 (100%)
5.	In cultural exchange and engagements.	103 (25.75%)	101 (25.25%)	99 (24.75%)	97 (24.25%)	400 (100%)
6.	In improved infrastructure and local tourism	149 (37.25%)	141 (35.25%)	60 (15%)	50 (12.5%)	400 (100%)

**Source: Field Survey,2023**

Responses in Table 3 show that these institutions are of immense value to the inhabitants of the zone. 97.5% of respondents are positive that the presence of these institutions in the zone does not only provide access to education which is the main focus but that it has created many job opportunities for the people of the zone, state and the nation at large. About 73.75% also supported that business opportunities have been enhanced within the zone especially around where the institutions have been located. This also attracts people and leads to cultural exchange and infrastructural growth of the zone as against what it was before the arrival of the institutions.

**Research Question Four:** Are these institutions (College of Education, Billiri, Health Tech, Kaltungo and Federal-Poly) meeting the core mandates of their establishment?

**Table 4: Responses on the extent to which the Institutions are meeting their establishment mandates**

S/n	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1.	Adequately.	110 (27.5%)	116 (29%)	81 (12.75%)	93 (23.25%)	400 (100%)
2.	Need financial support to achieve that.	115 (28.75%)	116 (29%)	90 (22.5%)	79 (19.75%)	400 (100%)
3.	The challenges of tertiary institutions in Nigeria are peculiar to them.	159 (39.75%)	141 (35.25%)	49 (12.25%)	51 (12.75%)	400 (100%)
4.	Not suited for the zone.	110 (27.5%)	104 (26%)	91 (22.75%)	95 (23.75%)	400 (100%)
5.	Infrastructural inadequacies in the zone hampering performance.	112 (28%)	119 (29.75%)	88 (22%)	81 (20.25%)	400 (100%)

**Source: Field Survey,2023**

Responses in Table 4 show that the institutions are meeting their establishment mandates 56.5% of the respondents argued so while 43.5% responded in the negative that not adequately. Similarly, 57.75% responded that the institutions need adequate funding from the government for them to perform optimally that the challenges of tertiary institutions in the country are peculiar to these and that some of the infrastructural inadequacies of the zone such as lack of constant power supply and water is a hindrance.

### **Discussions**

The first objective was to uncover the reason for the siting of these 3 institutions in the zone. The study revealed that resource availability, government decisions, the interest in local development, the population size of the zone and the educational needs of the people of the zone necessitated the reason for the establishment of the institutions in the zone. This is in line with the government's desire to provide the people with the basic needs for sustenance, survival and development. Since education is an instrument of excellence for meaningful growth and development.

The second objective of the study examine how the manpower need of the zone is being met. The study revealed that the specialized educational training being provided by these institutions is meeting the man-power needs of not only the zone but also those of the state and the sub-region at large as some graduates of these institutions work outside the state. So, on the whole, these institutions are professionally developing the people of the zone and technically addressing some of their local problems through the research they conduct and the community services they render. The study also found out the schools have impacted the zone in many ways; aside from serving as easy access to education for the people of the zone, they have provided the residents of the zone with many job opportunities to some academic while others non-academic positions which were hard to come by before the arrival of the institutions. While business opportunities have been opened up for the people of the zone and many outsiders that are interested are serving as avenues for cultural exchanges and infrastructural appeals. Meanwhile, the institution needs to be supported with improved funding and other essential infrastructure that the zone lacks such as electricity, good road networks, pipe-borne water supply and guaranteed security and safety of the residents.

### **Conclusion**

This study of an assessment of the role of tertiary education as a vehicle for sustainable national development in Gombe South empirically showed that tertiary education is a catalyst for the growth and development of a place. Apart from the main goals of contributing to national development through high-level relevant manpower training, inculcating proper values for the survival of individuals and society, developing the intellectual capability of the individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments and to give self-reliant skills, producing useful members of society encouraging scholarships and community service with the promotion of national unity and international understanding, they can also fast-track the growth and development of the places where they are sited. As it is the case with Gombe South where the study showed that the zone is better with the establishment of these institutions than without them.

### **Recommendations**

From the findings of this study, it is true that education is in the matrix of politics; the political class in most cases determine the siting and location of schools and colleges in the country. In recourse to the above mentioned fact, the paper therefore proffer the following

recommendations:

1. The siting and establishment of schools no matter the category should be determined by need and the availability of resources to support such a creation and the existing ones should be properly funded to operate at optimal levels before establishing new ones.
2. The establishment of tertiary institutions in the country should not be driven by politics but by dire necessity and availability of resources to back the creation.
3. The provision of education should be driven not by quantity but by a combination of quantity and quality. Because our progress as a people is hinged on the provision of quality education as John F. Kennedy captured it very succinctly by saying “Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education” That is, if an institution is not poised to train in excellence, it is no institution at all.
4. Since tertiary education is what the head is to the body and education is a vehicle for sustainable national development. It should be given to people or locations who deserve it the most not an instrument of oppression and domination.

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