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Beyond the Award of Degrees: An Analysis of the Role of Federal University Wukari in the Economic Transformation of the Host Community, 2011 – 2019

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Abstract

Universities are generally considered high-level educational institutions where teaching and learning are undertaken. As a knowledge-based institution, therefore, the citing of a university in communities naturally attracts large populations of those who seek to teach and learn. Nevertheless, while it is right to consider teaching and learning as the primary responsibility of the university; it is also pertinent to note the transformational role that these institutions have played in the economies of their host communities. Unfortunately, scholars have not shown commitment to investigating these citadels of learning and bringing out their contributions to the economic transformation of their host communities. Thisstudy was undertaken to unravel and document the role of Federal University Wukari in the economic transformation of the community that houses the University. The work has shown that the establishment of the University served as a pull factor for the migration of people into the area. As much as the university continued to grow there was a constant increase in the population of Wukari. Aside from its envisaged role of setting an environment for higher learning, the university also provided members of the host community with employment opportunities and opened up additional avenues forgenerating revenue within the Wukari area.Also, with the increase in the population of Wukari, commercial activities began to receive a boost. With all these changes taking place, it was clear that the impact of the university had permeated the Wukari community beyond the award of degrees alone.

Keywords: Federal University Wukari, Host Community, Economic Transformation

Introduction

The congregation of people at any point in society has never occurred without attendant impact. Be it positive or negative, the bottom line is results are produced wherever and whenever there is interaction among people. This assertion also applies to tertiary institutions where large numbers of people usually converge (basically) for teaching and learning. While the primary aim of

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establishing Universities in Nigeria is linked with the need to provide people with access to higher education, other social and economic implications manifest from the interactivity of people in and around these citadels of learning. For instance, the institutions have often served as centers for the migration and integration of people. Resultantly, the tertiary institutions develop into central places with various economic and social relations.

In the case of Federal University Wukari, the institution has continued reverberating to the host community beyond the award of degrees. Economic transformation has remained consistent in Wukari since the institution's establishment in 2011. Curiously, scholars appear not to have paid attention to account for the changes in the area during this period. This article has examined the historical changes occasioned by the establishment of the university and how those changes have transformed the economic fabric of the Wukari area. The study spans from 2011 to 2019. The choice of 2011 represents the year for the establishment of the university. The study terminated in 2019 because activities from the institution were dislocated in 2020 due to the outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19), which resulted in global economic and social crises. The pandemic equally affected economic activities within the host community of the university as the institution was closed down for about a year.

Wukari Area

Wukari is designated as a town and Local Government jurisdiction located within Taraba State boundaries. It is geographically positioned between latitude coordinates 7.9303N and longitude 9.8125^{o} E. The area is heavily forested with the average wind speed estimated at 11 km/h. The Local Government is drained by the Benue and Donga Rivers, coursing through parts of its territory. Please see the attached map for Wukari location details:

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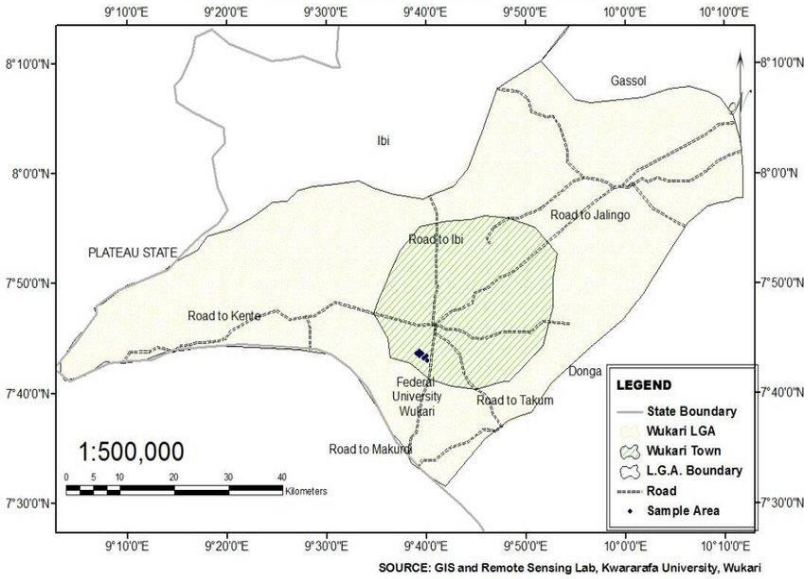
Figure 1: Map of Wukari, Taraba State



The above map shows the location of Wukari. The town which serves as headquarters of the Kwararafa Confederacy also houses tertiary institutions such as Kwararafa University, Federal University Wukari, and a study center of the National Open University.

Background to University Education in Wukari

Western education was introduced in Nigeria by European Missionaries. In 1842,Christian Missions began to arrive and settlein Nigeria for evangelical work.Though the major focus of the group was evangelism, formal learning was required to facilitate the study of the sacred writings among Christian adherents as well as facilitate their performance of religious duties.[1] Accordingly, these Christian missions subsequently ventured into educational works beginning with primary and secondary schools. On the part of Nigerians, the provision of formal education was an acceptable development.

Following Eric Hussey's proposal to the Nigerian Parliament in 1930 to structure Nigerian education into three (3) levels, the Yaba Higher College was established in 1932 as a higher education institution to train Nigerians, mostly in vocational subjects and education. At inception, the institution was provided with a temporary site within the premises of Kings College, Lagos. The permanent site of the Yaba College was completed in 1934. However, the establishment of the Yaba College appeared only to have whetted the appetite of Nigerian nationalists who preferred a university to a college.[2] Expectedly

[1] Boyd, W. & King, E., *The History of Western Education.* Eleventh Edition. Akure: Fagbamigbe Publishers 1981, 100

[2]Osokoya, I. O. *History and Policy of Nigerian Education in World Perspective*. Ibadan: AMD Publishers. (1989).

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this paved the way for further agitations. According to the nationalists, the curriculum of the college was too narrow, inferior, and incapable of meeting the needs of the country. More so, the nationalists had alleged that the college was not recognized outside Nigeria as it only qualified Nigerians as junior staff and assistants in the colonial civil service.

While academic activities were commenced at the Yaba College, agitations for university education continued among Nigerians. It was as a fallout from those agitations that two distinct commissions were set up by the Colonial Government in 1943. The commissions were mandated to consider establishing universities in British colonies (specifically Nigeria). Specifically, they were to consider the principles that should guide the promotion of higher education, learning, research, and development of universities in the colonies; and to explore means by which United Kingdom universities and other appropriate bodies can cooperate to bring the principles to achievable ends.[3]It was the consideration of the committee's report that the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Arthur Creech Jones, advised the establishment of two university colleges in 1947. Subsequently, the University College Ibadan was established in 1948.

Although the establishment of the University College Ibadan was well applauded, no sooner than it was established that the general public and the press assumed an antagonistic posture toward this new university.[4]The very first five years of the University College were characterized by criticisms and agitations with a call for a full-fledged university and not just a University College. The agitations were further heightened by allegations of discrimination in staff recruitment, conditions of service, students' enrolment, and admission policy. The curriculum was also alleged to be British-oriented. Between 1948 and 1949, the university had forty expatriates and six Africans.[5] As of 1953, the number of expatriates increased to eighty-one while that of Africans stagnated at six. Also, from 1952 to 1962, the certificates issued to University College graduates were similar to those given to private candidates who sat for the London University examination.

The persistent criticisms of the discriminatory posture of the British and other allegations signaled the necessity of transforming the University College into a full-fledged university.[6]This led to the establishment of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka on the 7th of October, 1960 soon after independence was attained. It was the first Nigerian autonomous and full-fledged university in the country. Three other universities namely the University of Lagos, the University of Ife, and Ahmadu Bello University, were subsequently established. The

[3]Osokoya, I. O. *History and Policy of Nigerian Education in World Perspective*. …14
[4]Okorosaye-Orubite, A. K. "Colonial Policies and Educational Development in Africa: A Comparison in Historical Perspective". Monograph 1. Port Harcourt: Prime Print Technologies Nig. Ltd. Unpublished Post-Graduate Course Manual. University of Port Harcourt (2017).
[5]Osokoya, I. O. *History and Policy of Nigerian Education in World Perspective*. Ibadan: AMD Publishers.(1989).
[6] Okafor, N,*The Development of Universities in Nigeria*. London: Longman Group Ltd.(1971) P93-97

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University College Ibadan was also upgraded to a fully autonomous University alongside these three in 1962.[7]

The Third National Development Plan of Nigeria (initiated in 1972)established the second-generation universities in 1975. These include University College Port Harcourt, University College Ilorin, University College Kano, University of Calabar, University of Jos, University of Maiduguri, and University of Sokoto (renamed Usman Dan-Fodio University). By 1977, all three university colleges were granted autonomy and attained the full status of universities.[8]

The Establishment of Federal University Wukari

As a way of addressing the growing need for access to tertiary education, the Federal Ministry of Education undertook to implement the extant government policy of equitable educational development in Nigeria, by establishing federal tertiary institutions in every State of the country where they were not in existence. To this end, a memorandum was presented by the Minister of State(Education) to the Federal Executive Council (FEC), at its 39th Meeting held on Wednesday, 10th November 2010, requesting for the establishment of 44 additional tertiary institutions in Nigeria. However, approval was only given for the establishment of twelve new universities. Out of the twelve approved universities, nine were approved for take-off under Phase I of the initiative. Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, was one of the nine universities approved for take-off under Phase I of that initiative. Meanwhile, President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, GCFR, the Visitor to the nine newly established federal universities, appointed Vice-Chancellors and Registrars for the universities on February 7, 2011. Prof. Geoffrey Okogbaa was appointed the pioneer Vice Chancellor of the Federal University Wukari.[9]The state government donated the Wukari campus of the Taraba State Polytechnic for the takeoff and the University commenced activities during the 2011/2012 academic session.[10]

Federal University Wukari and the Economic Transformation of the Host Community

The economy generally refers to complex human activities that are related to the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services, and the use of the resources of nature to satisfy the needs and desires of man.[11] Economic activities are integral aspects of human history because, in all societies, people are often engaged in making concerted efforts targeted at

[7]Ogbondah, L. "The Development of Private Universities in Nigeria: Implications for Access and Quality, 1999 – 2010". A Ph.D. A thesis submitted to the Department of Educational Foundations, University of Port Harcourt. (2012).
[8]Paulley, F. G. & Buseri, J. C, "Fighting Corruption in Nigeria for National Development: The Role of African Indigenous Education", A Paper Presented at Two-Day National Conference Organized by the OtontiNduka Foundation for Values Education and the Nigerian Academy of Education. 9th - Tuesday 10th, May 2016
[9] Judith Magbemena, D. VC FUW, Interview, Wukari, August 7th, 2022
[10] Office of Academic Affairs, FUW, Interview, Wukari, August 7th, 2022.
[11]A.D. Igirgi, 2007, *A History of the Tiv Textile Industry C.1850 – 2000AD* Makurdi: Aboki Publishers .66

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removing poverty. These efforts are consistent with the theory of dialectical materialism which holds that people must first eat before they can deal with other issues.[12]Bearing this in mind, the congregation of people in Wukari because the establishment of a Federal University affected the form and nature of economic relations in the area. While the establishment of the institution occasioned a surge in the population of the host community, changes also occurred in terms of job creation, revenue generation, infrastructure development, and the growth of commercial activities within Wukari town.

Employment Generation

One of the areas where the establishment of Federal University Wukari (FUW) affected the host community during the period of the study is employment generation. Available records at the Open Registry of the university indicate that a total number of three thousand two hundred and sixty-three(3,263)were employed by the institution during the period of this study i.e. Nine Hundred and ninety-four (994) academic staff and two thousand two hundred and sixty-nine (2,269 non-teaching staff. Among those employed were nine hundred and eighty-one (981) members of the host community.[13] In addition to the provision of direct employment, the presence of the university also occasioned the establishment of new businesses within the Wukari area. These businesses also constituted sources of employment for members of the host community. Such businesses as Sources Gate, Green Canopy, and Kolo Plaza all thrived in the presence of the university. Furthermore, many shops were established around the university gate that required the services of sales boys or girls. This also provided young people from the host community with employment opportunities. Equally, the influx of people into Wukari town led to an increase in the activities of motorists within and around Wukari. As more vehicles were bought to service the growing population which was induced by the presence of the university, more people were employed for the running of those vehicles.

In addition to the above, the development of residents for students and staff has provided job opportunities for engineers, masons, carpenters, electricians, and other manual laborers. Similarly, Danjuma,[14]has noted that as a result of the growing population in Wukari, a lot of people began to venture into the transportation business within the area. From the increasing number of vehicles that were bought to serve the area, the motor park located directly opposite the university gate witnessed an increase in commercial activities. This served as a source of livelihood for drivers and other transport workers. Several freelance workers also converged at the university gate daily to seek what was known as "chop money". The use of Okada also grew steadily during the period of this study. This also became a source of livelihood for many people within the Wukari area. Generally, as noted by Ogunode and Iroegbu[15] the

[12]Claude Ake, 1981, *A Political Economy of Africa* (London: Longman) p.9
[13] Report From the Office of Open Registry, Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, 24th October 2022
[14]Danjuma Bako, 67, Retired Civil Servant, Interview, Wukari, November 20th, 2022
[15]Ogunode N. J. and Abigail I. I., Perception of Undergraduate Students on the Impact of Siting Higher Institutions in a Community: A Case Study of Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria, Electronic Research Journal of Behavioural Sciences, Volume 1 (2018)

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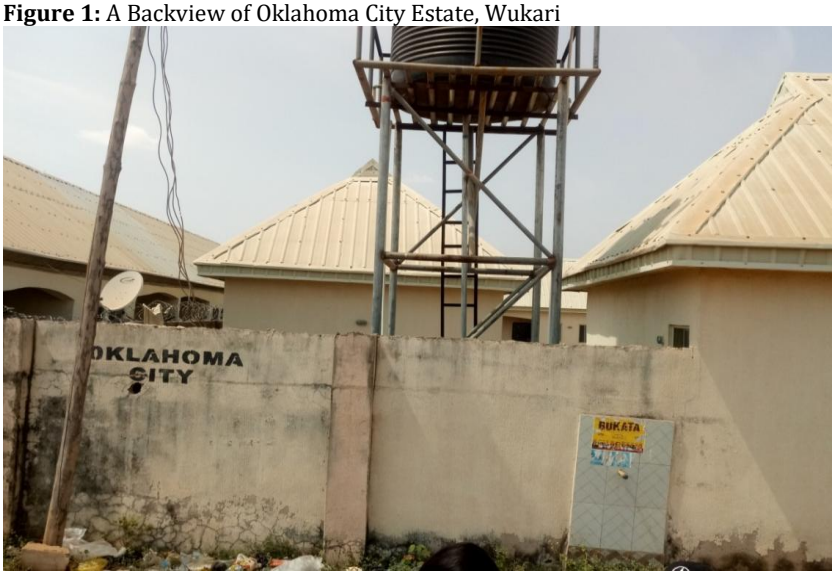
establishment of Federal University Wukari was key in opening up employment opportunities for people of the host community. The extent to which the provision of employment opportunities through the establishment of the university impacted on people of the host community was enormous. At the individual level, the jobs provided men and women with sources of livelihood. At the community level, employment became crucial in checkmating crime in the Wukari area. As more people got busy with jobs, their chances of getting involved in crime were lowered.

Infrastructural Development

The establishment of Federal University Wukari also prompted infrastructural development in the host community. This was mostly in the expansion of residential buildings. By 2019, residential and other buildings increased around the school area along Katsina-ala Road. There was also a visible increase in houses around Mission Quarters and New site.[16] The New Site is commonly dominated by FUW staff who have developed houses and reside within the area. Some investors have built houses within the Wukari for rent purposes. Around the school's gate, staff among other investors have also built estates for students as the population of the School is growing yearly. These estates include Banana Island, Oklahoma City Estate, Ranok, Tanzu, Capetown, and SK Villa. The picture below shows one of the estates around the school area:

Figure 1: A Backview of Oklahoma City Estate, Wukari



Source: Field Work by the Researchers, 2023

[16]TanimuYahaya, 42 civil servant, Interview, Wukari November 14th, 2022

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Picture 2: A Front view of Oklahoma City Estate, Wukari



Source: Field Work by the Researchers, 2023

As of 2019, the number of houses within the three named areas amounted to 485 while others were still under construction. Because of the growing population that was occasioned by the establishment of the university, there was a regular increase in the building of shops and event centers to accommodate businesses to cater to the needs of the people. According to Faith,[17] the sitting of the Federal University in Wukari contributed greatly to the development of social infrastructural facilities in the community and the Local Government in general.

Commercial Activities

Commercial activities in the Wukari area heightened after the establishment of FUW. Christy Gani (aka Madam Kudi),[18] has noted that traders including herself, who is a food vendor, benefitted a lot as a result of high turnovers. According to her, she purchased at least ₦100,000 worth of yam, about ₦10,000 eggs, and ₦25,000 vegetable oil weekly for her business. Madam Kudi further stressed that the presence of the University has enabled her to become an economic agent to reckon with in Wukari and employ three people. Similarly Al- Hassan,[19] aka "Man no be God" who has managed a business he established around the university since 2012 asserts that commercial activities within Wukari have witnessed unprecedented growth because of the presence of the University. According to him the area in front of the FUW gate gradually became an open Market because more and more persons were frequently coming to the area to buy and supply goods. Before the establishment of the University virtually all consumer goods were bought at either New or Old markets. But now one could buy almost everything within the university gate. As of 2019, there were 15

[17]Benbala Faith, 36, Civil Servant, Interview, Wukari, November 14th, 2022
[18] Christy Gani, 32 years, 42 Trader, Interview, Wukari November 14th, 2022
[19] Al- Hassan Awal, 39, Trader, Interview, Wukari, November 16th, 2022

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major shops opposite the school gate, selling goods. Similarly, there were 11 business centers offering internet services and 5 phone boot centers among other businesses operating opposite the school gate.

Usman,[20] a commercial transporter has also noted that before the establishment of the university, vehicles only loaded passengers at the Takum Junction. But with the establishment of the university transport activities began to heighten around the school gate. Gradually, the area opposite the school gate became a major loading spot for passengers going to Benue State, Jalingo, Calabar, Enugu, and Abuja. The effect of the motor park opposite the school gate is that it has occasioned the growth of commercial activities within the area. Relatedly, the presence of the university and the attendant hike in the population within Wukari has also encouraged activities of commercial motorcyclists. One of the motorcyclists in Wukari, Akachuwku,[21] had this to say:

> I was in Wukari since 2008 but was jobless all the while (although I was a part-time farmer). But when the university was established a few years later, more people began to move into the town either for business or work at the university. The number of students also kept increasing. At some point, my uncle encouraged me to engage in the okada business. Today I own two motorcycles, one of which I gave to someone (to bring returns). From the proceeds of the okada business, I go home with nothing less than 10,000 – 15,000 weekly.

The above is a testimony of the hike that occurred in commercial activities in Wukari after the establishment of the University. Traders in both the Wukari New and Old markets have also acknowledged that the establishment of the University in the area had a positive impact on their businesses. This is because once the school was in session, students regularly trooped into the market thereby making the turnover very high. Similarly, petty traders around the school area also came to buy goods in bulk to be sold to the students and staff who could not make it to the market.

Revenue Generation

In addition to the generation of employment opportunities, the establishment of FUW opened avenues for the host community to generate revenue. The number of staff at the university as of 2019 has already been mentioned. What is to be added is that all staff of the University were required to pay the "pay as you earn" (PAYE) tax, which ranged from 7% to 24% of the annual income of the staff. The total amount generated from the PAYE tax was remitted to the Taraba State government. This remittance constituted a source of income for the State and was used for the development of the State. The growing number of businesses in Wukari, which was occasioned by the establishment of the University constituted a source of revenue to the host community. this is because all the businesses were required to pay taxes.

[20] Usman Danjuma, 42, Motorist, Interview, Wukari, November 16th, 2022
[21] Martin Akachuwku, 25, Motorcyclist, Interview, Wukari, November 16th, 2022

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Apart from the taxes that went into government coffers, revenues were also generated by private business owners through rent, sales of goods, and provision of services. According to Danladi,[22] the population growth in Wukari led to more demand for goods and services. This enabled farmers to sell their farm produce thereby having a steady inflow of revenue. Similarly, estate owners within Wukari received a boost in revenues that continually accrued to them. Sani has also[23]observed that the increase in population within the Wukari also boosted the income of transport operators within the area. This was made possible due to the presence of the university.

Conclusion

The establishment of Federal University Wukari did not occur without reverberating the economic fabric of the host community. Even though the institution was conceived to enhance teaching and learning within the area, this study reveals that beyond the award of degrees, the Federal University Wukari became an agent of economic transformation in the host community. As observed, the university became a pull factor for those who wanted to study and work. Expectedly, the university employed people; students also gained admission to study at the institution regularly. Among those employed were indigenes of Wukari. Whereas the employment of those indigenous people provided them with a source of livelihood, other employees who were not indigenous to Wukari also began to move into the town. This resulted in a constant increase in the population of the area. As the population grew, existing businesses had to improve to meet the demand mechanism. Residential houses, shops, and event centers were also built to service the population. This led to the expansion of the Wukari area. Generally, it was not just those who were awarded degrees that derived benefits from the university. The economic transformation engineered by the institution affected the university employee, the landlord, the food vendor, the shoemaker, the transporter, and other persons who grasped the economic opportunities that came with the establishment of Federal University Wukari.

[22]Danladi Musa, 54, Landlord, Interview, Wukari, November 22nd, 2022.
[23] Sani Magaji, 57, Landlord, Interview, Wukari, November 22nd, 2022.

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2	Judith Magbemena	-	Deputy V.C	Wukari	August 7th, 2022
3	Madaki Friday	38	Trader/Landlord	Wukari	August 23rd, 2022
4	John Okoro	45	Trader	Wukari	November 5th, 2022
5	TanimuYahaya	42	Civil Servant	Wukari	November 14th, 2022
6	Benbala Faith	36	Civil Servant	Wukari	November 14th, 2022
7	Christy Gani	32	Food vendor	Wukari	November 14th, 2022
8	Al- Hassan Awal	39	Trader	Wukari	November 16th, 2022
9	Usman Danjuma	42	Motorist	Wukari	November 16th, 2022
10	Martin Akachuwku	25	Motorcyclist	Wukari	November 16th, 2022
11	DanjumaBako	67	Retired Civil Servant	Wukari	November 20th, 2022
12	Danladi Musa	54	Landlord	Wukari	November 22nd , 2022
13	Sani Magaji	57	Landlord	Wukari	November 22nd, 2022
14	Usman James	24	Student	Wukari	November 22nd, 2022
15	Yaro Sabo Blessing	27	Student	Wukari	November 23, 2022

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