

# Funding: Quality and access are not free!

• Alabi speaks at the Baraka Policy Institute (Final)

## Education Matters

With Anis Haffar



**F**OR the much touted quality education to happen in Ghana, it's quite clear that all stakeholders must help: parents, teachers, students, governments, chiefs, churches, mosques and so on. And when businesses, especially, add their voices through their corporate social responsibilities (CSR), they need to be commended. Adding value and saving the nation's children and youth are in everybody's interests.

### Views from Salem Kalmoni and Alhassan Andani

It was refreshing to hear from the managing director of Japan Motors, Mr Salem Kalmoni (President, BPI), when he said, "We would like to re-emphasise that we at Baraka Policy Institute (BPI) see those in charge of national policy as partners. And we are fully aware of the difficulties and complexities of policy drafting and implementation. Our intervention in these matters is to draw attention to those important details that might have escaped the attention of the government, policy makers and authorities. We do this by offering suggestions and alternative ideas through empirical research and intellectual support."

That view was corroborated by Mr Alhassan Andani, MD of Stanbic Bank (Chairman, BPI): "Over the last three years, BPI has tailored its activities towards education and wellbeing, as we believe that these inseparable domains hold the key to our socio-economic development. It is in this light that our research activities, capacity building programmes and policy drafting endeavours, as well as our advocacy programmes have focused on education of the deprived and the vulnerable in particular and the general wellbeing of the citizenry as a whole."

### Quality costs money

Pro. Joshua Alabi (in concluding his keynote address for the Institute, Feb 23, 2017) said (edited), "As we talk about quality and access, we should be guided by the fact that quality and access are not free. They cost money. So where should the money come from?"

"The current situation is limited by: 1. Inadequate funding from government to support effective tertiary education in Ghana; 2. Currently, the main areas of funding covers personal emoluments (though not 100 per cent) and to a lesser extent infrastructure; and 3. Main operations of the public universities are really not funded; so public universities are to find alternative sources of

funding to fill the gap. This is where a lot of public universities have resorted to massification and cost sharing, which has its own quality and access implications. To address the funding gaps, government intervention will be greatly required. Here, more transparent policy directives on funding and cost cutting mechanisms are timely. Sharing of resources among the tertiary institutions is another strategy.

"Unfortunately in Ghana, the tertiary institutions see competition and not collaboration. Private universities are

saddled with unnecessary fees charged by public universities, in the name of affiliation, making it very difficult for most of them to focus resources on essential quality issues. However, my candid opinion is that affiliation was a colonial concept at a time when there were no accreditation systems in place. With accreditation systems now firmly in place, one wonders the real value of affiliation.

"This is an area that should be critically revisited and I call on the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) to pay attention to the feedback from the private universities. Obviously, because of the income many public universities are making, contention is expected. Eventually the cost is passed on to the poor students in the private universities who have no subsidy from the state in the form of government support to the public universities. Students are, generally, overburdened with too much contribution towards their tertiary education and there is need for a strong national financial intervention to alleviate this stressful burden."

### Merging smaller universities

"One key strategy that many countries are using to cut cost and enhance their international presence and performance on global ranking is merging of smaller universities to make them bigger to raise their performance. Quality of university education is now equal to performance in rankings. For institutions to attract international students and become self-sustaining and globally competitive they have to look good on global rankings.

"The Education Sector Performance Report (ESPR) 2015 does not paint a progressive picture in this respect. The reports

notes, "The new University ranking compiled by Thompson Reuters has ranked the University of Ghana, Legon, as the 10th Tertiary Institution on the

African Continent. The report looked specifically at University reputation, which reflects a University ability to recruit high quality staff and students, establish valuable international partnerships, and connect with greater funding prospects."

"One would have expected to see a more promising picture of how Ghanaian universities are featuring on the global rankings with plans for

improvement in the report. Many countries have developed national strategies for internationalisation and ranking because irrespective of how we feel about these rankings, they are the new reality for universities across the world, and Ghana cannot be left out. Many countries are resorting to the merging of institutions to cut down on overhead cost and to improve their performance on global ranking and international visibility."

### Planned national strategy

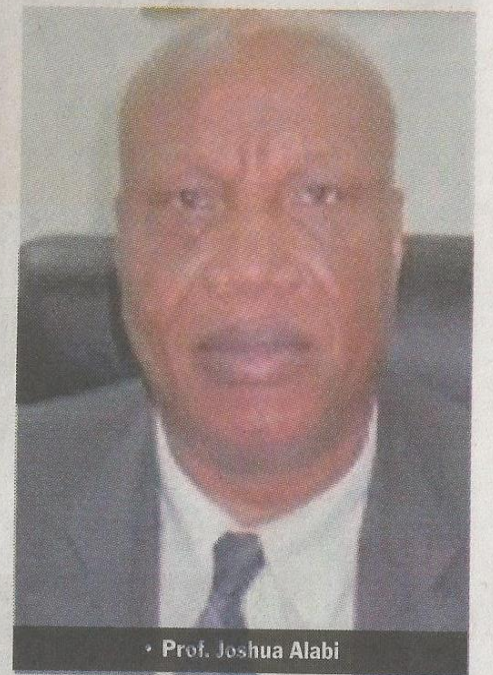
"Ghana can do the same. For example, we should be thinking of merging institutions like Ghana Institute of Languages, Institute of Local Government, Ghana Institute of Journalism, NAFTI and University of Professional Studies into one

big professional University, with satellite campuses all over. This will not only cut down on overhead cost but also enhance global ranking because of potential increase in research output. The question is, 'Do we have a planned national strategy to enhance our inclusiveness?' Tertiary education the world over has been commoditised under GATT/WTO and, therefore, requires well-planned marketing and strong promotional strategies.

"In conclusion, tertiary education should result in an 'economically productive workforce, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies and enhance individual well-being.' But this cannot happen with an elitist tertiary education system, a system where only few can have access to tertiary education either because of entry restrictions, lack of space to accommodate all who qualify or ability to pay.

"I will like to advocate a critical look into how we can improve both access and quality of Ghana's tertiary education system. We should not look far. We should not think of a revolution but a radical evolution that can build on the existing systems to enhance both quality and access in a distinctly Ghanaian fashion. In this respect, I believe the recommendations made in this presentation are worth considering."

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