THE UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA AND THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF THE LAND GRANT PHILOSOPHY OF HIGHER EDUCATION: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction
The University of Nigeria, Nsukka, was founded in 1960. It was the brainchild of Chief (Dr.) Nnamdi Azikiwe, the Owelle of Onitsha and other great men and women of former Eastern Nigeria. Among other objectives, the founding fathers of the University aimed at using the institution as a vehicle for promoting higher education and accelerating the pace of progress and development in Nigeria. Unlike the University College, Ibadan, which was ‘a lone experiment’ in the area of university education in Nigeria at the time Nsukka came into being, and which was seen in those days as ‘a colonial institution serving the ends of colonialism’ and, therefore, incapable of responding to national needs, the University of Nigeria was founded as an indigenous institution free from the constraints of British imperialism. It was founded with a philosophy which was claimed to be African, but which drew heavily from the American land grant college system.

The University of Nigeria represented a new and revolutionary type of university and made a radical departure from the usual practice of university organisation and administration. It was essentially marked by distinctive characteristics which distinguished it from other universities in West Africa. One of these distinctive characteristics of the University was its blending of the land grant philosophy of higher education with the classical concept of universities for a more result-oriented service in the changing Nigerian society.

The land grant philosophy which the University adopted was a new concept in Africa at the time it was introduced. It laid emphasis on functional vocational education. Imbued with this philosophy, the University of Nigeria pioneered the introduction of courses in the disciplines hitherto regarded as unorthodox in the traditional British and British-oriented universities.

In this paper, the author generally examines in a historical perspective, the concept of the land grant philosophy, its application at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and the efforts that were made to institutionalise the system in the University. In the first place, the author takes a cursory look at the historical foundations of the University. This is followed by an incisive examination of the land grant concept or philosophy of the University and the ways and means by
which the innovations, implicit in the philosophy, were institutionalised. Here, particular focus will be made on the role of the Michigan State University (M.S.U.) of America in the institutionalisation of the Nsukka land grant experiment. Next, attempts are made to highlight the various problems encountered by the University of Nigeria in the institutionalisation of the land grant philosophy as well as the impact of the land grant experiment at Nsukka on university education in Nigeria. It is from here that the author makes some concluding remarks.

The Historical Foundations of the University of Nigeria
The name, 'University of Nigeria', was well thought out and deliberately chosen by the founding fathers of the institution in their belief that it would, among other functions, play a vital role in integrating the various peoples of Nigeria. It was also their belief that the University would become a centre "from where all that (is) best in human thought (is) diffused throughout the country". According to I.U. Ukpabio, a former Minister of Education in the then Eastern Region of Nigeria, the founding fathers of the University stood for one Nigeria and believed firmly that the University would meet the needs of all Nigerians and more especially "help to retain the unity of Nigeria".

The University of Nigeria was conceived in the mind of the main architect and greatest of its founding fathers, Rt. Hon. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the Owelle of Onitsha, more than 20 years prior to its establishment in 1960. Azikiwe was said to have been influenced in making the call for a university by the resolution of the National Congress of West Africa (1920), during the heydays of the struggle for national self-determination, which stressed the need to "preserve in the students a sense of African nationality". In his book, *Renascent Africa*, published in 1937, Azikiwe had described universities as being responsible for shaping the destinies of nations and individuals, and where things material are made to be subservient to things intellectual in all shapes and forms.

The idea about the University of Nigeria is said to have its origins in the Report of the International Bank Mission of 1953 on the "Economic Development of Nigeria". The Report had observed that the University College, Ibadan, the only university in Nigeria at the time, needed, not only to provide many more graduates but also to diversify its courses. The Report specifically stated that "Nigeria's needs call for many more times the trained manpower the university college can supply as presently planned".

Following the Bank's Report, the Government of the then Eastern Region of Nigeria sent out early in May, 1954, an Economic Mission, headed by Dr. Azikiwe, to Europe. The Report the Mission recommended the establishment without further delay, of a full-fledged university in the Region which should "not only be cultural according to the classical concept of universities but... vocational in its objectives and Nigerian in content".