

## *Consolidation of Tertiary Institutions across the Globe: Implication for Human Resource Management Education*

*Christian Chibuzo Ohagwa, Ph.D*

*Department of Human Resource Management,  
Institute of Arts Management and Professional Studies (IAMPS),  
Owerri, Nigeria.  
Email: chinelio5@yahoo.com*

### **ABSTRACT**

*There has been a consolidation exercise of Tertiary Institutions across the globe. This article is focused on the attendant implications for human resource management education. The approach was to practically examine nations that consolidated their tertiary institutions and even nations that are yet to undertake the consolidation moves. The results are for reaching fir nations that pursued the policy of consolidation, there was a “skills gap” at the middle-level manpower requirements with regard to nations that maintained the status quo, they gave prominence to technological know-how in the understanding that technology, as well as intellectual manpower, are of equal relevance for development. However, there is an acute shortage of middle-level graduates with technical skills for human resource management education, while having too many thinkers and intellectual graduates.*

*The recommendations include the need to consider consolidation policy with due caution and not adopt the policy across institutions. It should be looked at from cost-effectiveness and revenue indicators, based on national development aspirations. But overall, the polytechnics and universities should be allowed to co-exist. It was also recommended that polytechnics with requisite human and material resources can be upgraded to a degree-awarding status as autonomous institutions, not by merger. The article concludes that the consolidation of tertiary institutions as a solution to the “Binary Divide” is unfounded in light of its backlashing effect on nations that adopted the consolidation policy.*

**Keywords:** *Consolidation, merger, amalgamated, Binary Divide, Exponential Expansion, Abridged version.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The terms 'Institute of Technology', 'College of Technology'. and 'Polytechnic', are designations employed in a wide range of learning institutions across the globe. The first institutes of technology and Polytechnics have existed at least since the 18th century but became increasingly popular post-World War 11, with the expansion of technical education, associated with the new needs created by generalized industrialization.

All over the world, after many legal and curricular reforms, some polytechnics are often seen today as being quite similar to universities in terms of standards and quality. However, in some places, a number of polytechnics providing higher education are simply a result of a formal upgrading from their original and historical role as intermediate technical education schools. These changes have caused concern in many countries where the lack of specialized intermediate technical professionals, lead to industrial skill shortages, in some fields. These changes are also associated with an increase in the graduate unemployment rate.

This article seeks to x-ray the issues of consolidation of tertiary institutions from a global standpoint and implications for Human Resource Management Education.

### **NATIONS WITHOUT CONSOLIDATION PROGRAMMES**

In Venezuela, Institutes of Technology was developed in the 1950s as an option for post-secondary education in technical and scientific courses. Diplomas are awarded after 3 to 3  $\frac{1}{2}$  years of education. The Country also runs a university system of education. However, education at Institutes of Technology is widely regarded as inferior to university education. In Malaysia, the university and polytechnic systems are in operation. However, unlike in some nations, polytechnics in Malaysia do not have the power to confer a degree or anything higher.

The polytechnics in Pakistan offer a Diploma spanning three years in different fields. A degree in Engineering follows this but is tenable in a university system.

Singapore operates a system close to that operating in the United Kingdom up to 1992, in which there is a clear distinction between polytechnics and universities. Polytechnics in Singapore offers 3-year Diploma courses in Information Technology, Engineering subjects, and other vocational fields. There are 5 polytechnics in Singapore including Singapore Polytechnic, Temasek Polytechnic, etc.

In India, a polytechnic is a technical institute, which imparts technical education. Polytechnics are not affiliated to any university. They offer 3-year duration Diplomas in Engineering courses. The courses offered in Polytechnics in India can be said to be abridged versions of degree courses offered in Engineering Colleges. The All-India Council of Technical Education is the regulating authority for Polytechnics in India.

### **NATIONS WITH CONSOLIDATION PROGRAMMES:**

Across the globe, a number of nations opted for one form of consolidation or the other. Some polytechnics were upgraded to Universities, while in other cases, the consolidation was a merger between two polytechnics or between universities and polytechnics.

In the United Kingdom (UK), Polytechnics were tertiary education teaching Institutions, However, under the Further and Higher Education Act, of 1992, they became fully-fledged Universities. This action was consequent upon the United

Kingdom's government's recognition that the difference between Polytechnics and Universities had become irrelevant and confusing. In fact, the division between Universities and Polytechnics was known as the binary divide'. Academic degrees in Polytechnics, between 1965 - 1992, were validated by CNAA (Council for National Academic Awards). After 1992, the Polytechnics (New Universities) awarded their own degrees. The Polytechnics changed their name when they gained University Status. In the United Kingdom (UK), London Polytechnic became the University of Westminster, while Anglia Polytechnic University became Anglia Ruskin University. The University of Bedfordshire was created from the merger of De Montfort University and the University of Luton, However, London Metropolitan University was the amalgamation of two polytechnics, London Guildhall University and the University of North London.

In Portugal, there are 15 state-run Polytechnics and also several other private Polytechnics. It is to be noted that the designation "Institute of Technology" is not applied at all, being meaningless in Portugal. Since the mid- 2000s after many reforms, upgrades, and changes, including the Bologna process, the Portuguese Polytechnics have become de facto technical Universities. In Portugal, some Polytechnics offer Master's Degrees, while others do not, due to budget constraints, lack of proper research activities, or doctored teaching staff. However, the Universities are the only institutions awarding doctoral degrees in Portugal, even with the Bologna process Implementation.

In Japan, there are Polytechnics that have been taken over by universities. For example, the Imperial College of Engineering was the forerunner of Tokyo University's Engineering Faculty.

In New Zealand, Polytechnics are established under the Education Act 1989 as amended and are considered state-owned tertiary institutions along with Universities and Colleges of Education. Many of the Polytechnics in New Zealand now grant at least Bachelor-level degrees. However, since the 1990s, there has been consolidation in New Zealand's state-owned tertiary education system. In the Polytechnic sector, Wellington Polytechnic amalgamated with Massey University. The Auckland University of Technology is the only Polytechnic to have been elevated to university status. In New Zealand, the Colleges of Education have also amalgamated.

In Australia, during the 1970s to 1990s the term Polytechnic was used to describe state-owned and funded technical schools that offer both vocational and higher education. In the 1990s, most of the polytechnics in Australia merged with existing Universities or formed new ones of their own. These new Universities often took the title 'University of Technology'.

Polytechnics in Belgium are called Hoge schools. The Hoge schools in Belgium are now undergoing a process of academization where they form associations with universities and research is being integrated into the curriculum.

In Finland, there are two sectors in tertiary education Universities and Polytechnic. There are 20 Universities and 30 Polytechnics in Finland. All Finnish

Universities are owned by the state while Polytechnics are governed by municipalities or, in special cases, by private entities. A degree from a Polytechnic is not, however, considered legally equivalent to a Lower University degree in the Finnish system. After January 1, 2006, some Finnish institutes of technology switched the term "Polytechnic" to the term "University of Applied Sciences", in their official names. Since the year 2006, however, all institutions of higher education have been sharpening their institutional profiles and developing new methods of cooperation in this regard, several polytechnics have announced mergers: Haaga and Helia, merged into Haaga - Helia, in 2007. In tertiary education, the World Economic Forum ranks Finland No. 1, in the world in enrollment and quality, and No. 2, in mathematics and science education.

The Republic of Ireland has an "Institute of Technology" system. They offer sub-Degree and Degree - level studies. Dublin Institute of Technology, developed separately from the Regional Technical College system, and after several decades of association with the University of Dublin, Trinity College, it acquired the authority to confer its own degrees.

The first Polytechnic in Hong Kong was the Hong Kong Polytechnic, established in 1972 (through upgrading the then Hong Kong Technical College). In 1994, the Hong Kong Polytechnic was granted University status and renamed The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The second Polytechnic in Hong Kong was the City Polytechnic, established in 1984. In 1995, it was granted University status and renamed City University of Hong Kong. The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology was established in 1991, with a focus on Applied Science, Engineering, and Business.

In Thailand, most of the Institutes of technology developed from technical colleges. Some of them can grant degrees to the doctoral level. For example, the Pathumwan, Institute of Technology, was developed at Pathumwan Technical School. However, Rajamangala University of Technology was formerly the Institute of Technology and Vocational Education.

## **IMPLICATIONS OF CONSOLIDATION: A GENERAL STANDPOINT**

The consolidation of tertiary institutions was embraced by many nations. The implications of these exercises are overwhelming. Firstly, it blurred the boundaries between vocational and academic programs. In fact, it became a solution to the "Binary Divide". Secondly, there was a backlash effect, as it resulted in skill gaps. The United Kingdom attempted a remedy this through the intensification of National Vocational Qualifications and Apprenticeship training. However, some nations are expressing regret for their consolidation efforts. An example of such a country is South Africa. Thirdly, it undermined the Accreditation and quality control that are different between Universities and Polytechnic. Fifthly, there was no regard for the purpose of universities and polytechnics. The sixth implication is that blamed or disruptors revenues and costs.

## **IMPLICATIONS OF CONSOLIDATION TO HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT EDUCATION.**

Human resource management is a specialized discipline that focuses on the people dimension of management. That is the practice of recruiting, hiring, deploying, and managing an organization's employees.

The consolidation of tertiary institutions has attendant implications for countries adopting the policy. With the consolidation policy, technologically based graduates will be lacking in the economy, where manufacturing concerns are in dire need of middle-level hands-on manpower. The universities, on the other hand, produce thinkers and policy formulators to solve societal problems. This results in a gap, as those graduates from polytechnics that should provide the technical support to the implementation of those policies, are unavailable due to mergers of the polytechnics and universities. Apart from the skills gap, unemployment is promoted as too many thinkers graduate from universities. So, from the consolidation point of view, Human Resource Management Education suffers, as too many Human Resource Management graduates from universities will be turned out and no middle-level graduates from polytechnic. This is a disaster in the age of exponential expansion in the ICT and internet. In some nations, like China and Germany priority is given to technical and vocational education.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

It is to be noted that polytechnics have a bias for professional and work-related study, while universities produce thinkers and policy formulators. None is less important to any country that wishes to develop intellectually and technologically.

In some nations, it was a solution to the popular "Binary Divide", where polytechnic graduates are discriminated against in the economy's public and private sectors. But the back-lashing effect of the skills gap, Unemployment, reduction in production capacity, and consequently, a fall in the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The purposes of polytechnics and universities should be allowed to co-exist in any economy. The issues of funding inadequacies, enrollment declines and alternatives to traditional education systems, and even resistance to tuition fee hikes, should not be the basis or reasons for consolidation.

## **RECOMMENDATION ON THE CONSOLIDATION OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS:**

While it must be acknowledged that Polytechnics are to prepare students for industry, business, and the professions, the universities are primarily to produce thinkers and policy formulators to solve societal problems.

The recommendations, against empirical evidence, include:

- The “Binary Divide” is unnecessary, as polytechnics and universities have different purposes, even by the laws that created them. They should be allowed to co-exist and prevent “skill gaps” created by the consolidations.
- Consolidations or mergers should be a selective and not a blanket policy. Overwhelming costs of operation and dwindling revenues as a consequence of the decline in births, enrollment challenges, and significant competition from online and global providers, should dictate the basis or otherwise of policy implementation as it relates to “identified polytechnics and universities”
- Polytechnics with requisite human and material resources can be allowed to run and award their degrees as autonomous institutions. After all, some polytechnics are more equipped than some universities

## CONCLUSION

The consolidation of tertiary education has been embraced by some nations, (United Kingdom, Portugal, Japan, New Zealand, Australia, Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Hong Kong, and Thailand) while other nations are not considered (Venezuela, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore, India). need to consolidate their tertiary institutions (Venezuela, Malaysia Singapore. It is worthy of note that consolidation moves by relevant nations are purely strategic and those nations adopting the consolidation of tertiary institutions, have their unique reasons, ranging from the need to follow the global trend to having a consolidated education scheme. Others are yet to appreciate the merits embodied. do not consider the need to consolidate their tertiary institutions.

The implications of consolidating tertiary institutions’ human resource management education are that it resulted in a shortage of technical graduates while having too many university graduates from the consolidation exercises in nations that adopted the consolidation policy

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