

## **Advancing Socioeconomic Development through Equitable Higher Education Administration in Nigeria**

Franca Chinenye Nwankwo, Iweha Chris Chijioke, Adekemisola Asahiah,  
Soyele Hamed Adesile, Mensah James, Adeoluwa Folami

*Morgan State University, Baltimore, USA*

---

### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper discusses the critical importance of equity in higher education administration as a lever for societal advancement. It posits that the persistent inequalities within Nigerian higher education stemming from religion, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic disparities have hindered the realization of the nation's full potential. This paper explores how these systemic inequities have led to unrest and disrupted educational environments, ultimately impacting the quality of graduates and the country's economic trajectory. The study argues for a strategic approach to fostering equity, which involves inclusive admission policies, fair hiring practices, and the creation of an inclusive campus climate. It emphasizes the role of leadership in advocating for and implementing these changes. This paper also outlines how the equitable administration of higher education in Nigeria can serve as a catalyst for sustained socioeconomic development, drive growth, and foster social cohesion in countries rich in diversity but plagued by divisions. In conclusion, this paper underscores the necessity of a multifaceted strategy that includes policy reform, capacity building, and cultural competency training to promote equity in Nigerian higher education.*

**Keywords:** Equity, Equitable Higher Education Administration, Higher Education Administration, Sustainable Socioeconomic Development

## INTRODUCTION

Given its considerable reservoir of human capital, Nigeria finds itself at a critical juncture. Despite rich natural resources and a growing young population, effectively harnessing these assets for sustained socioeconomic progress continues to pose considerable obstacles. The focal point of this dilemma pertains to the domain of higher education administration, wherein matters concerning equity have become increasingly prominent. Okundare et al. (2013) opined that in the context of higher education in Nigeria, a notable focus is on the restructuring and development of tertiary institutions to address various challenges, including those related to equity. The National Policy on Education in Nigeria defines tertiary education as encompassing universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education. The aim is to foster knowledge, provide solutions to national problems, and assist societal development in areas of human and socioeconomic growth. There has been a significant expansion in the number and types of tertiary institutions since independence, with a growing emphasis on addressing educational policies and their impacts. The colonial educational policy was initially focused on producing literate nationals for administrative roles, which later evolved postindependence to more comprehensive systems aimed at broader societal needs and aspirations. Recent reforms, such as deregulation, privatization, and commercialization in the educational sector, have been introduced as responses to increasing demands due to population growth and societal needs. However, these reforms also raise concerns about the potential lowering of educational standards and turning education into a commodity, prioritizing profit over quality. The complexities and challenges in Nigeria's higher education system highlight the ongoing efforts and the need for continued focus on improving equity and access in this crucial sector (Okundare et al., 2013).

The establishment of higher education institutions in Nigeria, starting in the colonial era, has been driven by sociopolitical factors and has undergone various transformations over the years. These institutions have played a significant role in shaping the country's intellectual and professional landscape. However, the system has faced numerous challenges, including underfunding, poor infrastructure, and political interference, leading to a decline in educational standards and research output (Otonko, 2012). Studies reveal that despite the expansion of higher education institutions in Nigeria, there are significant disparities in access to these institutions. Factors such as socioeconomic background, gender, and geographical location play a crucial role in determining who has access to higher education. These inequalities perpetuate existing societal imbalances and hinder the country's progress toward achieving inclusive and equitable education for all (Nwogu, 2015, & Oghenekohwo, 2018). The

unequal distribution of educational resources and opportunities among different ethnic and religious groups has been identified as a factor that exacerbates tensions and conflicts within the country (Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2017).

Higher education institutions in Nigeria have historically grappled with systemic inequities. Disparities in resource allocation, opportunities for advancement, and institutional representation have marginalized certain groups, particularly women and individuals from specific ethnic or socioeconomic backgrounds (Tate et al., 2014).

Higher education consists of all postsecondary education and training delivered at universities, colleges, college-level institutes, research institutes and career institutes that award academic degrees or professional certificates. Grubb (2003) noted that higher education includes all the activities a given country deems to be higher education, not only those that take place within ordinary universities and graduate schools but also shorter-term education and training courses that are 2-3 years in length and target a broad population of students. Higher education is increasingly becoming a vehicle for the economic prosperity of countries worldwide. Therefore, growing concern for the increasing effectiveness of education systems is to generate quality human capital to contribute to the economic prosperity of the country. In this respect, higher education is a means to produce human capital for knowledge-based economies around the globe (Salem, 2014, p. 1049). The primary functions of higher education institutions are education, research and societal development. These three functions are interwoven and depend on each other. According to James (2022), higher education institutions—most prominently universities—have three functions in total. In addition to education, these are research and contributing to society. The research and education functions are two sides of a coin; research makes a higher level of education possible, and education, in turn, develops the human resources to do research. Recently, contributions to society have increasingly demanded higher education institutions. This means that higher education institutions need to have activities to ensure that accumulated knowledge is circulated directly back to society and that they do not become ivory towers.

Higher education institutions have a significant impact on the development of individuals, societies, and nations. The administration of these institutions plays an integral role in the realization of equitable opportunities for all stakeholders. The purpose of this paper is to shed light on the importance of equity in higher education administration as a powerful tool for long-term societal development. This study aims to provide insights and recommendations for fostering equity within higher education administrative structures by examining current practices, challenges, and opportunities.

Human rights activism has consistently emphasized the imperative for organisations and institutions to embody the principles of equity, inclusion, and

diversity to ensure the just and equitable treatment of individuals. Historically, a significant portion of this activism has concentrated on combating classism, religious bias, and discrimination based on tribal and ethnic affiliations. Notably, in the context of Nigerian federal institutions, these forms of discrimination are not only prevalent but also have precipitated notable unrest.

In higher education, there have been documented instances where the appointment of university administrators from religious or ethnic backgrounds differing from those of the dominant student body has led to significant turmoil. Such appointments, when perceived as valuing religious, tribal, or ethnic loyalty over meritocratic principles, have incited student protests, culminating in the destruction of university property and the disruption of the educational environment. These events are symptomatic of broader disregard for qualifications and merit, which inevitably undermines the integrity and quality of the educational system. This erosion of educational standards has profound implications for the calibre of graduates entering the workforce, ultimately impinging upon the nation's economic growth and development. The entrenchment of such biases in selecting educational leaders not only devalues the principle of academic excellence but also perpetuates a cycle of inequity that hampers the potential for societal advancement and economic prosperity.

For several years, researchers and policymakers have been forecasting the shift in racial and ethnic demographics that is currently underway throughout the world. These demographic changes have largely informed our understanding of diversity and inclusion, as our universities prepared for the influx of a more diverse student body (Clayton, 2021, p. 4). There is a need for emphasis to be placed on the total inclusion of all people regardless of their race, religion, gender, sex or beliefs in the activities and governance of higher education. When ideas from different people are brought together, better solutions to problems are generated.

The equitable administration of higher education is a pivotal mechanism for nurturing long-term societal development. Its importance lies in its capacity to cultivate a society that is both diverse and resilient, attributes that are increasingly recognized as indispensable in the contemporary global landscape. By embedding principles of fairness and inclusion within the framework of educational systems, HEA equity ensures that all individuals, irrespective of their background, have access to the opportunities that higher education affords (Cook & Glass, 2014). This paper delves into the intricate tapestry of equity in higher education and explores its substantial contributions to society's advancement and enduring stability.

Within the Nigerian context, this position paper asserts the criticality of equity in the administration of higher education institutions as a catalyst for fostering sustained socioeconomic development. It posits that when higher education systems are governed by equitable practices, they not only open doors

to marginalized groups but also lay the foundation for a more innovative, skilled, and inclusive workforce. This, in turn, drives economic growth and social cohesion, thereby fortifying the nation against the divisive forces of inequality and exclusion.

This paper will examine the multifaceted dimensions of HEA equity, including access, representation, and success, and will argue that equitable higher education is not merely a moral imperative but also a strategic necessity. By ensuring that higher education administration is reflective of, and responsive to, the diverse tapestry of the Nigerian populace, the nation can harness the full spectrum of its human capital. The consequent enrichment of the academic discourse and the broadening of the professional landscape serve as testaments to the transformative power of HEA equity. This power is capable of propelling Nigeria toward a future marked by both prosperity and harmony.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Equity in Higher Education Administration (HEA)**

Equity is the fair and impartial treatment of people in a given society, irrespective of their economic and social class, religion, race, sex and gender, by giving them equal access to education, livelihood, and participation in the economic, social and political affairs of the society. Equity in HEA refers to all people's equitable treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement while working to find and remove obstacles that have prevented some groups from fully participating (Bensimon, 2005). To find and remove the obstacles that prevent achieving an equitable system, there must be conscious and intentional effort toward achieving the desired goals.

HEA requires intentionality because it necessitates creating procedures and systems that prevent exclusion and discrimination. Kiran and Kumari (2016, p. 52) opined that equity in education means that students from different social groups should have similar outcomes from educational institutes. Disparities in educational outcomes based on caste, class, sex, religion, language, etc., should not be tolerated. All deserving individuals should have equal access to higher education. Different student groups experience disparities in access, achievement, and completion rates as a result of higher education inequity (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). It also undermines the social, economic, and democratic values of higher education. Therefore, it is imperative for higher education administrators to ensure equitable outcomes for all students. Furthermore, Clayton (2021) stated that institutionalizing equity on our campuses can be achieved as senior leaders understand and adopt “equity-mindedness,” which is a mode of thinking that calls attention to patterns of inequity in student

outcomes, resulting in individual and institutional responsibility for advancing equity-achieving practices to impact success for all students. The social and infrastructural development of communities that host educational institutions is known to progress rapidly. Societies and nations that prioritize educational development are known to be progressive and recognized internationally. By implementing measures that promote inclusivity and equal opportunities, higher education administration plays a crucial role in advancing equity.

### **Equity as a Tool for Sustainable Societal Development**

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically Goal 4, which focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education (United Nations, 2015), highlight the link between equity in HEA and sustainable societal development. Education equity promotes social cohesion and allows for more holistic societal development. Equity is an objective ideal whereby people's achievements are increasingly dependent upon personal effort, choice and initiative rather than predetermined characteristics such as race, gender and socioeconomic background. As such, equity becomes an issue of moral equality based on the belief that people should be treated as equals, with equal access to life chances. This ideal pursues equal access to public services, infrastructure and rights for all citizens, including the right to education (Peercy & Svenson, 2016). The benefits of equity in HEA have been demonstrated by a number of initiatives. For instance, by providing academic, social, and financial support, the Pathways to Education Program in Canada successfully decreased high school dropout rates in low-income communities (Levin, 2009). According to James et al. (2017), the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program in Australia has increased the success, participation, and access of people from low socioeconomic backgrounds to higher education. Equity in higher education administration can significantly contribute to sustainable societal development by promoting social mobility and economic development (Desmond & López Turley, 2009). When everyone has an equal opportunity to obtain a high-quality higher education, income inequality is reduced, social cohesion improves, and a more knowledgeable and skilled workforce is created. Therefore, there is a need to provide opportunities for higher education administration and studentship to all people irrespective of race, social class, religion, gender, sex and ethnicity. There should be no room for marginalization of any group of people. To ensure that education provides equal chances of upward social mobility to each individual of society, there should be equal opportunities for each individual. Equal opportunity means that all people in a society have equal chances to develop into high social classes irrespective of any personal hindrances, such as gender, socioeconomic status or ethnicity (Parveen & Awan, 2019, p. 186).

## **Equity as a Catalyst for Social Justice and Inclusivity**

Sustainable societal development also hinges on social justice and inclusivity. Equity is a fundamental tenet for achieving social justice and inclusivity. It is founded on the principles of fairness and impartiality in accessing opportunities and resources, ensuring that each individual, regardless of social standing, has an equal opportunity to thrive (Rawls, 1971). Equity, as a catalyst, seeks to rebalance scales, promoting fairness and justice through systematic change. According to Cohen and Crabtree (2008), health equity is an example of a concept in which everyone should have a fair and just opportunity to be healthier. Poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, such as a lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education, housing, safe environments, and healthcare, must all be addressed. Equity is a powerful tool for promoting inclusivity in the context of education. It ensures that all students have equal access to opportunities and entails identifying and addressing disparities to achieve equal educational outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2010). In higher education, for example, equity-promoting inclusivity strategies have resulted in increased access, participation, and success rates for marginalized groups (Avery & McKay, 2006). Furthermore, equity plays an important role in promoting social justice in the workplace. Pay equity policies, for example, aim to close the wage gap that frequently exists between different demographic groups (Blau & Kahn, 2017). Such practices can contribute to the development of a more inclusive and just society by ensuring that people are fairly compensated for their work regardless of their gender, race, or other identities. Equity and inclusivity are also important in decision-making processes because they allow diverse voices to contribute to long-term development. Cornwall (2004) claims that this can lead to more comprehensive solutions to social problems while also promoting mutual respect and understanding. It is also important to note that achieving equity frequently necessitates systemic changes in policies and practices that have perpetuated disparities. As a result, social justice is a continuous effort to address these systemic issues, with equity acting as a catalyst for change (Young, 1990).

## **Advance Equity and Inclusivity in Administrative Practices**

In Nigeria, where societal dynamics are profoundly shaped by religion, ethnicity, classism, and tribal affiliations, the imperative of fostering inclusivity and providing equal opportunities in administrative practices is not just pivotal; it is essential for the nation's unity and development. The complex interplay of these factors often manifests in the workplace, influencing hiring practices, promotion, and access to professional development opportunities. A study by Osakede et al. (2017) emphasized that equitable administrative practices in Nigeria's diverse work environment can effectively bridge the divides created by these social constructs, thereby enhancing organizational performance and

national productivity. The Nigerian Federal Character Commission, established to ensure a fair and equitable distribution of positions in the public service, embodies the legislative commitment to equity across diverse lines (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1996). Despite such legislative measures, the Nigerian workplace often mirrors broader societal tensions, with administrative practices sometimes skewed along lines of religious, ethnic, and tribal biases. These disparities can lead to a sense of alienation and a lack of belonging among minority groups, as noted by Adogame (2013), who underscores the importance of inclusivity in fostering a cohesive work environment that values diversity and harnesses it for organizational growth. Academic institutions, as microcosms of a larger society, play a significant role in modeling inclusive practices. In the context of Nigerian universities, Afigbo (1986) asserts the need for policies that transcend parochial tendencies and promote meritocracy, inclusiveness, and diversity.

Therefore, to build administrative systems that reflect Nigeria's pluralistic society, a conscious and concerted effort is needed. This entails not only policies that advocate for equality and inclusivity but also the implementation of such policies in a manner that is transparent and consistent. As Okeke (2014) suggested, it is through the active promotion of inclusive practices that Nigeria can hope to achieve a more stable and prosperous future. In the end, the strength of Nigeria's institutions and, indeed, its society will be determined by their ability to embrace and celebrate diversity while providing equal opportunities for all citizens.

### **Strategies for Promoting Equity in Higher Education Administration**

Adopting inclusive admission policies, providing adequate financial aid, implementing academic support services, and creating an inclusive campus climate are some strategies for promoting equity in higher education (Perna & Jones, 2013). Higher education administrators must constantly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies and make necessary adjustments based on the results. Promoting equity requires strong leadership. Administrators must demonstrate a commitment to equity and inclusion at all levels and use their power to effect change (Kuh, et al., 2010). Establishing a clear vision for equity, allocating resources to support this vision, and modeling inclusive behavior are all part of this process. In addition, equity training for administrators can raise awareness about issues of diversity and inclusion, resulting in more equitable decisions and actions (Aguirre & Martinez, 2002). This could be done through workshops, seminars, or online courses, and it should be a continuous process rather than a one-time event. Furthermore, people from different backgrounds can be given an equal chance to succeed in higher education administration by using fair and open hiring and promotion procedures (Gasman, et al., 2011). This could entail conducting an audit of current procedures, revising job descriptions



to place more emphasis on pertinent abilities and experiences, and putting strategies in place to draw in a diverse applicant pool. Administrators in higher education can better understand the situation today and monitor development over time by gathering and analyzing data on equity and inclusion (Bensimon, 2007). Surveys, focus groups, or the analysis of administrative data may be involved in this. The findings can be used to pinpoint problem areas and gauge the effectiveness of equity-related initiatives. In conclusion, advancing equity in the management of higher education requires a multifaceted strategy. This calls for leadership commitment, ongoing training and development, ethical hiring procedures, and data-driven decision-making.

Promoting equity within the context of the Higher Education Administration (HEA) in Nigeria requires a strategic approach that considers the unique sociocultural and economic dynamics of the country. The following are targeted strategies that can help achieve greater equity in the Nigerian higher education system:

### ***Policy Reform and Strategic Frameworks:***

**National Equity Policy:** Advocate for a national policy framework that mandates equity as a core principle in the HEA across all federal and state universities. The proposal for a National Equity Policy emphasizes the need for an overarching policy framework that enshrines equity as a fundamental principle in the Higher Education Administration (HEA) across all federal and state universities in Nigeria. This policy mandates that equitable practices are embedded in all aspects of university administration, from admissions to faculty recruitment and resource allocation, ensuring fair treatment and opportunities for all students, regardless of their background.

**Quota System Re-evaluation:** Reassess and refine the existing quota system to ensure that it serves its intended purpose of promoting equitable representation without compromising merit. The Quota System Re-evaluation calls for a critical review and refinement of the existing quota system used in university admissions. The goal is to enhance the system's effectiveness in promoting equitable representation of diverse groups, including those from underrepresented regions and communities. This re-evaluation should focus on striking a balance between achieving representation and maintaining high standards of academic merit to ensure that the system both supports diversity and upholds the quality of education.

## *Institutional capacity building*

**Institutional Equity Plans:** Encourage universities to develop and implement their own equity plans, tailored to address specific institutional challenges and demographics. The concept of institutional equity plans involves encouraging universities to develop and implement their own specific strategies to address equity issues. These plans should be customized to meet the unique challenges and demographic realities of each institution, ensuring that measures to promote equity are relevant and effective in their specific contexts. This approach recognizes that each university has its own set of challenges and opportunities and thus requires a tailored strategy to effectively address issues of diversity and inclusion within its community.

**Capacity Development:** Invest in building the capacity of higher education institutions to manage diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives through training and resource allocation. The focus should be on investing resources and efforts into enhancing the ability of higher education institutions to effectively manage diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. This involves providing training for staff and administrators, as well as allocating sufficient resources to support these initiatives. The goal is to equip institutions with the necessary tools, knowledge, and expertise to create and sustain an inclusive educational environment that supports all students and staff, irrespective of their backgrounds.

## *Data-Driven Strategies*

**Equity Metrics:** Utilize data and metrics to identify gaps in equity and monitor the progress of interventions. The Equity Metrics Initiative emphasizes the importance of using data and metrics to identify and understand disparities in higher education administration. This approach involves collecting and analyzing data to uncover inequities in various aspects of university operations, including student admissions, faculty composition, resource allocation, and academic outcomes. By systematically tracking these metrics, institutions can monitor the effectiveness of their equity-related interventions and make informed decisions to improve equity in higher education.

**Research and Publication:** Encourage research on equity and diversity in HEA and promote the dissemination of findings to inform policy and

practice. There should be a push to encourage and support research focused on equity and diversity within the Higher Education Administration (HEA). This research should aim to deepen the understanding of the challenges and best practices in achieving equity in higher education. Furthermore, it is important to promote the widespread dissemination of these research findings, as they can serve as valuable resources for informing policy and practice. This would involve publishing in academic journals, presenting at conferences, and engaging in public discourse to ensure that knowledge about equity in HEA is accessible and can effectively influence policy-making and administrative practices.

### *Leadership and Governance*

**Diverse Leadership Representation:** Strive for diverse backgrounds and perspectives within university leadership and governance structures. The initiative for diverse leadership representation in higher education administration in Nigeria should focus on ensuring that university leadership and governance structures reflect a broad spectrum of backgrounds and perspectives. This should involve actively recruiting and promoting individuals from various demographic groups, including different ethnicities, genders, and social backgrounds, to leadership positions. The goal is to create a more inclusive decision-making environment that benefits from the diverse experiences and viewpoints these leaders bring.

**Accountability Measures:** Establish clear accountability mechanisms for achieving equity goals, including regular reporting and reviews. Accountability measures in higher education administration should aim to establish robust mechanisms to ensure that equity goals are not only set but also effectively pursued and achieved. This includes implementing regular reporting systems and reviews to track progress toward these goals. Such measures ensure transparency and responsibility in the administration's efforts to promote equity, allowing for the evaluation of strategies and the identification of areas requiring improvement.

### *Cultural Competency and Sensitivity Training*

**Mandatory Training:** Implement mandatory cultural competency and sensitivity training for all university staff and administrators to promote an understanding of the different cultural dynamics within Nigeria. Cultural competency and sensitivity training in higher education

administration in Nigeria should emphasize the need for mandatory training for all university staff and administrators. This training should aim to foster an understanding and appreciation of the diverse cultural dynamics within Nigeria. Staff should be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to interact effectively and respectfully with individuals from various cultural backgrounds. The goal is to create a more inclusive and understanding educational environment, enhancing the ability of staff to support and engage with diverse student bodies and colleagues.

These strategies should be approached as part of a comprehensive plan that recognizes the need for systemic change, continuous assessment, and the involvement of all stakeholders in the higher education ecosystem. By employing these strategies, Nigeria can work toward establishing a more equitable HEA system that contributes to the nation's development and reflects the diversity and potential of its population.

The knowledge gap identified through this review is the lack of comprehensive, empirical studies examining the direct impact of these educational inequalities on the broader socioeconomic and political stability of Nigeria. Although the literature provides insights into the challenges and disparities within the Nigerian higher education system, there is a need for in-depth research that connects these educational issues with the country's broader developmental goals and conflict dynamics. This gap signifies an opportunity for future research to explore the causal relationships between educational inequality, social justice, and national stability in Nigeria.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

Higher education serves as a crucible for cultivating values, skills, talent, and financial acumen, enabling individuals to engage in both competition and collaboration in the global arena. Drawing upon the research presented in this paper, it is evident that equity in higher education administration is a vital instrument for fostering long-term societal development. By embedding equitable practices within the fabric of recruitment, professional development, and policy implementation, higher education institutions can establish inclusive social justice and empower individuals to participate fully in the nation's socioeconomic fabric.

Pursuing equity in higher education administration (HEA) necessitates persistent efforts and the collective action of all stakeholders within the educational ecosystem. The strategies outlined, ranging from policy reform and institutional capacity building to leadership and cultural competency, converge on the need for a steadfast commitment to overturning the status quo and steering toward a

more equitable future. Equity in HEA emerges as a pivotal force for achieving sustainable societal development, driving a more inclusive and just society. By eliminating educational disparities and ensuring equal access to educational opportunities, HEAs can profoundly contribute to societal growth and sustainable development. It is crucial to acknowledge the symbiotic relationship between equity and human development; one feeds into the other, creating a virtuous cycle that propels society forward. To realize the vision of a progressive society marked by sustainable development, it is incumbent upon both society at large and individual educational institutions to grasp the intricate nexus between equity and human development. This understanding is the cornerstone upon which the edifice of an empowered, equitable, and thriving society will be built.

## REFERENCES

- Adogame, A. (2013). *The African Christian diaspora: New currents and emerging trends in world Christianity*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Afigbo, A. E. (1986). *The warrant chiefs: Indirect rule in southeastern Nigeria, 1891-1929*. Longman.
- Aguirre, A., & Martinez, R. (2002). Leadership practices and diversity in higher education: Transitional and transformational frameworks. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 8(3), 53-62.
- Avery, D. R., & McKay, P. F. (2006). Target practice: An organisational impression management approach to attracting minority and female job applicants. *Personnel Psychology*, 59(1), 157-187.
- Bensimon, E. M. (2005). Closing the achievement gap in higher education: An organizational learning perspective. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2005(131), 99-111.
- Blau, F. D., & Kahn, L. M. (2017). The gender wage gap: Extent, trends, and explanations. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 55(3), 789-865.
- Cohen, L., & Crabtree, B. (2008). Evaluative criteria for qualitative research in health care: controversies and recommendations. Retrieved from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/18626033/>
- Cook, A., & Glass, C. (2014). Above the glass ceiling: When are women and racial/ethnic minorities promoted to CEO? *Strategic Management Journal*, 35(7), 1080-1089.
- Cornwall, A. (2004). Spaces for transformation? Reflections on issues of power and difference in participation in development. In S. Hickey & G. Mohan (Eds.), *Participation: From tyranny to transformation? Exploring new approaches to participation in development*. Zed Books.
- Clayton, T. B. (2021). Refocusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion during the pandemic and beyond: Lessons from a community of practice. *American Council on Education*. [www.higheredtoday.org/2021/01/13/refocusing-](http://www.higheredtoday.org/2021/01/13/refocusing-)

diversity-equity-inclusion-pandemic-beyond-lessons-community-practice/

- Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). *The flat world and education: How America's commitment to equity will determine our future*. Teachers College Press.
- Desmond, M., & López Turley, R. N. (2009). The Role of Familism in explaining the Hispanic-white college application gap. *Social Problems*, 56(2), 311-334.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria. (1996). *Federal Character Commission (Establishment, etc.) Act*. Abuja: Federal Government Printer.
- Gándara, P., & Contreras, F. (2009). *The Latino education crisis: The consequences of failed social policies*. Harvard University Press.
- Gasman, M., Kim, J., & Nguyen, T. H. (2011). Effectively recruiting faculty of color at highly selective institutions: A school of education case study. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 4(4), 212-222.
- Grubb, W. N. (2003). The roles of tertiary colleges and institutes: Trade-offs in restructuring postsecondary education. University of California, Berkeley U.S.A. <https://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/35757628.pdf>
- James, J.(2022). Overview of higher education. <https://merithub.com/>
- James, R., Bexley, E., Anderson, A., Devlin, M., Garnett, R., Marginson, S., & Maxwell, L. (2017). Participation and equity: A review of the participation in higher education of people from low socioeconomic backgrounds and Indigenous people. Universities Australia.
- Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J. H., & Whitt, E. J. (2010). *Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter*. Jossey-Bass.
- Kiran and Kumari, K. (2016). Higher education: Equity, access and excellence. *Bhartiyam International Journal of Education and Research*. 5(IV). 51-58
- Levin, B. (2009). To know is not enough: Research knowledge and its use. *Review of Education*, 1(2), 2-31.
- Nwogu, G. A. (2015). Barriers to equality of access to educational opportunity in Nigeria: A philosophical perspective. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(4), 148-152.
- Oghenekohwo, J. E., & Torunarigha Y. D. (2018). Education and development: Dynamics of access, equity, and social justice in Nigeria. *International Journal of Education & Literacy Studies*, 6(2), 10-14
- Okeke, T. O. (2014). Promoting national unity in Nigerian universities: The role of stakeholders. *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education*, 1(11), 123-130.
- Okundare, A., Solaja, O. M., Soyewo, G. T. (2013). Rethinking Nigerian tertiary education policies: Toward equity and accessibility. *International Journal of Multi-Disciplinary Studies and Sports Research*, 3, 303-317.

- Osakede, K. O., Ijimakinwa, S. A., & Owolabi, K. E. (2017). Public administration, ethnicity and the state in selected African countries. *African Research Review*, 11(4), 1-17.
- Otonko, J. (2012) University education in Nigeria: History, successes, failures and the way forward. *International Journal of Technology and Inclusive Education* , 1(2), 44-48.
- Parveen, I. & Awan. R. N. (2019). Equitable higher education: Students' perspective on access to resources, participation, and educational outcomes. *Bulletin of Education and Research*, 41(1), 185-201.
- Peace Research Institute Oslo (2017). Education and systematic group inequalities in Nigeria. *Conflict Trends Project*. Available at [www.prio.org/ConflictTrends](http://www.prio.org/ConflictTrends).
- Peercy, C., & Svenson, N. (2016). The role of higher education in equitable human development. *Int Rev Educ*, 62, 139–160. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-016-9549-6>
- Perna, L. W., & Jones, A. (2013). *The state of college access and completion: Improving college success for students from underrepresented groups*. Routledge.
- Rawls, J. (1971). *A theory of justice*. Harvard University Press.
- Salem, M.I. (2014). The role of universities in building a knowledge-based economy in Saudi Arabia. *International Business and Economics Research Journal*, 13(5),1047-1056.
- Tate, K. A., Fallon, K. M., Casquarelli, E. J., & Marks, L. R. (2014, October). Opportunities for action: Traditionally marginalized populations and the economic crisis. *The Professional Counselor*, 4(4), 285–302. <https://doi.org/10.15241/kat.4.4.285>
- United Nations. (2015). Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development. United Nations General Assembly. Retrieved from <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/transforming-our-world-2030-agenda-sustainable-development>
- Young, I. M. (1990). *Justice and the politics of difference*. PUP.

## Bios

FRANCA NWANKWO, Ph.D., IWEHA CHRIS CHIJOKE, ADEKEMISOLA ASAHIAH, SOYELE HAMED, MENSAH JAMES, & ADEOLUWA FOLAMI are doctoral candidates at Morgan State University Baltimore, USA. Corresponding Author: [francanwankwo82@gmail.com](mailto:francanwankwo82@gmail.com)