

‘Marketing’ Nigerian Education: Issues and Challenges

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Doi:10.5901/ajis.2012.v2n5p57

Abstract

In Nigeria education is provided by both government and private proprietors at the basic, post basic and tertiary levels. For some time now the quality of education provided in these public and private sectors has been a source of concern to both the literate and illiterate in the society. To some the standard of education has fallen while others believe it is high. However against the background of the fact that the education sector is bedeviled with a myriad of challenges, the quality of education offered remains doubtful. These challenges serve as determinants as to whether education is being marketed. In this regard the paper reviews the concepts of marketing education, features of a marketable educational product/service and aims of education. A discourse on whether Nigerian education is marketable and being marketed is made. The paper also looked at challenges in the wheel of marketing education and lastly chatted the way forward and recommended that the 26% of annual budget as prescribed by UNESCO should be complied with.

Introduction

In developed and developing countries like Nigeria, education aims at:

- promoting national unity;
- public morality;
- training for vocational competence;
- developing democratic values;
- producing adequate middle and high level manpower for economic development;
- removing social inequalities;
- promoting religious tolerance; and
- engendering individual happiness and pleasure, among other objectives.

To attain the afore-stated, formal educational institutions have been established by government, private proprietors, Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Religion-Based Organisations (RBOs). These institutions operate at both the early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. To put this discourse on track, one question is pertinent: “Are the operators of these educational institutions operating under conditions, guidelines and standards that would enhance attainment of national educational objective?” Implicit in the above are three further questions and these are:

1. To what extent are the educational institutions achieving the goals of education in Nigeria at their respective levels?
2. Is Nigerian education actually marketable as to attract more learners and teachers into the institutions?
3. Are the educational institutions marketing their degrees and certificates for profiteering?

For easy comprehension, the paper shall be presented under the following sections:

- A Conceptualization of Marketing.
- Attributes/Features/Characteristics of a marketable product/service.

- The Concept of Education.
- Aims of Education in Nigeria.
- Nigerian Education: marketable and being marketed?
- Cogs in the Wheel of Marketing Education
- Conclusion and the way forward

A Conceptualization of Marketing

Marketing as a concept has a plurality of definitions, and this is reflective of the fact that many in the field look at it from their respective perspectives. Nonetheless, a few definitions are very instructive. The British Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) perceives marketing as that management process which is responsible for the identification, anticipation and satisfaction of customer's requirement profitably. Kotler (1999) saw marketing as human activity directed at satisfaction of needs and wants through the process of exchange. According to Ezirin, Okorie, Udo, Onyiriuka, Okon, Iruene and Nwokah (2006) "marketing consists of individual and organisational activities designed to sense and serve/satisfy consumer's needs and to facilitate and expedite exchange with a view to achieving the individual's or organisation's goal through the satisfaction of consumer's needs" (p3). The above definitions reveal the fact that marketing places emphasis on the customer who is the focus of the organisation's activities, and the organisation profits by satisfying the needs of the customer. In other words, the emphasis is on students/learners who become the focus of the institution's activities and the institution make profits by satisfying the needs of its students as well as the attainment of institutional goals. Education which is an essential service can be equated with service marketing which Kelechi and Egbuta (2006) defined as the activities of human beings designed to satisfy intangible desires/demand through the process of exchange

Characteristics of Marketable Services

Some of the features that make marketable services outstanding and their implications for education include:

- Services are inseparable from their providers because they are simultaneously produced and consumed. A teacher will normally not be separated from teaching the students as the need arises. This makes it difficult for the service provider (teacher) to attend to all the customers (learners) at the same time. The implication is that adequate number of teachers should be provided and their classroom interaction skills should be built/sharpened.
- Since services are simultaneously produced and consumed, it means that there is a direct channel for distribution of services. This implies that middle men are completely eliminated in the marketing of services. Therefore, it calls for the strengthening of the capacity of teachers in the learning institutions.
- Service changes based on the provider, the place and time it will be provided. This means that efficiency cannot be guaranteed with certainty. The implication for education here is that continuous motivation, capacity building and retraining of teachers and allied counterparts in the educational institutions should be of paramount importance, so as to maintain a high standard service to students and the nation at large.
- Services are perishable since they are simultaneously produced and consumed. The result is that services cannot be stored in order to sell them on a later date. Another variant to this feature is fluctuation in demand pattern of services. This means that enrolment in school may increase at one time, and decreases at another. The implication arising from this characteristic is that adequate number of qualified human and other resources should be on ground to contain whatever situations.

- Services are intangible, as a result they cannot be seen, heard, smelt, felt and tasted before they are rendered or purchased. In the same vein, teaching and learning are intangible, hence the need to concretize the process with the use of instructional materials and resources. Intangibility of education makes it imperative for parents and students to search for indications of high service quality before enrollment.

Concept of Education

Education has come to remain one very potent instrument for effecting development and transformation in all facets of life. It promotes the talents and potentials of those that receive it, and facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, skills, habits, values, attitudes and aptitudes as well as competencies for self adjustment and to cope with personal and societal challenges. Education is a process that starts from cradle (birth) to grave (death). Thus, it is the totality of man's sojourn on earth. Education could be formal or informal in nature, but above all, it is used to meet expectations of society as it is consciously applied to tackle challenges and to realise the yearnings and aspirations of individuals receiving it and the society operating it.

In the light of the above, education can be conceptualized as the aggregate of all processes, social in nature, available under specialized settings, selected and controlled, by which an individual develops knowledge, skills, culture, attitude and insights in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning that are vital for his survival as a person and a member of a community, and for the enhancement of his life and that of his society (Uche, 2003 and Okoh, 2003).

Implicit in the above stated concept of education is that:

- Education is a social process that involves development and transmission of knowledge, skills, attitude, culture, values and habits from one generation to another.
- An agency is responsible for the dispensation of education and this is the school.
- All that is needed to be achieved or developed must be in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning.
- A document directs all learning experiences and activities (i.e curriculum).
- Education is for the growth and development of the individual and society at large.

Therefore, 'marketing' education can be conceptualized as the experiences and activities, both curricula and co-curricula, which the school embarks upon in order to initiate a desirable change in behaviour of its clients (learners) as well as attainment of set national goals of education.

Aims of Education in Nigeria

Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN, (2004) which describes education as an instrument "par excellence" for effecting national development, found it desirable to spell out the philosophy and objective upon which education in Nigeria is built. Therefore the national goals of Nigerian education are:

- a) The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
- b) The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;
- c) The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and
- d) The acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society." (p8).

In furtherance of the achievement of the afore-stated goals, the quality of instruction at all levels of education has to be geared towards inculcating the following values:

- a) Respect for the worth and dignity of the individual;
- b) Faith in man's ability to make rational decisions;
- c) Moral and spiritual principle in inter-personal and human relations;
- d) Shared responsibility for the common good of society;
- e) Promotion of the physical, emotional and psychological development of all children; and
- f) Acquisition of competencies necessary for self-reliance (FRN, 2004, p.8).

It is in fulfillment of these goals and values that government intensified the provision of formal education, and at the same time beckoning on non-governmental agencies, communities and well meaning individuals to actively participate in the education sector. From the fore-going, it is not in doubt that the Nigerian system of education is a vibrant one. However, one pertinent question that requires an urgent answer is "to what extent has Nigeria, as a nation, realised the attainment of its national educational goals and the values to drive these goals?" In attempting to answer the above, let us quickly move to the next unit of this presentation.

Nigeria Education: Marketable and being Marketed?

The Nigeria education system which is guided by an educational policy (National Policy on Education) is a marketable one. Its marketability lies in the fact that, first, this is the first and acceptable attempt to provide a document that charts education in Nigeria. This document provides a philosophical base for Nigerian education and a uniform system of education. Second, the policy stratifies education into 3 levels viz:

Basic Education (early childhood, primary, junior secondary, adult and non-formal education);

Post Basic Education (senior secondary, technical colleges, vocational enterprise institutions (VEIS); and

Tertiary Education (Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEDS), Colleges of Education, Polytechnics/Monotechnics and Universities. (FMOE, 2009, p.1). Each of these strata has its objectives outlined in the policy document, as well as curricula and co-curricula activities and experiences that would lead to the attainment of set goals. Third, in pursuance of the attainment of set goals, the policy recommends the medium of instruction and methodology for use in curriculum delivery, and arrangement for local production and utilization of instructional materials and other resources. Fourth, in recognition of the role of teachers, the document describes a teacher as one who is indispensable, for upon him hangs the success of the education industry. For this reason, attempts are on to raise both the academic and professional standard of entry into the teaching profession as well as legalization of the profession and the consequent establishment of Teachers' Registration Council (TRC) as a regulatory body for teaching in Nigeria. Fifth, for education to be all-inclusive, the policy emphasizes open and distance education, and special education. This is to cater for the majority of Nigerians who for one reason or the other could not fit into the regular school programme. In addition, some reforms have been made to accommodate "almajiris", nomads and the children of migrant fishermen into the formal school system. Sixth, a major radical development expressed in the national policy on education is the introduction of continuous assessment at the different levels of the education system. This mode of assessment is intended to ensure that learners at all levels gain from the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning as espoused by Bloom. Osokoya (2011) is of the strong belief that introduction of continuous assessment in to Nigeria's system of education will guarantee acquisition of the three Hs of the Nigerian child, and these are the head (cognitive), the heart (affective) and the hand (psychomotor). Lastly, the policy document has introduced and integrated Information Communication Technology (ICT) at all levels of the education system. The purpose is to prepare Nigerian students to be abreast of the globally competitive economy as well as overcoming the challenges of access, equity, quality and management to quality education in Nigeria (Mohammed, Nbina, 2010 & FMOE, 2009).

With all these enunciations implicit in Nigeria's National Policy on Education, it will not be out of place to categorically state that the education system being operated is marketable. This is to the effect that it is not

only capable of attracting more learners and teachers from within and outside the country, but can also produce both middle and high level manpower or human resources for development in other sectors of the economy. However, Kolo (2007) reiterates that to achieve the set goals of education in Nigeria as enunciated in the policy document in the present circumstance is to initiate a complete overhaul of the entire system. This would mean re-orienting the society about the value of education and awakening her consciousness concerning the enormous responsibilities in the education sector. Overhauling the entire system of education has become imperative as it is a way to check crisis in the sector, and avert further failure in other spheres of development (FME, 2007 & Akpan, 2007). The foregoing reveals that certain cogs exist in the wheel of (providing) worthwhile and wholesome quality education in Nigeria. As a result, education is being marketed (sold) for profiteering and to boost the level/status of individual in the society, especially as it concerns the activities of private universities in the country.

Cogs in the Wheel of Marketing (Providing) Quality Education

There exist a myriad of challenges in Nigeria's effort to provide (market) quality education to its citizenry and other nationals. Some of these challenges are enumerated as follows:

Curriculum Development and Innovation Issues: The curriculum is meant to serve individuals and society at large. As a major source of curriculum content, society expects its problems to be solved, while her needs, hopes, yearnings and aspirations are fulfilled via the curriculum. These call for a responsive curriculum that will respond to a variety of changes taking place in a dynamic society. In other words, the curriculum operated at the different levels of the education system requires some form of reforms, innovations and re-engineering processes in order to accommodate emergent issues in the society. To meet the aspiration of Nigerians and Nigeria, especially in this era of global economic competitiveness and values re-orientation, the educational curriculum needs to be revised to reflect and accommodate societal issues that are emerging on a daily basis. (Kolo, 2007; Mbachu, 2011; & Okoro and Afurobi, 2011). In Nigeria, the emergence of these issues has eaten deep into the fabric of the society. These issues include climate change and green house effect, political intolerance, cyber crime, militancy, senseless bombing and killings, kidnapping, unemployment, corruption, insecurity, armed robbery and other social vices. The absence of a curriculum re-engineering process has further exacerbated these issues. Curriculum content of some courses in our institutions of learning is docile. This is in the sense that such courses do not impact on society positively because emergent issues have overtaken the course content. In some cases equipment, materials and other resources required to deliver the curriculum may be obsolete, inadequate or not available. These conditions impose limitations on efforts to market education in the country for the benefit of all. Due to inability of the system to market education the result is a bumper harvest of bombers in the North, kidnapers in the east, armed robbers in the west and militants in the south. All resulting from the half-baked graduates in the system. Another instance of non-marketable education is exemplified in the current incidence of flood across the country. Meteorological authorities warned state governments and other related authorities concerning rainfall and consequent flooding of the affected areas. Unfortunately due to lack of adequate knowledge and skills about climate change, many communities have been submerged.

It therefore becomes pertinent to revise the educational curriculum and include contents such as peace education, value education, environmental education, entrepreneurial education, citizenship education and Information Communication Technology (ICT) education to mention a few. Experiences, knowledge, skills and values acquired from these contents will, to a large extent, inform Nigerians on how best to positively handle these emerging societal challenges.

Teacher Quality: The quality of teachers in a nation's educational institutions can never be divorced from the education received. As an academic discipline which has a body of theoretical formulations (Emen, 2010), teacher education has become one of the greatest challenges of our time. Osokoya (2010) stresses the

need to train and retrain professional teachers who will be able to sufficiently motivate the young generation and imbue them with a thirst for knowledge. In recognition of the quality of teachers in the education system, FRN (2004) stressed the need to place emphasis on teacher education and development. Unfortunately, however, the curriculum and programmes specification of teacher education in the teacher training institutions are yet to address the challenges of teaching in the basic education sub-sector. Even though the curriculum specifications for this sub sector have been restructured and renewed, pre service National Certificate in Education (NCE) teachers are ill-equipped to cope with the demands of these new specification (Obioma, 2010). In addition, there has been no coherent policy on teacher education in Nigeria(Ayalemi ,2008), rather there has been some incoherent and uncoordinated programmes mounted for teacher at one time or the other. These include Special Teacher Upgrading Programme (STUP), Pivotal Teachers' Training Programme (PTTP) and Federal Teachers' Scheme (FTS), to mention a few. Furthermore, the existing curriculum specification and programmes in teacher education do not incorporate or integrate Information Communication Technology (ICT). Yet, teachers are required to be proficient in computer operation, programming and software development to enable them adequately integrate ICT in the classroom (Ifegbo, 2011). When the teacher who is pivot of the entire system of education constitutes a challenge to the system, the products become doubtful. This calls for further questions on how marketable the education system is. Teachers being facilitators in the learning process, have a primary role to play in marketing education. When teachers quality is however poor, it follows that the system will be negatively affected and this will result to poor quality of graduates. This condition cannot in the least, make education marketable in all ramifications.

These issues call for immediate attention in order to improve the quality of teachers in Nigerian education system.

Provision and Rehabilitation of Educational Infrastructures: Educational infrastructures in this presentation refer to structures, facilities and material resources which are used in combination with human resources for the desired growth of learners and attainment of set goals of the school. The dearth of these infrastructures has necessitated a situation where teaching and learning go on in conditions that can be described as deplorable. It is a common feature, at all levels of education, to see dilapidated buildings with caved-in or blown off roof tops, inadequate toilets facilities, broken furniture and damaged floor. These conditions have resulted in students over crowding available classrooms or learning under trees. Tertiary education lecturers are seriously in need of office spaces and furniture, just like the students require lecture blocks, hostels and the attendant facilities. This state of affair has made the National Universities Commission (NUC) to impose the policy of "carrying capacities" on Nigerian University system (Kolo, 2007). This is a deliberate attempt to control admission of students into tertiary institution, thus inhibiting access to education at this level. It is truism that in real estate market, a few and dilapidated buildings and other archaic facilities in a manor are not marketable enough to attract profit. In the same vein educational infrastructures' which are in a deplorable condition will not engender a conducive environment for teaching and learning to thrive. This condition makes education unmarketable as, the infrastructures make it remain distasteful to learners, teachers and other allied personnel. Education in fact, given and received under any deplorable condition could be said to be a mockery of the system.

There is need therefore, to provide more educational infrastructure and for a massive rehabilitation of deteriorated and deteriorating facilities in the sector across the nation.

Examination Malpractice: The importance of education in both personal and national development cannot be over-emphasized. In Nigeria, formal education is operated at the basic, post-basic and tertiary levels. At each of these levels certificates are issued to graduates as a mark of having met or satisfied the necessary conditions, in character and learning, for graduation. These certificates are pre-requisites for enrolment into higher levels of education, as in basic to post-basic and post-basic to tertiary. In some cases they are required for job placement in order to earn a livelihood. These make the importance attached to educational certificate over whelming. Due to this situation, students are hell-bent on acquiring the

certificates by all means, including through malpractices in examinations. In many cases these students are aided by their parents and teachers. This improper and dishonest act associated with examination calls to question the integrity of certificates awarded in our national education system. This problem has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigerian society (Salami, 1994). The consequences of examination malpractice have manifested in the form of low quality of graduates and unemployable graduates, the craze to hold high political offices, corruption in both low and high level positions of authority and a steady decline of teaching quality in our schools, to mention a few. It is also logical to conclude that examination malpractices are related to militancy, kidnapping, human and drug trafficking, since these are all improper and dishonest ways to achieve success in society. Certificates that are improperly and dishonestly acquired are not only dangerous to the acquirer but also to the society he belongs. This unmerited certificate does not in any way portray knowledge or ability of the holder, hence could result to low human resources development in a developing country like Nigeria (okujagu, 2012). The unemployment saga in the country is not only occasioned by governments' inability to provide employment for her citizenry. Some Nigerian graduates have become unemployable because they flaunt certificates that do not reflect the knowledge, skills and character they claim to possess. Examination mal-practice therefore makes education more unmarketable to its clients.

Funding: The issue of funding education in Nigeria has become a matter of grave concern. This is inspite of the crises it has generated over the decades at both state and national levels. Available data indicate that for the past twenty or more years, the level of funding stands at 5 – 6% of the national budget, a far cry from the 26% recommended by UNESCO. In addition, it has been observed, over the years, that even the little given for education is not always spent on education (Akpan, 2007). The results therefore, have been inadequate provision of educational infrastructure and inability to rehabilitate existing but broken down facilities, inadequate investment in teacher education and development, inability to embark on curriculum re-engineering processes and inability to carryout value-re-orientation programmes in the direction of conscientizing and sensitizing students, teachers, parents and supporting examining agencies on issues bothering on examination malpractices. Inadequate funding has continued to be a major obstacle to educational development in Nigeria. Funds are very crucial for a system to attain its goals. Inadequate funding of any enterprise stifles attainment of institutional goals. This calls to question the marketability of a system that is starved of funds like education.

Information Communication Technology (ICT): As I speak with you today, apart from the efforts of the international community at differing a full blown third World War (WWIII), the next most interesting phenomenon on the globe is the advent of ICT. The value of ICT lies in its potential to foster quality education delivery and sustainable national development on a general note. Ifegbo (2011) noted that ICT has globalized education by breaking the walls of the conventional classroom and extending the boundaries to virtual classroom. It is in this direction that it has been introduced into Nigerian system of education in order to meet local needs and to adapt international best practices. Unfortunately, the introduction of this all important component of education has been fraught with implementation problems. These problems included lack of requisite ICT infrastructure, institutional weakness such as dearth of qualified ICT teachers and other personnel, as well as low capacity of ICT teachers,... problem of power and energy (FMOE, 2009, p.17). These challenges, if not well addressed, will continue to frustrate ICT and allied activities in the nation's education system.

Proliferation of Educational Institutions: Government's resolve to involve active participation of private proprietors in the education enterprise is to fast track the provision of education and its dividends to the citizenry. The intention is a good one. For instance, before the advent of Early Childhood Care Development and Education (ECCDE), a component of the Universal Basic Education (UBE), provision of pre-school education dwelt with private proprietors. In the same vein, private proprietors have been very active in a bid to expand access to primary, secondary and tertiary education. At present the number of privately owned primary and secondary schools as well as universities are close to overwhelming these owned

by government. Private universities dot the nooks and crannies of Nigeria with their operational environment and conditions not significantly better than the public universities. Of recent, more universities have been approved for both the public and private sectors as exemplified in the 12 newly approved federal universities and a few more approved private universities. Private participation in any enterprise is usually profit-motivated. Thus, to keep 'business' afloat in the face of their inability to meet the accreditation benchmark stipulated by the National Universities Commission (NUC), some unwholesome practices are perpetrated by students, lecturers, some management staff and their allies in these universities. Infact, following this business-like attitude the NUC in a letter to registrars of Nigerian universities early in 2012, published a list of 17 universities that are not on the scheme of approved universities. These illegal universities were also branded 'Degree Mills' by the NUC. This is a further attestation to the fact that universities are profiteering with their certificates and degrees. The proliferation of educational institutions especially universities has reduced them to agencies which merely issue degree certificates to who can afford them monetarily. Again, given the fact that the certificates so awarded are not a true reflection of the character, knowledge and aptitude of the carriers, the viability of the certificates remain in doubt. This constitutes a cog in the wheel of marketing education. It would be proper to think that the right thing for NUC to do is to focus and concentrate on existing universities by making them teaching and learning friendly, rather than approving more that would not stand the test of accreditation.

Conclusion and the way forward

This presentation has reviewed the concept of marketing, attributes of a marketable product/service and concept of education and its aims. The paper further dwelt on whether or not education is really marketable and the current effort at marketing it. Lastly, it has provoked the thought of conferees as to whether Nigerian tertiary institution, especially, universities are 'marketing' education for profiteering. It is the view of the presenter that the way forward is to conscientiously adopt or adapt the recommendations made hereunder:

- ✓ All the agencies such as the National Universities Commission (NUC), National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), West African Examination Council (WAEC), National Examination Council (NECO), National Business and Technical Education Board (NABTEB) and Universal Basic Education Commission (UBE), charged with the responsibility of developing curriculum should as a matter of urgent importance develop strategies for curriculum reforms, revision and re-engineering processes. This will help the education sector to cope with and cater for emergent issues in society.
- ✓ Teacher education programmes should be directed at producing professionals who will be able to motivate students and stimulate their thirst for knowledge to the extent that they would volunteer to become professional teachers, rather than take to teaching as a last resort.
- ✓ The Federal Ministry of Education through the relevant agencies should formulate a coherent National Policy on Teacher Education. This policy should spell out in details the teacher education programmes and processes, who the teacher should be, the minimum qualification of teachers, time/period and strategies for retraining programmes/ exercises and teachers welfare and motivation strategies, among others. ICT should also be incorporated as a major component of teacher education programme.
- ✓ A state of emergency should be declared in the education sector. During this period of emergency, effort and resources should be channeled toward the provision of basic educational infrastructure and rehabilitation of facilities at the basic, post-basic and tertiary levels of education. This emergency period could be from eighteen to twenty-four months.

- ✓ Just like the federal road maintenance agency (FERMA) an agency charged with the responsibility of maintenance of educational infrastructure should be put in place of both the State and Federal levels. This will function to ensure that educational structures and facilities do not breakdown to a level of deterioration and inconvenience. Such maintenance culture is bound to make educational institutions attractive to learners and teachers alike.
- ✓ The federal/state ministries of education and operators of private universities should strive hard to provide all it takes to meet accreditation requirement of programmes in tertiary institutions.
- ✓ In addition to the provision of an academically appropriate environment by stakeholders for teaching, learning and research to thrive, appropriate legislation should be articulated and enforced on examination malpractice matters.
- ✓ Any budgetary allocation to the education sector that is short of the 26% of national budget as prescribed by the UNESCO will be too paltry to make any meaningful impact in the sector. Therefore, governments at the state and federal levels as well as private operators should be very positive about this prescription. Funds meant for education should no longer be diverted for other purposes, no matter how urgent such may be. No other sector of the economy merits greater urgency and emergency more than the education sector.
- ✓ ICT should be taken very seriously. This means that ICT infrastructure, qualified ICT and other personnel and power and energy should be put in place. In this way Nigerians will become exposed to the global economic competitiveness and equally be a part of this competition. ICT skills should be made a compulsory requirement as English Language and Mathematics for admission into any form of higher education programme in Nigeria.
- ✓ Concerted effort should be made to consolidate the state of existing universities, rather than establishing new ones. This will make the academic programmes of the universities to be more development – friendly, and open up more access to university education. All these recommendations, if and when properly given serious consideration, will bring about improvements in the quality of education. These improvements will further chart the way for a more effective marketing of education in Nigeria.

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