



**International Journal of Economics,
Environmental Development and Society
(IJEEDS)**

MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF FUNDING HIGHER EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Governments owned higher education in Nigeria require a significant amount of funds to achieve their goals and objectives. However, funds to higher education in Nigeria continue to be inadequate with the attendant effects of negative influences in the school system. This paper takes a review of the present funding challenges of governments owned higher institutions in Nigeria and proffers suggestions as to how higher education can meet these challenges based on the premise that government funding on higher education might continue to decrease while the composite cost of higher education per student might continue to be on the increase, and that higher education cannot be free in the real sense of it. Some of such suggestions include the putting in place of structures that would enhance availability in administration of higher education, and exploring alternative means of generating funds especially that of making students to bear reasonable cost of their higher education while ensuring that university education does not become accessible to only those that have means of acquiring it to enhance sustainable development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Challenges, Funding, Sustainability, Development.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Nnadijeze, G. C., & Oteyi, J. V. (2023). Meeting the challenges of funding higher education for sustainable development in Nigeria. *International Journal of Economics, Environmental Development and Society*, 4(4), 492-500.

INTRODUCTION

One of the major problems of higher education in Nigeria for a sustainable development is funding. Higher education in Nigeria has remained under funded over the years. During the former President Muhammadu Buhari's administration (2015–2023) a paltry sum of 5-7 percent of the total budget was allocated to education as against the United Nations recommendation of at least 26 percent of the annual budget of any nation to education. It is therefore, obvious that the government is not committed to the sustainable development of higher education in Nigeria.

One of the major problems of funding higher education in Nigeria is as a result of government policy. Today, there is an unprecedented growth of Federal Universities students' enrollment/population, without a corresponding increase in the budgetary allocation. Ojedele and Fadokun (2009) observed that higher education plays a key role in the economic and social development of any nation. This is particularly the case in today's globalized information and knowledge-based economy. No country can expect to successfully integrate in and benefit from the 21st century economy without a well-educated workforce.

World Bank (2002) noted that in today's life-long learning framework, higher education provides not only high level skills necessary for every market but also the training essentials for teachers, doctors, nurses, civil servants, engineers, humanist, entrepreneurs, scientist and a myriad of personnel. In collaboration, the National policy on education (FRN, 2014) also stressed that university education shall make optimum contribution to national development by intensifying and diversifying its programmes for the development of higher level manpower within the context of the need of the nation. It is these trained individuals who develop the capacity and analytical skills that drive local economics, support civil society, teach children, lead effective governments and make important decisions which affect the entire society.

As regards higher education in Nigeria, the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014) highlighted the following as the expected goals of higher education in Nigeria:

- To contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training;
- To develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and the society;
- To develop the intellectual capacity of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments;
- To acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;
- To promote and encourage scholarships and community services;
- To forge and cement national unity; and
- To promote national and international understanding and interactions

Section 5, paragraph 82 of the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014) further emphasized that higher education shall pursue these goals through (a) quality student intake; (b) quality teaching and learning; (c) research and development; (d) high standard in the quality of facilities, services and resources; (e) staff welfare and development programmes; (f) provision of a more practical based curriculum relevant to the needs of the labour market; (g) generation and dissemination of knowledge, skills and competencies that contributes to national and local economics goals which enables students to succeed in a knowledge-based economy; (h) a variety of flexible learning modes including full-time, part-time, block release, day release and

sandwich programmes; (i) access to training funds such as those provided by the industrial training fund (HP), tertiary education trust fund (TETfund); (j) students industrial work experience scheme (Siwes) that is well structured, coordinated and supervised; (k) maintenance of minimum educational standards through appropriate “regulatory agencies”; (l) and all inclusive credible admissions policy for national unity; (m) supporting affordable, equitable access to tertiary education through scholarships and students loans; (n) inter-institutional co-operation and linkages and (o) dedicated services to the community through extra-moral and extension services.

Considering these even goals of higher education in Nigeria, it could be seen that essentially higher education is meant for developing individuals intellectuals and otherwise so as to enable them cope with the challenges of contemporary society and to be able to meaningfully contribute to the development of the society. This implies that investment in higher education is an investment in the present and future development of a nation for its relevance and survival.

In spite of the laudable goals and objectives which higher education is expected to achieve as enumerated in the National Policy on Education, (FRN, 2014) one of the major problems affecting higher education in Nigeria is that of inadequate funding. Hence, this paper exhaustively discussed the following highlights: challenges facing higher education in Nigeria, inadequate infrastructural facilities, shortage of staff, brain drain, poor research, weak administrators, insecurity, issues of underfunding higher education in Nigeria and meeting the challenges of funding higher education for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Challenges Facing Higher Education in Nigeria

There are many challenges facing higher education in Nigeria. This paper will consider the following: inadequate funding, corruption, inadequate infrastructural facilities, shortage of academic staff, strike actions, brain-drain, poor research, weak administrators and insecurity

Inadequate Funding

According to Sani and Oluwasanumi (2013), there has been increasing concerns about the growing shortage of funds and learning resources in higher education in Nigeria. It has been observed that Nigeria government over the years has not been meeting the United Nation Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommendation of 26% of total budget allocation to the education sector, which impacts negatively on the performance and sustainability of higher education in Nigeria.

Abdulkareem (2001) also opined that the ever increasing problems that tend to compete for government financial attention, budgetary allocations to education especially university education may in a relative term continue to be in the decline. Akinola (1990) was worried about the funding situation and commented thus: Our higher institution education systems are in dire need of money.... To cater for both their capital and recurrent needs. For a few years, the budget have been out back from year to year by the federal government. This cut back has affected both capital and recurrent expenditures. In many higher institutions capital projects embarked upon few years ago, are yet to be completed due to lack of adequate funds.

He maintained that many factors are responsible for shortage of funds in the Nigerian higher education and they include poor financial planning, lack of political will to fund higher education, corruption and drop in national revenue. The education sector in Nigeria is known to

be one of the few areas that do not get the right budget allocation. Aside from funds for infrastructure, it was reiterated that equipment and other necessities, such as the salaries of staff are not prioritized

Corruption

Ogunode (2020) observed that corruption in the higher education in Nigeria is another bane preventing effective administration for sustainable development in Nigeria. The abnormal rate of corruption in Nigeria education has hindered effective administration of education as many higher institutions are in the present condition because of the corruption in the system. Funds meant for implementation of programmes, provisions of infrastructural facilities, employment of staff and programme development are perceived to be diverted into private accounts. In agreement, Ololube (2016) revealed that much of the little funds that go into the higher institutions are usually stolen.

Inadequate Infrastructural Facilities

Udida et al. (2009) observed that the lack of adequate infrastructures in our higher education has posed serious setback in the achievement of higher education for sustainable development in Nigeria. Proper teaching and learning cannot be affective and efficient in a system where there are no adequate classrooms, resource rooms, staff rooms, lack of laboratory facilities and computers. Ogunode (2020) maintained that many higher institutions in Nigeria do not have adequate academic staff and infrastructural facilities which include; libraries, laboratories, halls, offices, administrative blocks, hostels, road facilities, water, electricity, internet etcetera.

The students do not have adequate lecture halls and hostel accommodations (Ogunode & Abubakar, 2020). Salisu (2021) also observed that there is significant difference in the academic performance of students in institutions with adequate facilities and those with inadequate facilities.

Shortage of Academic staff

According to Ahaotu and Ogunode (2021), one of the major challenges facing higher education in Nigeria for sustainable development is the shortage of academic staff which revealed wide disparities between Nigeria universities and their counterparts in the Western World. To collaborate this, Ogunode (2020), NEEDS (2014) emphasized that inadequate lectures is a serious problem facing all the higher institutions in Nigeria. The shortage of lecturers is responsible for the poor quality of teaching and learning in most Nigerian higher institutions.

Strike Actions

Sani and Oluwasanumi (2013) observed that poor funding of higher education in Nigeria has also resulted in a couple of problems for Nigerian institutions which invariably have resulted in problems of quality. For instance the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has gone on strike for several times namely, in 1992, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2004 and 2022 to press home its demand for increased funding for the system. In instances of strike occurrence, academic programmes are disrupted, students and the entire school system are negatively affected

and the resultant effect usually is loss of confidence on the quality of the product produced by Nigerian universities both locally and especially internationally.

Okoli et al. (2016) observed that the disagreement or lack of understanding between government and unions arising from non-implementation of agreement reached, often results in deadlock that usually disrupts academic calendar. As academic activities are suspended for a long period, naturally, the students reading abilities fall, and their previous knowledge acquired is often forgotten. The negative effects of these will turn some students into certificate seekers rather than knowledge seekers. Also, students during strike action engage themselves in social vices which are inimical to societal growth and sustainability.

Brain-drain

According to Arikewuyo (2004), poor funding evidenced in the brain-drain phenomenon has negatively affected higher education in Nigeria. The country has lost most of its experienced academics that have gone in search of greener pastures. Tribune (2020) reported that the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has warned the Federal Government severally against encouraging brain-drain with a lingering strike and nonchalant attitude towards the learning of students in higher institutions.

Ogunode (2020) argued that the mass movement of academicians from the Nigerian public universities is affecting the administration of the higher education because academic staff are very important for the implementation of universities programmes.

Poor Research

Okafor (2021) stated that lack of funds is affecting research in the universities and that there is no indication that this problem will not continue in the future. To buttress this view, Ogunode et al. (2020) opined that research programme of the Universities is one of the key indicators used to measure the performance of universities. In another view Okoli et al. (2016) observed that research is the hub of university education considering the current problems facing Nigerian universities presently. They maintained that research in the higher institutions contributes to the acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value orientation for the survival of the individual and society. However, this function has continued to be truncated with poor government attitude towards research and adequate funding, zero corruption index and adequate infrastructural facilities to pursue higher education programmes in higher institutions in Nigeria.

Weak Administrators

Udida et al. (2009) opined that some individuals appointed as Vice Chancellors or heads of Higher Institutions in Nigeria are weak, not competent and lack administrative acumen. They further maintained that such appointees must possess some administrative qualities and must lead by example. Also such administrators must have integrity and be knowledgeable to practice modern types of management leadership styles.

A good administrator must be visionary and ready to adjust to situations in the system. The administrator must utilize the material and human resources in the achievement of the goals and objectives of the organization. A good administrator is expected to possess the charisma and good human relationship needed for effective and efficient leadership.

Insecurity

Ojedele et al. (2013) observed that security of lives and property is the foremost moral challenge for any government. The security threat from various groups in the country has been there for about two decades, which include the political and religious violence, arm robbery, kidnapping, banditry, etc. To a large extent some criminal elements within the society constitute a serious threat which has stalled educational development in the country. The state of insecurity caused by these various groups slow down the pace of development in Nigeria. The threat of insecurity is not peculiar to one region alone, but the country at large.

Boko Haram insurgency is rampant / common in the North, kidnapping is more pronounced in the South East and arm robbery is frequent in the South West. The problem of insecurity escalated due to the ineptitude of former presidents, who were not able to arrest the situation on time. The consequence of the state of insecurity is that personnel of the education sector can no longer stay, work and school in the places of their choice and interest for fear of losing their properties and lives. It is of utmost concern that most parents of Corp members decline the posting of their children to serve in some parts of the country, because of the death of eleven members of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), who served as ad-hoc staff during the April 8, 2011 elections in a bomb blast, at Suleja, Niger State. More importantly, a college lecturer in Damaturu, Yobe state was hit hard by bombings and battles (The Nation, Dec. 28th, 2017).

Again, a lecturer of the Federal College of Education, Technical, Omoku, Rivers State was kidnapped in 2016. This brought the officials of the college who had been kidnapped to eight (The Nation, Jan. 23rd:2016). The country is still grappling with this challenge, and many innocent lives have been lost in inexplicable and avoidable circumstances; the bombing of places of worship and those who have been killed by gunmen have been enormous in Nigeria. Hence, Nigeria state is under an ominous cloud of insecurity, where people are victims.

ISSUES OF UNDER FUNDING OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

There is an increasing concern about the growing shortage of funds and learning resources in the university system, considering the fact that Nigeria government over the years has not been meeting the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommendation of 26% of total budget allocation to the education sector.

Agbor et al. (2016) observed that Nigeria ranked the least among 20 selected countries as regards annual budgetary allocation to education while smaller countries such as Ghana, Coted'ivoire and Uganda were the first three countries with highest budgetary allocation to education in Africa. This obviously is an indication of the underfunding of education in Nigeria. Worst still, this low allocation to education would have to be competed for by various sectors of the educational system.

Similarly, Arikewuyo (2004) also buttressed that the university system in Nigeria has witnessed a lot of turbulent experiences. The crisis has been characterized by a combination of chronic underfunding, rapidly increasing students enrolment, inadequate facilities, deterioration of physical infrastructure and periodic staff strikes.

Some of the challenges of our higher educational system are inadequate water supply and irregular electricity. Without steady water supply most of the laboratory equipment procured cannot be used and without a regular power supply some experiments cannot be effectively

performed (Agbor et al., 2016). In addition, most government owned institutions now introduce some token fees to help in defraying some sundry expenses. Attempts to generate revenues have led many higher institutions to embark on mounting revenue generating programmes (Ololube, 2016). Incidentally, efforts at solving these problems have often led to collision between government and staff unions. In the view of Ololube (2016), aside funding shortage, other problems have made significant contributions to the general problems of underfunding of higher education in Nigeria; such problems include lack of prioritization and funds mismanagement, misappropriation and accountability.

Meeting the Challenges of Funding Higher Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Considering the fact that no institution can depend totally on government allocation of funds, the need to generate funds for utilization in higher education cannot be over emphasized. Uche (2020) stated that the government has made it clear that it could no longer fund education alone and therefore called in the university authorities to work for ways of diversifying their funding base, to solve the problem of underfunding. In a similar vein, Agbor et al. (2016) listed some conventional sources of internally Generated Revenue (IGR) of funds for financial higher education in Nigeria, viz:

- Donations and endowment fund;
- Tuition fee / levies;
- Education Trust Funds tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) interventions
- Loans;
- Bursary;
- Running part-time and sandwich programs;
- Soliciting assistance from alumni;
- Establishing business project with the campus like bakery, laundry, filling stations, banks, bookshops, water plants, hotels, agriculture farms, etc.

CONCLUSION

Within the context of the present economic situation and security challenges coupled with issues of gross corruption and accountability in Nigeria, university education cannot be adequately funded. The attendant effect shall always be the production of poor quality graduates. This makes it paramount for all stakeholders of higher education to start considering several viable alternatives to funding higher education aside heavy dependence on government to fund higher education. Higher Education Institutions should start embarking on viable activities that are capable of generating revenue / funds for educational development. These propositions would go a long way in addressing the challenges of funding higher education for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Suggestions

To address these challenges facing higher education; the following have suggested that:

- There should be adequate funding of higher education for staff development and procurement of facilities for the production of quality of graduate for sustainable development.
- Employment for more academic staff for quality teaching and production of quality graduates for sustainable development.
- Provision of adequate infrastructural facilities be made for effective teaching and learning to produce knowledgeable graduates for sustainable development.
- Motivation of academic staff should be prioritized to enhance quality teaching and learning in higher institutions.
- Appointment of qualified administrators is key to managing higher education to achieve its goals.
- Fighting all forms of corruption in higher education would enhance funding of the same.
- Provision of adequate security in all higher institutions would enhance safety of lives and infrastructure.
- All agreements with unions in higher institutions should be implemented.

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