
An Analysis of Challenges Facing Funding of Public Universities in Nigeria

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Abstract: Funding of public universities in Nigeria has been described by educational stakeholders as inadequate due to many problems. This paper examined the sources of funds for public universities, factors militating against adequate funding of public universities and the implications of underfunding public universities in Nigeria. Both primary and secondary data were employed in the paper. The paper contends that public universities sourced their funding through government subvention, school fees, internally generated revenue, donations from private sector, NGO's and international organizations. Factors militating against adequate funding of public universities were identified to include short fall in national revenue, corruption, competition from other Sector, poor implementation of National Policy on Education, insecurity problems and poor internally generated revenue. The paper identified shortage of infrastructural facilities, inadequate academic staff, poor quality of University education, shortage of universities, strike actions and poor capacity building programme as the implications of underfunding the public universities in Nigeria. In view of addressing the identified problems, the paper recommended that the government should implement the 26% recommendation for education and more priority should be given to university education.

Keywords: Funding, Challenges, University Education.

Introduction

Public Universities are universities owned by the Government. Public universities are universities established to provide post-secondary education for Nigerians. Public universities are universities established by act of parliament to serve the interest of the general public. Public universities deal with the provision of teaching, research and community services. Nigerian Higher Education, including professional education has the following aims: the acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value orientation for the survival of the individual and society; the development of the intellectual capacities of individuals to understand and appreciate environment; the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community; the acquisition of an overview of the local and external environments (FGN, 2014). Public universities in Nigeria are grouped into federal and state owned universities. The federal universities are owned by the Federal Government of Nigeria while the state universities are owned by the State Government. The National Universities Commission supervises over 200 universities, consisting of 48 Federal owned, 54 State owned and 99 privately owned institutions. The Nigerian Universities have about 2.1 million students and staff strength of about 170,000 non-teaching and 100,000 academic staff (NUC, 2022).

Funding of public universities in Nigeria has been described as inadequate by Ogunode (2020); Ogunode, Ahmed, Deborah & Abubakar (2020); Ogunode, Ugochukwu, & Jegede (2022); Ogunode & Mcbrown, (2022). The problem can be linked to the federal government poor budgetary allocation from where public universities derive their allocation (Tunde & Issa 2013; Gambo & Fasanmi, 2019). Punch' (2021) investigation revealed that Nigeria did not allocate up to 15 percent of its annual budget to education in the last six years, just like those of the previous years. In 2016, the Federal Government allocated N369.6bn which amounted to 6.7 per cent of the national budget of N6.06tn to education, while in 2017, N550.5bn; 7.38 percent of the N7.29tn budget was allocated to the sector. In 2018, N605.8bn, out of N9.12tn budget, representing 7.04 per cent was allocated to education; in 2019, it was N 620.5bn, representing 7.05 per cent of the N8.92tn budget. In 2020, N671.07bn of N10.33tn which amounted to 6.7 per cent was allocated to the sector; while in 2021 the sector got N742.5bn of N13.6tn budget, representing 5.6 per cent (Punch 2021). Isiguzo, & Arinze, (2021) reported that President Muhammadu Buhari disclosed that Nigerian government cannot afford the amount of funding needed to revive the country's educational system. The president also said the competition for funds had become keener because of the recent increase in the number of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Also, Inyang, (2022) reported that the Minister of Labour, Senator Chris Ngige claimed the federal government does not have the money to meet some of the demands of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). Gambo & Fasanmi, (2019) noted that the allocation of fund to federal universities by the federal government has not been palatable to other university stake holders. University education sector often blame the government for inadequate funding of university education in Nigeria while the government in turn blames the sector of inefficient utilization of resources allocated to them. Also, the government complain of scarce resources, especially in this period of recession. It is therefore imperative to examine the sources of funds of public universities, factors militating against adequate funding of public universities and the implications of underfunding public universities in Nigeria.

Funding of Universities

Funding of universities refers to the official financial resources universities receive from their owners for the running of the institutions. It is the official money given to universities to implement its programme. Okebukola (2003), observed that for the purpose of administration, funds to universities are classified as recurrent or capital. In turn, the recurrent category is partitioned into personnel and overhead costs. Personnel costs take care of staff salaries and allowances. Overhead costs take care of the routine expenses for running the university including such items as equipment, building and road maintenance, payment of utility bills, fuelling of cars, refreshments for meetings, payment of council allowance, as well as hostel and ground maintenance.

Ogunode, Lawan, & Ajape (2021) submitted that the objectives of funding educational institutions include: to enable the institutions implement its programmes, enable the educational institutions conduct teaching programmes, to enable the educational institutions carry out research programmes; to enable the educational institutions execute services, to enable the educational institutions provide adequate infrastructural facilities, to enable the educational institutions employ adequate academic and non-academic staff, to enable the educational institutions implement the staff development programme, to enable the educational institutions provide conducive teaching and learning environment and to enable the educational institutions pay salaries, pay for services, maintenance and for unforeseen circumstances. The availability of adequate funds aids the administration and management of university education. It helps to realize its objectives and goals.

Sources of Funds for Public Universities

The federal government, through the National Universities Commission, provides funds for all federal universities to meet their capital and recurrent expenditures. The federal government also funds its own polytechnics and colleges of education. State Governments fund higher institutions in their areas of jurisdiction. The major sources of funds to the public universities include;

Government Subventions (Grants)

Government grants and subventions constitute about 98% of the total budget of Federal Universities. It is instructive to note that university education is tuition free at the Federal Universities. Public universities in Nigeria depend solely on their respective owners for funding.

Donations and Endowments

Other sources of funding education in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria are through donations and endowments. Substantial grants are received from organisations like the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Ford Foundations, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Carnegie Foundation, the German Academic Exchange Services (DAD), the Canadian International Development Association (CIDA) among others (NOUN 2012).

Education Tax Fund (ETF)

The Education Tax Fund is an initiative of the Federal Government towards the funding of education in Nigeria. According to Ade-Ajayi (2001), the Education Tax Fund was originally proposed by the Committee of Vice Chancellors of the Federal Universities for the exclusive funding of the universities, but the initiative was hijacked by the Federal Government which now led to the inclusion of all other levels of education inclusive of tertiary institutions. The Education Tax Fund was established through the Education Tax Fund Decree Number 7 of 1993 which compelled companies operating in Nigeria, which have up to 100 employees on their pay roll to contribute 2% of their pre-tax earnings in any one year to the Education Tax Fund for the funding of education. While Education Tax Fund has improved the provision of physical facilities through the construction and rehabilitation of new classroom blocks, hostels, staff office complexes, laboratories among others, the demand of these universities remains unabated.

NOUN (2012) submitted that Federal government sources of funds are federal taxes; duties on petroleum, profits; exports; and imports; which make up the revenue. Another source is the collected Value Added Tax (VAT) on sales of commodities which was introduced in 1996. This VAT is shared between the Federal and State Governments according to agreed formula. Funds allocated by Federal Government to the education sector are normally distributed to the various arms and tiers of education-primary

nation from private sector, NGO's and international organization (Ogunode, Lawan, & Ajape (2021). Aina (2007), in North American public universities, about 77% of universities budget was received from the government, and 7% was derived from tuition fees, 5% from institutions' internally generated funds, 4% from foreign aid, 1.5% and 1% from private and industrial donations respectively. This tends to confirm that government funding of universities is a general situation all over the world.

Factors Militating Against Adequate Funding of Public Universities in Nigeria

There are many factors militating against adequate funding of public universities. Some of these factors include: short fall in national revenue, corruption, competition from other Sector, poor implementation of National Policy on Education, insecurity problems and poor

internally generated revenue.

Short fall in National Revenue

OhiareUdebu, Sarafadeen, & Abashi, (2022) observed that, for the past few years now the revenue of the entire country have been decreasing due to fall in the price of oil in international market. This is another factor responsible for the poor funding of higher institutions in Nigeria. Ogunode & Onyekachi (2021) submitted that another problem affecting funding of education in Nigeria is the continuous short fall in the government revenue over the years. For the past five years now, Nigeria's revenue generation has continued to fall below the expected projected figure. According to the documents released by Punch Newspaper (2021), the total revenue projection for the six-year period was N31.9tn, while about N16.9tn was generated, resulting in a shortfall of N15tn. The short fall in the national revenue is affecting the funding of education, especially the Basic education in Nigeria. Mark (2021), observed that budget revenue projections of the federal government based on the amended 2020 Budget Framework was N5.365 trillion, showing a quarterly estimate of N1.341 trillion. However, the total revenue inflow of the Federal Government stood at N3.418 trillion as at the end of December 2020, representing a N1.947 trillion (36.29 percent) shortfall from 2020 annual budget estimate.

Noun (2017) concludes that education contributes to economic growth through increased Gross Domestic Product arising from the additional training of the labour force. Government devotes resources to education. However, the proportion of the national resources that will be devoted to education will depend on the rate of economic growth of a nation. If the economic growth rate is low, it may be difficult for the government to devote more resources to education.

Corruption

Corruption is responsible for the poor funding of the education sector especially that of the university education. Ololube (2016); Godwin (2017); Ogunode & Onyekachi (2021) acknowledged that the high rate of corruption in the Nigerian educational sector is a huge problem facing educational financing in Nigeria. The little funds released for the administration of education are mismanaged and misappropriated (Ogunode, 2020, Edeh 2020). Oluwakemi (2021) reported that "the Federal Government is losing over N5trillion to corrupt officials and foreigners operating at the ports. There is no iota of doubt that money lost based on the high level of corruption at ports weighs heavily on the economy of the country, forcing the government to borrow several billions of dollars to finance the budget. UNESCO 2014 reports on Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality for All, shows that Nigeria is among the 37 countries that are losing money spent on education, because children are not learning. UNESCO disclosed that the menace is already costing governments USD 129 billion a year. It stressed further that despite the money being spent, rejuvenation of primary education is not so soon because of poor-quality education that cannot ensure that children learn (NEEDS, 2014). Noun (2017) observed that indiscipline and corruption have eaten deep into the fabrics of Nigerian society. In fact, indiscipline and corruption are today found in the industrial sector, in health institutions, in government agencies and parastatals, and even in educational institutions that were once known for order and decorum. In the ministry of education, some officials embezzle funds meant for specific projects in schools. There are others who divert funds meant for education to other channels. For instance, some officials divert funds meant for the erection of classroom blocks into games and sports. Kyari, Obed & Yalwa(2018); Edeh (2020) opines that corruption constitutes the greatest challenge to improving the quality of education in Nigeria. Corruption leads to diversion of funds meant for education development programmes and quality improvements. Despite the poor financial allocation to education, the available ones are often mismanaged, misappropriated and looted. Ogunode, Josiah, & Ajape (2021) identified the effects of corruption on

educational institution to include reduction of funds for administrative functions, shortage of infrastructural facilities, shortage of academic staff, poor quality of education, resources wastage, increase in administrative cost, hampering development of public universities and resulting to poor image of public universities in international communities.

Competition from other Sectors

Ogunode & Onyekachi (2021) opined that demand from other sectors of the economy like security sector, health, transportation, energy are competing resource allocation with educational sector and the resources that supposed to go into the Basic education. Research has it that Nigerian government spends about one trillion naira a year for over five years now on security problem in the country. And these Funds are supposed to be used to develop other sectors of the economy like education. Ogunode & Onyekachi (2021) and Noun (2012), submitted that the revenue of a country is distributed among the various sectors of the economy in order to foster national development. Education is one of these sectors and its share of the national revenue depends on the needs of other sectors of the economy. When other sectors call for more attention of the government, the proportion of the national revenue devoted to education may reduce. Ogunode & Onyekachi (2021) and Noun (2017), also pointed out that the education sector competes with the industrial, health, agricultural, communication and steel sectors of the Nigerian economy. Education demands effective funding from the government. The same is true of the industrial, health, agricultural, communication and steel sectors mentioned above. Thus, the funds made available to education are never enough as these sectors must receive attention as well.

Poor implementation of National Policy on Education

National policy on Education (2013) observed that the financing of education is a joint responsibility of the Federal, States/FCT and Local Governments and the private sector. Government welcomes and encourages the participation of local communities, individuals and organizations. Efforts towards the improvement in the funding of education at all levels shall include: Increased government investment in education in order to eliminate the deficiency in public investment between Nigeria and other Sub-Saharan and developing countries. At least 26% (UNESCO minimum standard recommendation) of the Federal, States and Local Governments budget should be dedicated to funding of education at all levels. The inability of the federal, states and local government to implement this policy is responsible for inadequate funding of education in Nigeria (UNICEF, 2017). Ogunode & Onyekachi (2021) observed that poor implementation of national policy on education policy as regards educational financing is a problem limiting allocation of funds to education.

Insecurity

OhiareUdebu, Sarafadeen, & Abashi, (2022) observed that the Nigerian government is spending huge sum of money annually to fight insecurity and this is affecting the funding of higher institutions. Monies that are supposed to be used for the development of education and other sectors of the economy is been consumed by the insecurity challenges. This was also reaffirmed By Ogunode & Onyekachi (2021) who stated that the insecurity challenge facing Nigeria as a country is consuming huge financial resources of the country every year preventing development of other sector like education and health. Every year the Nigerian government budgets huge among of funds for fighting insecurity in the country. Ogunode & Adanna, (2022); Ogunode, Akinjobi & Musa (2022) and Ifeanyi, Ogunode & Ajape (2021) pointed out that Nigeria as a country is faced with the challenges of insecurity since 1999. The insecurity problems have many dimensions across the six geo-political zones. Every year huge amount of funds are budgeted to wage war against the insurgents and bandits in the Northern Nigeria and to reduce the high rate of crimes in the country. The funds that are supposed to be allocated for other sectors of the economy like education and health is

reduced and added to the budget of defense. The huge amount of money spent every year on management of security in the country is contributing to the poor funding of education. Ogunode & Onyekachi (2021) and Yakubu, (2021) submitted that the military needed an annual budget of at least \$2 billion to fight terrorism. Minister of Finance, Zainab Ahmed disclosed that Nigeria plans to borrow N722.53 billion (\$1.76 billion) from domestic capital markets to fund the fight against insecurity (Msugh 2021, Tuesday, 5th October 2021). Report by Guardian Newspaper shows that from 2015 to date, security budgets have been on the increase just as total national budgets increased.

Poor Internally Generated Revenue

OhiareUdebu, Sarafadeen, & Abashi, (2022) opined that the internally generated revenue of public higher institutions in Nigeria is small and contributing small percentage to the total funding of the various institutions in the country. Ifeanyi, Ogunode & Ajape (2021) submitted that poor internally generated revenue of the universities in Nigeria is a fundamental reason for a shortage of funds in the universities across the country. Majorities of public universities in Nigeria were designed and structured to depend fully on government subvention. So, the universities cannot function without the government funding.

Poor support from private sector

OhiareUdebu, Sarafadeen, & Abashi, (2022) submitted that contribution of private sector to the funding of higher institutions in Nigeria is minimal and this is affecting the funding of higher institutions. Adedeji (2017) observed that in advanced countries private sectors contribute immensely to the development of higher education, but in Africa and in Nigeria especially, the contribution of private individuals and institutions towards the development of higher education is insignificant and this is affecting the development of higher education in Nigeria.

Implications of Underfunding Public Universities in Nigeria

There are many implications of underfunding public universities in Nigeria. Some of the implications include; shortage of infrastructural facilities, inadequate academic staff, poor quality of University education, strike actions, shortage of universities, and poor capacity building programme

Shortage of Infrastructural Facilities

Inadequate funding of public universities in Nigeria is responsible for the shortage of infrastructural facilities. Ogunode (2020) defined Infrastructural facilities as facilities aiding delivery of academic and non-academic services in educational institutions. Infrastructural facilities include; libraries, laboratories, halls, offices, administrative blocks, hostels, roads, water, electricity, internet etc. The availability of the infrastructural facilities in adequate quantities will support effective administration of educational institutions and the inadequacies will prevent effective administration of educational institutions. Gambo & Fasanmi (2019); Ogunode & Ndayebom, (2022) and Ishaya & Ogunode (2021) submitted that the problem of insufficient buildings, under-equipped laboratories and facilities in Nigerian universities can be traced to inadequate funding. Most student riots in the university and even most of the crisis between university unions and federal government of Nigeria can be traced to monetary issues which revolve around inadequate funding of their institutions. Ebehikhalu, & Dawam (2016); Ehichoya & Ogunode (2020) submitted that many public universities are not having adequate facilities. Ogunode, Yiolorun & Akeredolu (2019); Ifeanyi, Ogunode & Ajape (2021) and Ogunode (2020) concluded that the factors responsible for inadequate infrastructural facilities in Nigerian public universities include; underfunding, increased student' population, corruption, poor infrastructural facilities planning, poor supervision and inflation. The implications of inadequate infrastructural facilities in the

Nigerian public universities include; poor quality of education, poor teaching and learning, low productivity, brain-drain and overcrowding of lecture halls.

Inadequate Academic Staff

The poor funding of public universities is also responsible for inadequate academic staff in the public universities across the country. Ifeanyi, Ogunode & Ajape (2021) observed that shortage of academic and non-academic staff in the various public universities in Nigerian has also been linked to poor funding of the universities. Ogunode & Atobauka (2021a); Ogunode & Abubakar (2021); Ogunode (2020) observed that this problem of inadequate teachers in public universities is caused by underfunding of the universities, corruption, brain-drain, poor motivation, unconducive working environment and lack of manpower planning. The implication of shortage of academic staff in the Nigerian public universities include inadequate student – teacher ratio, poor learning, poor delivery of teaching, low productivity and poor quality of education. Also, Ogunode, Akin-Ibidiran & Ibidiran (2022); Ogunode & Audu (2022) and Ogunode & Adamu (2022) observed that inadequate funding of public higher institutions in Nigeria is responsible for the shortage of academic staff. The public higher institutions in Nigeria are underfunded. The inability of the government to implement the recommendation of the UNESCO 26% annual budget allocation for education for the developing countries like Nigeria is affecting the development of higher education. Due to inadequate funds in the system, the school administrators cannot employ adequate academic staff required to implement the teaching programme as expected.

Poor Quality of University Education

The poor quality of University education in Nigeria is also caused by the poor funding of the universities. Educational resources needed to ensure quality standard are not available in the system due to shortage of funds. Ogunode, Akinlade & Musa (2021) stated that quality assurance in the higher institutions require high investment in both human and materials resources. There are a lot of resources needed to guarantee quality assurance in the higher institutions. It is unfortunate that the budgetary allocation for the higher institutions are inadequate and this is affecting the quality assurance in the system. Ogunode, Olugbenga, & Ezema, (2022); Ogunode, Ugochukwu, & Iroegbu (2022); Ogunode (2021) submitted that the budgetary allocation for the administration of higher institutions is inadequate. Due to this problem, many school administrators cannot procure the necessary human and materials resources needed to ensure quality assurance in their various institutions. Ahaotu and Ogunode (2021) observed that Government funding of higher education in the country have been inadequate for decades. The funding of education is shared among different levels of government and supplemented by funds from other sources such as business, community organizations and levies charged. The revenue collected through fees constitutes an insignificant proportion of the revenue of the institution. Fund allocation has not been much during the last decade. The poor funding of higher educational system in the country has rendered the higher education system incapacitated. The higher education system has not had the financial resources necessary to maintain educational quality in the midst of significant enrolment. Ogunode, Ahmed, Gregory, & Abubakar (2020) concluded that the poor funding of education is responsible for the poor quality of the Universities education in Nigeria. The annual budget for the administration of universities in the country is not adequate to provide the needed infrastructural facilities and human resources that the various universities require to function properly. The underfunding of the university system in the country is also responsible poor researching and ineffective teaching.

Strike Actions

Strike action in the Nigerian public universities is linked to poor funding of the University education. This submission is attested to by Okebukola (2018); Ogunode, Jegede & Musa

(2021); Ifeanyi, Ogunode & Ajape (2021); Ogunode & Onyekachi (2021); Abubakar, & Ogunode (2021) who opines that underfunding of higher institutions has been one of the major reasons why different union groups like ASUU, ASUP, and NUT go on strike. Uzoh. (2017) submitted that the issues of funding and provision of facilities have caused friction between ASUU and the government in almost all instances. This is because the union at different periods has been finding it difficult to teach in an environment without the expected amenities or with poor facilities. ASUU's contention has been to refuse underfunding of the universities, which undermines the capacity of universities to maintain standards at desirable levels. Underfunding has made staff and students not to have access to the latest books and journals, laboratories lack equipment, so experiments cannot be conducted and local research funds have virtually dried up (Pemedede, 2007, Abubakar, & Ogunode 2021). Ogunode (2020) Ogunode, Ugochukwu & Iroegbu (2022) and Ogunode, Ugochukwu, & Jegede (2022) noted that the reasons for the strike actions by different union groups include; underfunding of the public universities, inadequate infrastructural facilities, poor implementation of agreement reached with union groups and poor working condition. The implications of the continuous strike actions on the public universities include; disruption in the academic programme, poor quality of education, bad image for the universities, poor ranking internationally and poor patronage of public universities in Nigeria.

Poor Capacity Building Programme

Poor capacity development programme in the public universities can also be traced to poor funding. This is confirmed by Ogunode & Oluseun, (2020) who submitted that inadequate funding of Nigerian higher education institutions is a major problem facing the administration of professional development program for employees across higher education institutions. Adequate funding is vital for implementing the professional development program. Without adequate funding, no professional development program can be fully implemented as planned. Inadequate funding has been a major challenge to the development of higher education institutions in Nigeria. Many programs for higher education institutions, such as the teaching program, research program and the community service program have not developed because of poor funding. The professional capacity development program for higher education institutions is not effectively implemented in many higher education institutions across the country due to the poor funding of higher education in Nigeria. Ogunode & Onyekachi (2021); Ogunode & Oluseun, (2020) and Basil et al. (2013), noted that poor funding results in poor participation in capacity-building programs and, to a greater extent, in poor research productivity and, lastly, poor ranking of universities.

Way Forward

Based on the challenges identified, this paper therefore recommends the following:

1. The Government should increase the funding of public universities in Nigeria.
2. The School administrators in Nigerian public universities should look inward and come up with strategies to increase the internally generated revenue for the universities. Efforts should be geared towards organizing strong alumnus associations of the Universities in order to get their financial support for the development of the universities, improvement of their internal sourcing of funds through consultancy services and mounting of sub degree courses to generate more revenue for necessary expansion.
3. The government should use anti-corruption agencies to fight all forms of corruption in the Nigerian public universities.
4. The government through the National Universities Commission should source for funds from international organizations for the funding of public higher institutions. Development agencies such as the World Bank; UNICEF; Ford Foundation; John F.

Kennedy Foundation;

Rockefeller Foundation; WHO; USAID; and DFID should contribute to the higher educational development of Nigeria. We should use their aid for the provision of science and technical equipment or establishing model institutions (Noun, 2009).

5. The government and universities administrators should encourage the private sector to contribute to the funding of Public universities in Nigeria.
6. The public universities should leverage on other funding sources, such as from alumni, friends, the private sector, institutional linkages, and research grants, to attract additional revenue for infrastructure, research, and development. The institutions can also embark on innovative research that could help boost production and diversify the economy.

Conclusion

Funding is the life-wire of the universities. The realization of the University programmes depends on the availability of funds. In Nigeria, public universities are faced with the problems of inadequate funding. The paper identified government subvention, School fees, internally generated revenue, donation from private sector, NGO's and international organization as sources of funds to the public universities. Factors militating against adequate funding of public universities was also identified to include short fall in national revenue, corruption, competition from other Sectors, poor implementation of National Policy on Education, insecurity problems and poor internally generated revenue. The paper identified shortage of infrastructural facilities, inadequate academic staff, poor quality of Universities education, strike actions, shortage of universities, and poor capacity building programme as the implications of underfunding the public universities in Nigeria.

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