FUNDING UNIVERSITY EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA: IMPLICATION FOR SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract
This study examined Funding University Education for Sustainable Development in South-East Nigeria: Implication for Societal Development. Two research questions guided the study; descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 23000 lecturers from 10 public universities in South-East Nigeria. The sample comprises of 1000 lecturers from 5 universities. The sample was composed using the simple random sampling and purposive sampling technique. Data collected were analyzed using mean. Findings of the study revealed that poor funding of university education in south-east Nigeria could lead to no practical and laboratory sessions, little number of field works, non-sponsorship of lecturers for academic conferences, little or no appointment of new lecturers, reduction in study grants, loss of variety in research and teachings, closing down of schools, loss of autonomy, increased administrative burdens and poor infrastructure, poor staff working conditions, poor salaries and rewards, brain drain, incessant strike actions, lecture boycotts, enlarged student teacher ratio, overcrowded classes, poor quality teaching , corruption on the side of the lecturers, and other negatives. It was also found that poor funding of university education could be ameliorated through privatization of university education, donations from private bodies, increased government budget for education, granting universities autonomy to source their own funds, aids, grants from international bodies and Non-Governmental Bodies, and scholarship for outstanding students and lecturers. The study recommends that Nigeria government must urgently work towards meeting the recommended UNESCO 26% budgetary allocation for education in the United Nations and as well increases its Tertiary Education Trust Fund for universities in the country.

Introduction

The importance of education cannot be over emphasized therefore no nation's education succeeds without investing properly into its educational system; no wonder United Nations Education Report (2021) posits that nations must prioritize education funding as it is the vehicle to achieve the sustainable development goals. Education has been conceptualized through different prisms and different angles as the situation requires. Eki (2023) notes that education is the process of studying to have a deeper knowledge, and understand a variety of subjects which when applied to daily living contributes to human development. Aregbesola (2023) defined education as that which is pivotal as an instrument for social, political, economic and all round development. Sujan (2021), in another dimension defined education as a social institution through which society's children are taught basic academic knowledge, learning, skills and cultural norms. It is pertinent to understand that education is an inseparable part of human life without which human life is incomplete. The importance of education includes its place as a tool for social development that is essential to promote and change human development in the society.

Education has also been explained to mean a very important factor in human development, and it brings about critical thinking, fosters change in human life, in teaching someone how to make important decisions, boosts creativity, enhances individual's potentials and importance to the society, and has been ultimately explained to be a passage to progress(Chirazze, 2023).United Nations Education Report (2023) also posits that education contributes to the reduction of inequality, empowers people to live a more healthy and sustainable lives- this indicates that education is at the forefront of the United Nations campaign , and this is because of the potentials it holds for university students across Africa and other parts of the world.

The term university has however been conceptualized as a source of universal knowledge and highly skilled man power for training in different professions. Alemu (2018) defined university education as an organized learning and training activities and institutions that include schools such as arts, social sciences, engineering, science and technology. It also entails a community of scholars that brings men and women to a high level intellectual development in the arts and science and in other traditional professional disciplines that promotes high level research. University education is regarded as the highest level of education attainment and offers bachelor's degree to students who have undertaken undergraduate courses in different fields of Arts, humanities and sciences. University education plays a very significant role in shaping students into a finished product that are employable in the labour market. According to Ejiogu and Sule (2016) who traced the origin of university education in Nigeria to the University of Ibadan in 1947 as the first public university in the country, and subsequently the opening of the University of Nigeria Nsukka in 1960; after these universities, there have been plethora of universities in the country which are categorized under public and private universities, and granted license by the federal government through the federal ministry of education for a full operation for them to admit students and students to undertake accredited courses in different fields (Okojie,2008).

However, for a university to reach its potential and churn out competitive graduates there is need for adequate funding of the universities. University funding entails the support given to universities financially through various schemes and methods, and can be done through either private, government or other donor means. UNESCO (2023) notes that funding of universities is a political and social decision that has to do with mobilizing funds and other resources for the purpose of allocating it for lifelong learning opportunities. In the education system, to achieve this, the government owns the responsibility of distributing and allocating those resources proportionately according to the needs of the universities at the material time. In the university system, the funding could come from the government schemes, and budgetary allocations while private bodies come in through donations, scholarships, and other incentives; international bodies and Non-Governmental Organizations also come in through Aids and Grants, Sponsorships and Education Loans (Okwuosa, 2021).

The funding of university education comes with some pertinent importance which among them is the global common good that accrue from university education funding such as the intergenerational benefits that cut across economies, societies and the individuals and it also contributes to greater access to education for the financially vulnerable and propel them to actualize their development and destiny (UNESCO, 2023). Oladipupo (2023) also agree that developing our human capital is vital if we intend to catch up with the rest of the world, and that human capital development is critical for national development, and that is why education is a top priority in many other parts of the world such as Europe, America, Asia, Australia and Oceania were their annual national budget takes have education take over 40% of it.

In other countries of the world, funding of university education is prioritized given that they deem it as the most viable tool of their development and human capital index, and productivity. According to European Tertiary Education Register (2023), every Europen nation prioritize the funding of education in the nation through free education for European and ETA nationals, livable wages for lecturers in the European union, provision of conference, publication and research grants for researchers and academic staffs in these institutions in Europe. In the western world, what sets it apart from the developing nations like Nigeria is that the universities through their records are able to attract grants and sponsorship from donor agencies and other bodies to aid in the already sufficient funds set apart by the government for higher education funding.

In Nigeria, funding of university education is sponsored by the federal government through the Tertiary Education Trust Fund Project. According to Ofoma (2020), TETFUND is a body or scheme that was set up by the federal government of Nigeria to manage the challenges occasioned by the lack of funding in the Nigeria University education system.; this body was established as an intervention agency by the education tax Act No.7 of 1993 and was later amended in 1998. The key objectives and mandates of TETFUND is to provide the needed funds to support university education in the country, provide scholarships and grants to staff and students of the universities, enhance productivity and quality of higher education and these their interventions spans across normal funding, library intervention, research grant, academic staff training and development, publication of journal, manuscript development and conference attendance (TETFUND.EDU, 2023). The body operates and

raises fund for university education funding through the 2% tax on the profit of all the registered companies in Nigeria, and when the taxes has been mobilized, they manage, disburse and monitors the use of these funds for the management of educational research and activities in the university (TETFUND.EDU,2023).

The end goal of any funding is to achieve positive results, and that is the case with the funding of universities in the country; with the vision of sustainable development goals fast approaching in 2030, the need for adequate funding of universities can never be over emphasized as it is the vehicle that will drive the nation to the sustainable development goals. Sustainable Development are those goals which 193 countries came together in September 2015, at the United Nations to adopt and commit to a long-term, comprehensive strategy to tackle the world's greatest challenges related to global sustainable development. To achieve a sustainable development, the following must be: no poverty, zero hunger, good health and wellbeing, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life below water, life on land, peace Justice and strong institutions, and partnership for the goals (Sheila-Naah,2023). The Sustainable Development are important for effective national development because they all interconnect, incorporate social, economic and environmental sustainability, and is a global blueprint for socio-economic prosperity, political stability and other positives for now and in the future.

In the present's dispensation, the funding of education has come under scrutiny as education in the African clime has been challenged by proper funding. It is argued that education financing must become a national investment priority and this could be achieved by making education free, and subsidizing education plays a crucial role in this regard; more so, increasing the number of lecturers, improving basic school infrastructure, increasing tutors' salary and other benefits could be ways to fund university education in the country. Faboyode et al (2017) notes that poor infrastructure and inadequate funding has also continued to be the bane of good university education in Nigeria and has had dire consequences of the growth and development of its human capacity development. Funding university education is in two ways-as it could spell positive or negative consequences. Ubogu and Itoro (2023) concur that funding of tertiary education contributes to the promotion of socio-economic, political and cultural development of any nation. This is so because it is the human resources from the university and other institutions that contribute to the all-round development of a nation. For the nation to produce the next batch of medical doctors and engineers that will drive the face of research and discoveries in the different fields of medical and engineering sciences, there must be sufficient funding of the universities that are preparing to produce these prospects. Faboyode et al (2023) argues that a nation over all advancement is a product of the quality of education that they give to their students, and this is dependent on the quality of funding the universities receive. Ubogu (2011) identifies the downsides of poor funding of university education in the country to include no practical and laboratory sessions, little number of field works, non-sponsorship of lecturers for academic conferences, little or no appointment of new lecturers, reduction in study grants, loss of variety in research and teachings, closing down of schools, loss of autonomy, increased administrative burdens, poor infrastructure, poor staff working conditions, poor salaries and rewards, brain drain, incessant strike actions, lecture boycotts, enlarged student teacher ratio, overcrowded classes, poor quality teaching , corruption on the side of the lecturers, and other negative).

In the last decade and more, Nigeria university education has been on the decline due to the numerous cases of poor funding and corruption as regards the use of the little available funds for universities. Notable among this is the continued strike action of academic and non-academic staff in Nigeria university and these include the 7months strike of July, 2013- to February 2014, due to the non-compliance of the federal government to the 2009 memorandum of understanding with lecturers as regards their earned academic allowances, increment of salary, and provision of funds for infrastructure and students research. Despite the numerous promises of the then government which led to the call-off of the industrial action, Onu (2019) observes that the federal government reneged on their promises and this led to the more than one-year strike of 2018-2019 and 2020 which coincided with the Covid-19n pandemic. The implication of this poor funding and continuous industrial action is enormous as the students who are out of classes at the time become endangered and engage themselves with all sorts of crime which has implication of negative note on them and the society; this has led to a staggered

academic calendar for the student which drew them back while the lecturers who are at the receiving end of this inadequate funding approached their duties with laxity and poor attitude. At the end, one thing stands out and that is the fact that inadequate funding of universities has a negative spiraling effect that cuts across different strata and actors in the university system.

In 2022, Nigeria universities was engulfed in another round of strike action by the lecturers as they stayed at home for 8 months from February 14 2022- 17th October,2022, to drive home their grievance on poor funding of universities and poor funding of lecturers research and their welfare packages; more so, the lecturers are still being owed their salaries and emoluments from the eight months strike action, and this sums the case of insufficient funding of Nigeria universities and government lackadaisical attitude to university education in the nation (Igwe,2022).

However, with the recent poor funding of university education, there is a palpable fear that the country socio-economic and political reality will worsen- that is the social and national effects of the poor attitude to education. Eserinune (2019) identified some of these implication of poor funding for national development as production of half-baked university graduates, dearth in research and innovations, poor leadership, collapsed civil services in the country, lack of succession in the academia, collapsed political culture, poor economic sustainability, low human development index, brain drain and low productivity; this means that Nigeria presently and in future may not produce graduates that will take over from the ageing political and economic actors in the polity already. More so, the country risks not remaining competitive in global marketplace and socio-economic decision making due to its inability to produce competitive graduates through the poor funded universities (Obi,2023). The import of this worrisome development is enormous and calls for a national action to turn the dwindling fortunes of the nation's university.

However, and whichever way it is viewed, one cannot argue that the funding of education in the country has been sufficient, given the economic challenges bedeviling the nation such as naira fall in the market and fuel subsidy removal which has continued to have enormous effects on the funding of universities in the country. It is on the backdrop of these enormous evident challenges which are likely to affect the funding of universities that this present study became very pertinent.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed to guide the study:

1. What are the effects of poor funding of university education in south-east Nigeria?
2. What are the possible ways to ameliorate the effects of poor funding of University education in south-east?

Method

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 23, 000 academic staff from the 10 public universities in South-East Nigeria. Simple Random sampling technique was used to obtain 5 out of the 10 public universities in the region. Then purposive sampling was used to obtain one faculty from each of the universities with the record number of undergraduates' students. Then, simple random sampling technique was used to obtain two departments from each of the faculties to give rise to 10 departments. Finally, simple random sampling was used to obtain 100 students in each of the 10 sampled departments to give rise to 1000 academic staff of the universities. To establish the reliability of the instrument, trial testing method was used on 50 undergraduates of Delta state University, Abraka, which was outside the study area. The reliability was calculated using Cronbach Alpha for each of the subsections. At the end of the analysis, the scores obtained were 0.83 for effects poor funding on Nigeria universities and 0.81 for possible ways to ameliorate the effects of poor funding on university education. The results showed high reliability of the instrument. The instrument has two parts, A and B. Part A sought information on the respondents. Part B sought information required to answer the research questions. It has 1 & 2 and these were concerned with information regarding research questions one and two. Part A contains 15 items while part B also contains 9-items, making a total of 24 items. The four-point response mode of strongly Agreed (SA = 4 points), Agree (A = 3 points), Disagree (D = 2 points) and Strongly Disagree (SD = 1 point) was adopted in the study. The questionnaire was administered to the respondents with the with help of 20 research assistants, who were paired for each of the 10 faculties. Administration of the questionnaire was done during the first semester of 2022/2023 academic session. All copies of the questionnaire

distributed were collected back because of on the spot delivery method and collection technique applied. Mean was used to analyze the data. The four-point response mode used, informed the use of mean 2.50 as the cut-off point for decision. The decision rule was that mean scores of items of 2.50 and above were regarded as positives while mean scores below 2.50 were regarded as negative.

Results

Research Question One: What are the effects of poor funding of university education in south-east Nigeria?

Table1. The following are the effects of poor funding of university education in south-east Nigeria

S/N	Items	-X	Dec
1	It will result to having no practical and laboratory experiences which are as a result poor funding of university education.	2.9	Agreed
2	It will amount to having insufficient field experience which is a result of poor education funding	3.0	Agreed
3	Non sponsorship of lecturers for seminars and conferences is a result of poor education funding.	3.0	Agreed
4	In accessibility of study grants is as a result of poor education funding	2.90	Agreed
5	Poor study and research is as a result of inadequate education funding	2.76	Agreed
6E	Non recruitment of academic and non-teaching staff from time to time is as a result of poor education funding	3.0	Agreed
7	Poor administration of the institution is as a poor funding	2.89	Agreed
8	Provision of poor infrastructure in the institution is as a result of poor education funding	2.90	Agreed
9	Poor lecturers remuneration and welfare packages are as a result of poor university education funding	3.0	Agreed
10	Brain Drain is as a result of poor university education funding	2.89	Agreed
11	Incessant Strike action is as a result of poor education funding	3.0	Agreed
12	Poor student to lecturer ratio is a result of inadequate education funding	2.79	Agreed
13	Lecture Boycott from lecturers is as a result of poor education funding	3.0	Agreed
14	Low quality teaching is as a result of poor education funding	3.0	Agreed
15	Having overcrowded classes is as a result of poor education funding	3.0	Agreed
16	Lecturers who sort and engage in all kinds of immoral acts do so, as a result of poor qq education funding	3.0	Agreed
Total		47.03/16	Agreed
Cluster		2.93	

Data in table 1 shows that respondents affirmed positively to the items with a mean socre above 2.5. stated clearly, the cluster mean of 2.93 indicates that respondents agreed that poor funding of university education in south-east Nigeria could lead to no practical and laboratory sessions, little number of field works, non-sponsorship of lecturers for academic conferences, little or no appointment of new lecturers, reduction in study grants, loss of variety in research and teachings, closing down of schools, loss of autonomy, increased administrative burdens, poor infrastructure, poor staff working conditions, poor salaries and rewards, brain drain, incessant strike actions, lecture boycotts, enlarged student teacher ratio, overcrowded classes, poor quality teaching , corruption on the side of the lecturers, and other negatives.

Research Question2: What are the possible ways to ameliorate the effect of insufficient funding of University education in south-east?

Table2: The following are the possible ways to ameliorate the effects of poor funding of universities in south-east, Nigeria

S/N	Items	- X	Decision
	Seeking Grants from International Bodies will ameliorate poor funding of university education	3.0	Agreed
2	Seeking Grants from NGOs will ameliorate poor funding of university education	2.9	Agreed
3	Seeking Aids from international world's will ameliorate poor funding of university education	2.98	Agreed
4	Seeking scholarship from international bodies for Lecturers will ameliorate poor funding of university education	3.0	Agreed
5	Granting education Loans will ameliorate poor funding of university education	2.87	Agreed

6	Granting Universities Autonomy will ameliorate poor funding of university education	3.0	Agreed
7	Privatization of University education will ameliorate poor funding of university education	3.0	Agreed
8	Increase in Education budget will ameliorate poor funding of university education	2.89	Agreed
9	Prioritizing education will ameliorate poor funding of university education	3.0	Agreed
10	Donations from wealthy and affluent individuals will ameliorate poor funding of university education	2.90	Agreed
Total		29.54/10 2.95	Agreed

Data in table 2 shows that respondents affirmed all the possible means to ameliorate the effects of poor funding of university education in south-east with a mean score above 2.5. The cluster mean of 2.5 indicates that respondents agreed that the ways to ameliorate insufficient funding of university education in the country include through privatization of university education, donations from private bodies, increased government budget for education, granting universities autonomy to source their own funds, aids, grants from international bodies and Non-Governmental Bodies, and scholarship for outstanding students and lecturers.

Discussions

The findings of the study were based on the research questions that guided the study; based on that, the following findings emerged:

That poor funding of university education in south-east Nigeria could lead to no practical and laboratory sessions, little number of field works, non-sponsorship of lecturers for academic conferences, little or no appointment of new lecturers, the findings are in line with the study conducted by Fameruwa (2014) who found similar aforementioned issues as a result of poor funding which is the bane of higher education in Nigeria and the findings of the study by him include poor learning materials, no practical's and field work, and lack of funds for lecturers to pursue research and publications. Reduction in study grants, loss of variety in research and teachings, closing down of schools, loss of autonomy, increased administrative burdens and poor infrastructure. The study of Onuoha et al (2023) agreed with these findings and found also that poor funding, misappropriation and mismanagement of funds have a negative impact on management of tertiary institution, but misappropriation of funds have the most significant negative impact on tertiary education management in Nigeria; poor staff working conditions, poor salaries and rewards, Adekola (2023) also found similar issues in a related study that poor funding in universities lead to poor salaries for lecturers, poor staff condition, and poor welfare packages for lecturers which increases corruption in the system; brain drain, incessant strike actions, lecture boycotts, enlarged student teacher ratio, overcrowded classes, poor quality teaching , corruption on the side of the lecturers, and other negatives, extant empirical finding from Nwikpo and Ojukwu (2022) similarly found that poor government funding of university education plays a key role in provoking incessant ASUU strikes through meager budgetary allocation to universities which cannot adequately cater for the rising education demand and poor remuneration .

It was also found that poor funding of university education could be ameliorated through the following means such as privatization of university education, donations from private bodies; Cardosa (2021) in a study also concur that University education could be funded through donations made by parents and other stake holders. Grants from international bodies, scholarship for outstanding lecturers and students; existing studies also collaborate this finding in the work of Udoh (2008) that found scholarship, scientific break-through, staff exchange programme, checking fraudulent practices, and loans as means to ameliorate insufficient funding of universities in Nigeria. Increased government budget for education, granting universities autonomy to source their own funds, aids, and loans; the study of Ezeugbor (2021) also concur that increased budgetary allocation from government to meet international practice and granting universities autonomy o source for funds are ways in which poor funding of Nigeria university education could be curtailed.

Conclusion

Nigeria educational sector and most significantly the higher education sector that comprises the University's in the country is a serious state of emergency due to multi-faceted challenges it is facing in the Nigeria socio-political system. Given this numerous challenges, it is apparent that it holds serious

challenges and negative pay off for the students, lecturers and the society at large. Given this afore mentioned issues, it is pertinent to conclude that due to the poor funding of education in Nigeria, University system in the country is presently facing a very rough phase where both the students and lecturers have been denied the global best practices in terms of university education and effect of this is enormous for the socio-political- and economic survival of the country as the country's low human capital index and low youth productivity will continue to be on the negative side till this issue is adequately addressed by the concerned authorities.

Implication of poor funding of university for national development

This study is timely and quite germane given the rot and negligence in Nigeria education system, and it is expected that this study will help draw the attention of the government to increase the funding of university education in the country, meet up with global best practices in University funding and sanitize TETFUND as the corruption in the education has become a bane to adequate funding of university education in the country. If not, poor funding will have a very negative implication for national development and the possible implications include production of half-baked university graduates, dearth in research and innovations, poor leadership, collapsed civil services in the country, lack of succession in the academia, collapsed political culture, poor economic sustainability, low human development index, brain drain and low productivity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government must urgently make efforts to meet up with United Nations 26% budgetary allocations for Universities in countries that make up the United Nations.
2. Nigeria government can seek alternative ways to fund universities through grants and funds for International Organizations and private bodies as this could augment the meager budget for university education in Nigeria.
3. Government probe and monitor the disbursement of the TETFUND for universities and implement stringent punishment for any form of University fund misappropriation.

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