

Educational Challenges and Funding of University Education in Nigeria

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Abstract: *University education system is an indispensable level of a country's education system. As the last level of education, it shapes the philosophical and social need of any society. Hence, this paper examined the implication of funding the university education to align it with the national policy objective on education. The need to fund this level of education was highlighted and stressed. It also examined the various source of funding this level of education in order to meet its mandate of galvanizing the country's scientific and technological drive for development. The various challenges confronting funding of universities were also examined. The study revealed that there should be clearly defined pattern or system of disbursing funds to universities, and that funding system and ratio or percentage pattern should be stated clearly, this will enable university authorities to plan. The study also revealed that government should meet the UNESCO 26% recommendation as bench mark for allocation of annual budget to education, also, education sector should be prioritized. Finally, the study recommended that government and other non-governmental organizations should collaborate and brainstorm on the problems confronting education and indeed university education, and government should waive in taxes for industries and other organizations that have shown concern for funding education in Nigeria.*

Keywords: *Allocation, budget, education, funding, prioritized, university*

Introduction

Education is the wheel that propels the developmental programmes of any society. No society could therefore develop its manpower and the entire citizenry without the involvement of education. And that is the reason why countries earmark a large percentage of their annual budget to educational development.

Education is the eye, the way and the means for the development of any nation and its languages (see Imu 2018). Education in Nigeria as stated by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013:4) is an instrument for excellence for effecting national development. Education has witnessed therefore, the active participation by government and other organizations (Anyaocha, 2016). According to the national policy on education (2013:6) Nigeria's Philosophy of education is based on:

1. The development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen
2. The full integration of the individual into the community and
3. The provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at system, including university education.

Regrettably, as beautiful as the philosophy of education sounds it is only an academic exercise and could be described as a theoretical approach in the paper Igbokwe & Igbokwe (2010).

The Nigerian educational systems including university education have continued to witness low patronage by successive governments in terms of funding. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Every nation is to commit 26% of her annual budgetary allocation to education. Igbokwe and Igbokwe (2010), noted with regrets. "The budgetary allocation to education by the federal Government of Nigeria has never reached a benchmark of 10% since 1999 till date". This demonstrates that our educational philosophy as written in the national philosophy of education can never meet the objective of developing a citizen into a sound and effective individual. Education through this negative approach to funding will never achieve its developmental aims of equipping the individual and meeting the technological and scientific needs of the nation

University Education in Focus

This is the highest level of education in the country. It is expected to make optimum contribution to national development by intensifying and diversifying its programmes for the development of high level manpower within the context of the needs of the nation. The duration of stay at the university ranges from 3-6 years depending on the course of study (Anyaocha, 2016).

According to the National policy on education, university education shall make optimum contribution to national development by:

1. Intensifying and diversifying its programmes for the development of high level manpower within the context of the needs of the nation:
2. Making professional course contents reflect our national requirements
3. Making all students part of a general programme of all-round improvement in university education; to offer general study courses such as history of ideas, philosophy of knowledge, nationalism and information technology (IT) and
4. Making entrepreneurial skills acquisition a requirement for all Nigerian universities.

Continuing, section 87 also states that "University research shall be relevant to the nation's developmental goals. Particular attention shall be paid to research and promotion of indigenous knowledge in Nigeria. In this regard, universities shall be encouraged to collaborate with government, industries and the global community in the conduct of research and disseminate the results." Sub-station 91 summarized it thus. A sizeable proportion of expenditure on university education shall be science and technology. Not less than 60% of places shall be allocated to science

and science-oriented courses in the conventional universities and not less than 80% in the universities of technology and Agriculture.

The foregoing mandate of the universities as captured by the national policy has entrusted the universities with the mandate of developing the entire nation through research. Research is therefore, the fulcrum of national development through the university education. And in realizing this need, the federal government in 1981, created special universities of technology and agriculture to fast tract the nation's development in science and technology and agriculture. The states governments too, have set up their own state universities to also facilitate development by producing high level manpower to achieve this purpose. Today, we have universities of petroleum, university of marine, etc. apart from conventional universities.

Nwokocha 2017, noted that underfunding of Nigerian Universities is the bane of Nigerian governments at both federal and state levels.

Funding of Nigerian Universities

No Institution could survive without funds. Funding remains a major aspect of university education in Nigeria. According to Eke and Olarinoye (2006), education is probably the most powerful instrument in achieving economic growth, reducing poverty and improving living standards of the people. University education is not exclusion. Looking at the rapid pace in technological changes, and the present global village, university education becomes critical in providing a nation with its needs for labor force that is adaptable and endowed with its necessary capabilities that facilitate the acquisition of new skills, new knowledge and new technology.

There is therefore, the need to provide facilities, infrastructure, equipment, payment of teaching and own teaching staff, maintenance of materials and other needs which are all dependent upon the availability of funds (Anyaocha, 2016), Most importantly, research which is a very critical aspect of university education is solely dependent on funds. It is only money that provides the essential purchasing and maintenance power with which education acquires its human and physical input. Therefore, the need for adequate funding of Nigerian universities in meeting for the needs of the society cannot be over-emphasized. Hence, government shall provide all the funds needed for universities. If universities are essential driving force for national development, the followings are reasons for funding university education in Nigeria.

Okunamin (2010) listed the followings as the importance of financing university education in Nigeria as follows:

1. The externality benefit: The benefit of university education spills over from one individual to another. If an engineer from the university is in the field, he will help to train artisans. This is called social benefit of education.
2. Education is a free service. Government should provide university education to alleviate poverty in the society. This they should do by giving scholarship and bursary awards to students and lecturers.
3. Entrepreneurial development: There is the need to provide and fund university education to boost entrepreneurial development in the country. This they should do by making universities help the government to shift from consumption economy to manufacturing economy.

4. There is the need for attainment of national objectives as contained in the National policy on education. The objectives could only be transformed into reality by adequate funding of universities.
5. For government to easily execute its policies and objectives, and for the effective control of the nation, it becomes incumbent on government to not only control education of the youths, but also to fund it. He who controls the education of the young controls the future of the nation". This statement holds sway here.

Sources of University Funds

There are primarily two sources of funding university education in the country: government grants and non-government sources

Government Grants

Government grant is a reasonable source of funding education in Nigeria. This grant comes from taxes and duties on petroleum, profits from imports and exports, which form the federal government revenue of the federation account and the value, added Tax (VAT) (Hinlile 2003). The Nigerian Government is able to give grant to universities through the sale of crude oil whose discovery has brought fundamental change to the economy. This allocation of the annual budget has fallen short of the recommended UNESCO 26% of allocation to education. For instance in 2010, education budget allocation was N426.53 billion, N306.3 billion in 2011 4.7 billion in 2012.

Non-Government Sources

This includes funds generated from private sectors of the economy. The federal government realized this when it said in the national policy on education (FRN, 2013) that the financing of education is a joint responsibility of federal, state and local government. Hence, individuals, communities, philanthropic organizations and parents have supplemented government efforts in the provision of funds for the running of universities. Also, international agencies such as United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO), World Banks, African Development Banks etc have funded university education in the following areas:

- a. Supply of textbook
- b. Supply of equipments
- c. Supply of experts for research and training
- d. Development of educational personnel.
- e. Curriculum development
- f. Supply of libraries, language laboratories, computers
- g. Research (Anyagwu, 2016)

Other areas of sources of funds include

- a. School fees-payment of tuition, boarding fees etc
- b. School activities such as agricultural sales, entertainments.
- c. Hiring of halls and classrooms by churches, individuals etc.
- d. Alumni unions
- e. Grants from philanthropic organizations, banks, industries
- f. Endowment funds and donations
- g. Funds from consultancy services, hostel accommodations establishment of printing press, catering services, internet services, manufacturing of pure-water and bottle water baking

of bread, establishment of university campus and off-campus transport business, establishment of satellite campuses etc.

- h. Challenges affecting proper funding of universities in Nigeria.
- i. There are inherent challenges confronting the proper funding of university education in Nigeria. According to Edem, (2006), some of these challenges are as listed below:
 - a. Rate of growth of the national economy. Government provides a large chunk of university education fund. This however, depends on the economy. If the economy lags behind annual increment to education too is likely to decrease.
 - b. World market: The vagaries of the prices of oil and other prices may not be easy to determine to the proportion of the national resources that should go to university education.
 - c. Competition with other sectors: There is serious competition of other sectors of the economy such as defence, health, agriculture, infrastructure such as roads, bridges etc. Education is not the only critical social service of the government.
 - d. System of funding: There is no defined pattern or arrangement on the funding of university education and other levels of education in Nigeria. There is unpredictable and inconsistent pattern of funding education which has affected university funding seriously.
 - e. Expensive nature of education as a social service: Education is a social service. But there are no sufficient funds to cater for it. This inadequate provision has affected or hindered the effective realization of providing education as a social service to the people.
 - f. Corruption: Nigeria leadership and citizenry have been noted for their penchant for diversion of public funds into personal pockets. Funds meant for university education is diverted by ministry and other government officials
 - g. Political /ideological difference: The Nigerian political system is not stabilized. Consequently too, her political ideological programmes and policies are not stable too. There have been changes in government frequently which has impacted negatively on the educational attainments of the country.
 - h. University administrators: University administrators such as Vice Chancellors, Deputy Vice Chancellors, Pro chancellors, busars and other top university officials has at one time or the other mis-managed funds meant for procurement of learning materials or salaries of personnel. This has hampered effective learning in universities negatively

Keke (2006), also listed the followings as major problems facing institutions of higher learning (Universities) in funding as:

- a. Delay in release of government subvention.
- b. Inadequacy of amount released;
- c. Difficulty in collection of fees;
- d. Misappropriation of funds by university official;
- e. Greed and prizing of education project ;
- f. Embezzlement of funds by administration

These reasons above have hindered universities in their realizing of their established objectives.

The Way Forward

University education is a critical level of educational system in Nigeria. Education and indeed other levels of education is the solution to poverty and ignorance and key for the unlocking of natural resources. No nation striving for accelerated development does so without huge investment

in education, without education no solutions to a nation's problems. Hence, the followings are advanced as solutions to the perennial mal funding system in Nigeria.

There should be clearly defined pattern or system of disbursing funds to universities. Funding system and ratio or percentage pattern should be stated clearly. This will enable university authorities to plan.

Nigeria government should as a matter of necessity meet the UNESCO 26% recommendation as bench mark for allocation of annual budget to education. This will make universities and other levels of education to meet critical infrastructure decay on our campuses.

Government should take drastic steps against any university or government official caught diverting funds meant for university education. Any individual or group found embezzling funds meant education should be prosecuted. This will serve as a deterrent to others.

Government should realize the importance of university as they never did. Education sector should to be prioritized. Hence, it should be given a preference against other sectors of the economy. Until when this is realized, funding will continue to be a major and fundamental problem to universities.

Government and other non-governmental organizations should collaborate and brainstorm on the problems confronting education and in deed university education.

Government should waive in taxes for industries and other organizations that have shown concern for funding education in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Education is the bedrock of the economy of any nation. Hence, Nyerere, former president of Tanzania in 1967 said "only when we are clear about the kind of society we are trying to build can we design our education service to serve our goals (Nyerere 1967). Nigeria cannot service or design education goals which is unfunded. University education is a very critical level of education which produces high level manpower for national development, until we get it right through adequate funding; the beautiful goals of education as contained in the national policy on education will only be a mirage.

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