
ISSUES OF FUNDING IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY, ABRAKA.

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a crucial overview for understanding the issues of funding in Nigeria University Education, using Delta State University Abraka as a case study. Existing literatures on the subject was critically reviewed to x-ray 'funding' as a major issue in the promotion of University Education in Nigeria. The paper utilized phenomenological case study approach to build facts which described the causes of poor university funding in Nigerian public institutions, as well as the standpoint issues associated with funding in Delta State University, Abraka. Furthermore, the study proposed some viable strategies which are essential for the improvement of education funding in Delta State University Abraka, also applicable to other public Universities in Nigeria. The paper thus calls for an essential 'paradigm shift' in the government allocation of resources to universities, and also in the universities approach to generating funds, as befitting an institution of excellence.

KEY WORDS: Issues of funding, Improving University Education, Delta State University Abraka, Endowment funds, Nigerian University Education.

INTRODUCTION

Issues in research refers to existing problems which may be considered at varying magnitudes and pathways. Consequently, this paper is centered on the problems associated with funding in the university education of Nigeria. Ideally, universities are centers of excellence and innovative ideas which are responsible for national advancement on many scales. Therefore, every standard or good university education must strive to avail learners' equal opportunities to thrive and succeed through gainful and meaningful quality education. In Nigeria, the University Education System has been reasonably challenged with many serious issues which poses as a threat to what a standard university education ought to be (Ogbogu, 2011). This is not a good feat for any nation desiring to record tremendous growth and development, especially in the area of science and technology which has become a life-line for meaningful national development. Dominant among some of the identifiable issues is the problem of inadequate infrastructural facilities, funding, corruption, shortage of academic staff, strike actions, poor research, etc. All these are eminent issues which must be addressed and improved upon so that the average Nigerian seeking University Education will not only be able to meet up with the demands of the 21st century survival and labour market, but will also be able to cope and compete with their peers globally even as they remain significant and fit for the post-postmodern world. In 2022 World Education Forum's ranking involving 140 countries, including 38 African countries, Nigeria, which is Africa's most populous nation and largest economy, failed to find a place among the top 10 educational systems in Africa (Times Higher Education, 2023). As a response, a critical review of the many challenges bedeviling university education in Nigeria is completely unavoidable. This study is therefore a necessity to provide a crucial overview for understanding the issues of funding in Nigeria University Education, using Delta State University Abraka as a case study. The study employs the Phenomenological Case Study approach to explore and describe some notable causes of poor education funding in Nigerian universities as well as some identifiable issues of funding in Delta State University, Abraka. This is aimed at projecting viable strategies which can be used to effectively salvage and improve the issues of funding in Delta State University Abraka, and in other Nigerian universities.

EDUCATION FUNDING IN NIGERIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES: A CASE STUDY OF DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY, ABRAKA.

Delta State University, Abraka, is a state owned public institution, established in 1992 by the then Governor of Delta State, Olorogun Felix Ibru. The University had three campuses, located at Abraka, Anwai, and Oleh, with an estimated student population of about 36,000. In 2021, under Governor Ifeanyi Arthur Okowa, Anwai campus was converted into an autonomous University along other three new universities established by the Delta State Government. Delta State University offers undergraduate and postgraduate programs in several fields of academic study, including Social Sciences, Education, Law, Sciences, Agriculture, Management Sciences, as well as Arts and Humanities. While there is an impressive high demand for education in Delta State, the challenge of poor university funding is observable in many directions of the Delta State University, Abraka. The university is majorly a responsibility of the Delta State Government, and recently following the establishment of new universities in the state, the Delta State University Abraka is posed with a serious need to internally generate revenue to augment for the financial inadequacy accruing from the reduced funding package of the State Government, in their bid to satisfy the newly created universities. The University as a result, struggles to meet many of her obligations due to lack of funds even as it imposes ungodly fees and levies on her students in their quest to meet the institutions financial demands. It has been observed that a great number of projects executed in the university since 2020 were mostly funded by TETFUND as a result. The real question

now, is that if the quality of education relies largely on the revenue generated by students, how qualitative will such education be? Is education now for sale? Answering these questions would generate additional lines of thought on the real roles of government in providing quality education for her citizens. For a university to be under-funded is to generate gaps in the system which expands to more militating challenges in education. Education funding is a serious issue that may birth other impending problems in the university education system, such as inadequate infrastructure and facilities, poor staff welfare, low research output, and overburdened academic staff.

CAUSES OF POOR UNIVERSITY FUNDING IN NIGERIA.

There are several reasons why funding has become a major problem for university education in Nigeria. Firstly, the government allocation for education has been consistently insufficient overtime (Ebuka, 2021). While the Nigerian government sets annual budget for education, the amount allocated in most cases are usually inadequate to meet the needs of the universities. This leads to deficits in funding, which affects the capacity of the universities to accomplish their basic functions successfully. According to November 11, 2022 Premium Times Nigerian Newspaper, the Nigerian government budget for education got its highest so far, as 7.9% of the total budget in 2016. For 2020 it was 6.7%, in 2021 it was 5.68% and 2022 it was 7.2% of the total budget. Although, the President Buhari led administration further increased it to 8.8% of the total budget in the proposed budget for 2023, they still fall below the recommended 15 -20% of the total budget suggested by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO (Qosim, 2022). This analysis goes a long way to define the value and premium which the Nigerian government places on their educational system.

Secondly, universities in their effort to meet their financial needs tend to rely on the fees paid by students to support their operations. However, these fees most times are usually too low (particularly in Federal Universities), and thus puts stress on the universities' financial capability to function efficiently. This comes with many consequences on quality education as they may have to source for alternative funding support which often times are not easily available for the institutions' operations.

Thirdly, the failure of Nigerian universities to attract sufficient funding from both local and international sources is another cause of under-funding in the universities (Ogunode et al., 2019). This may be due to the poor reputation of Nigerian universities in relation to lack of transparency and accountability in their operations. However, many universities in other parts of the world receive significant funding from both local and international organizations in order to meet their needs. It may also be that business organizations in Nigeria are not necessarily interested in education as they often expend huge amount of funds to sponsor entertainment programs like BB Naija, Nigerian Idols and a host of others which happens to make their interest list.

Lastly, the absence of resourceful management practices in Nigerian universities is also a major contributing factor to the issues of funding in Nigerian Universities. Resourceful management practices calls upon university authorities to utilize the unique skill-set inherent to them, in the conservation of already garnered funds as well as in the generation of new funds by providing needed technical services and skills for money. The university can generate revenue to fund her operations by investing in a comprehensive and invigorating radio/television station(s) which can serve her community, and can be coordinated by the Mass Communication and ICT department of the school. The University can invest in Electronic and Automobile workshop operated through the Engineering department to service

the needs of her community and generate funds for her operations. The University as an institution can coordinate many programs to generate revenue through her immeasurably wealth of knowledge and skills in their bid to promote quality education. A resourceful university management must be financially prudent and be able to think outside the box in order to drive the expectations of their institution.

ISSUES OF FUNDING IN DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY ABRAKA.

The issues of funding in Nigerian Universities are not only peculiar to Delta State University, Abraka. Just like other typical Nigerian universities, the institution has been confronted with many challenges which have significantly influenced the overall progress of the institution. Some of the issues associated to funding in Delta State University, Abraka are discussed below:

1. **Poor Funding from the State Government:** The Delta State Government's funding of the university has been inadequate especially since the introduction of more state owned universities in the state. The poor funding from the State Government has culminated into a lack of basic infrastructural facilities and equipment befitting a post-postmodern university. This has made it difficult for the university to provide quality education as well as attract the best students and staff. While the Delta State University, Abraka currently ranks 27th position in Nigeria (Felix, 2023), it is hoped that the institution would achieve more if it gets more funding that satisfies her needs and aspirations, as good funding tends to attract lots of good things to the university.
2. **Inadequate Research Funding:** The University is not adequately funded for research, which has led to a low turn-out of research output. Sawyerr (2004) identified research capacity to include; funding, research incentives, research environment, etc. and further opined that these stated capacities have the ability to severely compromise the quality of research of an institution. Quality research requires good funds and often times, when university faculties self-sponsor their research consistently, they lose their motivation for research advancement as the process is capital intensive. A university that places high premium on research would therefore make effort to reasonably sponsor notable researches of their faculties as their bid to make the institution recognized as a research-intensive institution, thereby improving its global rankings and reputation.
3. **Poor Staff Welfare:** The welfare of staff is an essential aspect of university education, as it motivates their dedication and commitment, driving them to expend their best effort in making remarkable impact in the lives of students. When the staff welfare package is poor, there is usually a consequential brain drain of experienced staff as they would prefer to work in places where they are valued and appreciated. This has the capacity to affect the quality of education in the institution (Elijah, 2016). In Delta State University, Abraka, it has been observed that salaries are not paid in-time, most offices tend to generate their own power (leading to noise pollution in the university environment) because the University power system does not fully cover all the working hours. All these calls for the welfare and working conditions of staffs in Delta State University, Abraka to be improved upon.
4. **Over-Reliance on Tuition Fees:** The over-reliance on tuition fees has also affected Delta State University, Abraka. The university has had to increase its tuition fees over the years to meet its financial needs. This has led to a situation where many students cannot afford to pay the fees, leading to the exclusion of many students from getting a university education. When university places too much dependence on the fees generated from

students, they would focus more attention on increasing the number of students in order to generate more funds. This may make an institution to even admit below standard students and even reduce education quality to meet the standard of these students just to meet up with the financial needs that these students satisfy. Ajadi (2010) recounted that, over reliance on school fees usually pose a major challenge in the actualization of quality education by private universities in Nigeria. Issues of over-reliance on tuition fees has generated lines of thought, on the dangerous commercialization of education, and any institution that hope to perform well will tour the part of affordable quality education.

STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE FUNDING IN DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY, ABRAKA AND OTHER NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES.

To address the issues of funding in Delta State University, Abraka, as well as in other Nigerian universities, effective strategies need to be put in place. Some of these strategies include:

1. **Improvement of Government Funding Package:** The Delta State Government and the Federal Government of Nigeria through TETFUND, need to increase their allocation to the university in order to meet her financial needs satisfactorily. This will go a long way in providing basic infrastructural facilities, and equipment that will be utilized to enhance the quality of education. This will also help to curb the issue of over-reliance on tuition fees.
2. **Innovative Resourcefulness of Institutional Management:** The University needs to improve the resourcefulness of her institutional management to ensure that allocated funds are not only properly accounted for but diversified to generate additional sources of revenue. This will promote the better utilization of the rich technocracy inherent to schools which often times are greatly under-utilized. An innovative and resourceful university management must shun corruption practices which has the capability to hamper effective financial school growth. The university can also explore profitable private partnerships with other businesses.
3. **Improvement of Funding for Research:** The University needs to increase its funding for research, to develop a research-intensive culture that will enhance its global ranking and reputation. This will also enable the university to provide solutions to critical societal problems through cutting-edge researches.
4. **Improved Staff Welfare:** The welfare of staff needs must be improved upon, in order to motivate them to put in their best. This can be achieved by ensuring that salaries are paid in the first week of the month, provision of comfortable working environment and other incentives that will enhance the overall productivity and well-being of academic staffs.
5. **Establishment of Endowment Funds and Professorial Chair:** Endowed professorial chairs are instrumental to capacity building in a university as they push academic and knowledge boundaries through many frontiers. Universities can establish these endowed professorial chairs and reach out to organizations and individuals who would fund them in tenures. Endowment funds is a portfolio created out of charitable donations and can be used to provide effective support for university teaching, research and students' cost of education where such have issues.

CONCLUSION

Funding is an essential aspect of University Education, and the Nigerian University Education system has been grappling with funding challenges over the years. Delta State University, Abraka, is not exempted from these challenges, as the university has experienced funding difficulties overtime and can become a better citadel of academic excellence when granted access to more funds. The government needs to increase its allocation to the education sector, while universities need to improve the resourcefulness of their institutional management and diversify their funding sources in ways that would grow their institutions. It is hoped that putting these strategies in place will enhance the quality of education in Delta State University, Abraka, and the Nigerian University Education system as a whole. By addressing these issues, Nigerian Universities would provide quality education to the Nigerian citizens and contribute to the nation's development meaningfully.

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