

Funding of Higher Education in Nigeria: Issues and Concerns

By

Chinedu R. Aguba, Ph.D.

L.O. Ocho, Ph.D.

Department of Educational Management

Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) Enugu-Nigeria

Introduction

This paper is concerned with funding initiatives in higher education in Nigeria. It is asking the question: "What else can we do to properly fund higher education since past efforts and struggles have yielded no sustainable positive results?". Higher education is used here to mean the education given after secondary education in universities, colleges of education and polytechnics in Nigeria. They are often called tertiary institutions. These institutions are owned by either the Federal or state Governments or voluntary agencies. The Federal Government funds Federal universities through the National Universities Commission (NUC), polytechnics through the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and colleges of education through the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE). These Federal parastatals approve, supervise and accredit courses in the relevant institutions irrespective of the proprietorship of such institutions. State governments fund state higher institutions of learning. All higher educational institutions charge fees but privately owned higher institutions depend more on such fees than state and federal ones for running the institutions. On the average, federal institutions are better funded than the others and students pay far less fees than in the other two types.

History of the Funding Problems in Higher Education:

The first tertiary institution in Nigeria, the Yaba Higher College, was founded in 1932. The University College Ibadan was opened in 1948 as a College of the University of London. The first University, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka was opened in 1960. The first

Advanced Teachers College which later came to be called College of Education was opened in Lagos in 1962. Thus the three main types of higher educational institutions came into existence in Nigeria before or in 1962.

The Universities

The first-generation universities were all established between 1960 and 1970, starting with the University of Nigeria Nsukka (1960), University of Lagos (2 Oct. 1962), Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (10th Oct. 1962), University of Ife, now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife (24th Oct. 1962), University of Ibadan (27th Dec. 1962) and the University of Benin, (1970). The Universities of Lagos and Ibadan were Federal Universities while the remaining four, UNN, ABU, OAU and UNIBEN were established by the Eastern, Northern, Western and Mid-Western Regions respectively.

University education came under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Federal Government with effect from August 1972. Thus, the states lost the authority to establish universities. On April 1st 1973, the Federal Government took over the U.NN and in 1975 it took over the remaining regional universities.

Immediately after taking full responsibility for the six first-generation universities, the Supreme Military Council announced the establishment of seven new universities in April 1975; to be located at Calabar, Jos, Maiduguri, Sokoto, Ilorin, Port-Harcourt and Kano. In 1976, the Military Government launched the UPE. It is difficult to understand what informed the decision of the federal government to undertake such complex, strategic, extremely financially costly programmes of building, maintaining and running 13 universities in addition to financing a universal, free primary education for the whole country all at the same time. Was there any policy analysis? Was there any realistic costing of these projects? Did the Federal Government analyze the earlier efforts by the Western and Eastern Regions before deciding to undertake and sustain a UPE programme? Did it look at the cost of running the two federal universities of Lagos and Ibadan before deciding to run 13 Universities? It was therefore not surprising that by 1980, the UPE had collapsed and primary schools had closed in many parts of the country

for non-payment of teachers' salaries. Adequate university funding was becoming difficult. Then to everybody's consternation, the civilian Federal Government (1979-1983) stood logic on its head and embarked on another scheme of establishing seven new universities of technology at Owerri, Minna, Bauchi, Makurdi, Abeokuta, Akure and Yola. As Ocho (2006) pointed out

"More than two decades after their establishment, they still remain shadows of what technological universities ought to be" As our people put it, "While the child was dying about the small size of his food, the dog bent down and ate it up".

Under and in spite of this difficult funding situation, state governments started to found their own universities. The Anambra and Rivers State Governments started the ball rolling by opening the Anambra and Rivers State Universities of Science and Technology in 1981. Soon after that, all the states in the southern part of the country then, opened their own state universities. There are now more than 140 universities by governments and voluntary agencies. Everybody could see that the education system as a whole is failing partly due to over ambitiousness and lack of planning. During the 2nd Republic (1979-1983) private universities, started to open. Within a matter of three years, there were 26 private universities. The Military returned to government in December 1983 and by Decree No 19 of 1984 abolished private universities.

The Polytechnics

The first Polytechnic was the Yaba College of Technology which came into existence in 1963 when the Yaba Technical Institute established in 1948 became converted into a polytechnic. Then the following polytechnics were established: Kaduna (1968), Ibadan 1970, Institute of Management and Technology Enugu (1973), and Auchi Polytechnic (1974). These are mostly state institutions. The Federal Government had opened eleven polytechnics by 1998. As is usual with Nigeria, there was a kind of scramble to open polytechnics and by 1998, there were 41 of them. The extent of planning by the state and private proprietors for the projects is difficult to determine, but what is evident is that

most of them are underfunded, without qualified lecturers and without the necessary technology and equipment.

The Colleges of Education

The Ashby Commission Report of 1960 gave rise to the establishment of Advanced Teachers Colleges which award the Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E). The earliest among these colleges were established in Lagos (1962), Ibadan (1962), Zaria (1962), Owerri (1963), Kano (1964), and Abraka (1968). The colleges later came to be called Colleges of Education. The one at Ibadan was later transferred to Ondo in 1964 and became known as Adeyemi College of Education. We now have more than 80 colleges of education run by federal, state and private proprietors.

The Decay

Up till the 1980s these higher institutions were properly provided for, both in terms of quantity and quality of teaching and service staff and in terms of provision of requisite equipment. Accommodation was provided for staff in the campuses and up to 75% of the students had hostel accommodation. The standard of education and the productivity of the institutions in terms of teaching, research and dissemination of knowledge was quite high and of world class. To ensure qualitative education at all levels of the system, quality control measures received considerable attention of both the Federal and State governments. Since quality of education depended to a great extent on the quality of the teaching staff, the government took great care to improve the quality of teacher training in Grade II teacher institutions, advanced teachers' colleges and university faculties of education. There were Federal and State inspectorates, which supervised primary and secondary educational institutions on a regular basis. The Federal Government in addition, set up secondary schools in the states, which came to be called Unity Schools as models to be emulated by the states. They were called Federal Government Colleges and they were among the best of their kind. In-service short-term, sandwich, and correspondence courses were run by the universities and they were popular with primary and secondary school teachers.

University staff, especially the lecturers were well educated men and women from all parts of the globe. Indeed, Nigerian universities of the 60s and 70s were international institutions which admitted students from different countries of the world and from all parts of Nigeria. The competition for excellence among staff and students was keen and palpable.

Presently and unfortunately Nigerian Universities are now local institutions where the overwhelming majority of staff and students come from the catchment areas of the institutions. The drive for excellence among lecturers and students is now almost dead. Those people who were at the UNN as students in the 60s and 70s were comfortable. Conditions in the other first generation universities at the time were about similar. They were served three-course meals at breakfast, lunch and supper. They lived two in a room, cleaners took care of their rooms including making up their beds and ensuring that the toilets were well maintained. They neither lacked water nor light in the hostels, classrooms and dining halls. The libraries were fully stocked and the laboratories lacked neither equipment nor consumables. On Wednesday afternoons, students emptied from the halls of residence and classrooms into the fields to engage in one type of game or athletics — football, lawn tennis, table tennis, swimming, track events, badminton, draught, chess, dancing, choir practice etc. Different clubs organized dancing parties in which everybody was free to attend on the payment of gate fees. Each hall of residence organized hall dinners to which the university hierarchy, beginning from the Vice-Chancellor down to the hall wardens attended. The word **student Cult'** did not exist. There were academic, political and departmental clubs and associations that, from time to time, invited eminent scholars, orators and politicians for campus-wide lectures and symposia.

One is bound to ask, what happened? Why are our institutions of learning in this sorry and messy state? Hostel rooms are now overcrowded, the halls of residence stink from the fowl smell from the toilet ends; murder, rape and violence are now routine events; cultism is rampant; lecturers are half baked unambitious individuals who believe that the purpose of their employment is to exploit students through sale of handouts and hastily written and unreferenced books full of errors of facts and language. Lecturers no longer refer

students to authoritative authors and books in the various fields of learning. The classrooms are overcrowded, dirty, smelly and dilapidated. The laboratories lack equipment and consumables, and the libraries contain a few ancient books and periodicals. Games, athletics, swimming, dancing, social and academic clubs and other leisure pursuits are no longer part of students' life. Students now eat in fly-infested hovels and open sheds where hygienic principles are observed in their breach. The downward trend in quality of university education was replicated in the polytechnics, colleges of education and on the secondary and primary levels.

According to Sokunbi (2006:9) it is no longer news that our universities and Polytechnics have fallen far below the minimum standards acceptable for the production of quality graduates that can move the nation forward". Many university programmes cannot be accredited for lack of qualified teachers, equipment and infrastructure. According to the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), more than 500 programmes being run in the polytechnics could not be accredited. Despite the glaring scarcity of qualified lecturers, many new private higher institutions are being opened with the approval of government.

Causes of the Decay

The causes of the decay and dilapidation in tertiary institutional facilities and decline in Standards of education could be ascribed to three major factors, viz:

1. Unrealistic planning and inadequate funding
2. Change in societal values
3. Wrong concept of human development.

1. **Unrealistic and inadequate funding.** This has been alluded to above. Costly and over ambitious educational policies such as the UPE, the UBE, technological universities are approved without detailed planning and costing resulting in disastrous implementation. Omolayole (1998) after a review of the education system in Nigeria and its funding concluded that the whole system has collapsed and that tertiary education is comatose and in a state of perpetual crises. In conclusion, he said:

The most serious problem facing the whole educational system is a very large under-funding syndrome. Even the bit of money made available is quite often mismanaged. Such is the grim state of affairs now that the future will need some drastic paradigm shift. (Omolayole 1998:9)

Ocho (2005:259-260) Laments the lack of careful planning and execution of the most potent instrument for individual and national development. He concludes,

However, we must accept that such a necessary and powerful societal instrument requires careful and detailed planning, critical step-by-step assessment and evaluation of each step in the planning, detailed costing of each step, proper identification of the sources of funding and assured ways of tapping from each resource and agreeing on acceptable ways of accounting for all expenditures and incomes.

Ocho wonders why we could not learn anything from the British colonial administration of education in Nigeria in her steady but gradual, step-by-step increase in colonial government financial contribution to education. It started by paying paltry grants to a few voluntary agency missions in Lagos in 1877 and gradually increased the amounts and number of recipients in accordance with fund availability. Before any change in the condition and amount of grants, proper evaluation of the implementation of existing policy would be undertaken so as to determine how future grants would be used. By 1948, the government had extended the grants-in-aid of education to all voluntary and native administration schools that met its conditions for grants in all parts of the country. By 1952, it had reached a stage where it felt able to give grants equal to 50% of capital expenses and 100% of teachers' salaries. Aguba (2006) and Aguba (2009) agree that since education is capital intensive, concerted efforts should be made to manage the existing resources effectively and efficiently through proper planning and monitoring.

2. Change in Values: The pervasive acceptance of materialism with its philosophy of the- end- justifying-the-means among the Nigerian elite has brought retrogression in all facets of human and physical development of the country. The Local government Councils, the third tier of government, have been rendered inoperative by the stealing propensities of some of our current governors. People have lost faith in government so that every government policy statement is greeted with pessimism. Materialism which was first

embraced by politicians gradually became accepted by businessmen and finally by the academicians. Thus, through corrupt means candidates are admitted into higher institutions without requisite qualifications, awarded degrees without attending lectures, promoted to the rank of professor without the necessary qualifications. The cut-throat competition for the post of Vice-chancellor, the recourse to charms, to political, religious and ethnic god-fathers and god-mothers and the financial inducement expended for the position make one believe that there is more to gain than service to one's country. When one is appointed to the position, there is no fair means of recouping his expenditure, showing gratitude to his benefactors than through stealing public funds, that is, money meant for the development and maintenance of the institution.

There is no doubt that the amount generally budgeted for education is hardly enough but what is more important is the use to which the funds are put. No amount of funds released for education will be sufficient to run the institutions effectively and efficiently if we do not have selfless and committed leaders at all levels of the system. Ocho (2005) remarked that the problem is how to identify such leaders and more importantly whether any political leader is interested in honest and dedicated personnel. He asks, "How much honesty will a politician who fraudulently got himself elected into political leadership appreciate?" (2005:291). A fraudulent leader will naturally need fraudulent people to work with. Nwagwu (2001) believes that corruption and lack of accountability are principally responsible for the apparent underfunding and shortages in our educational institutions. The Longe Commission (FRN 1991) observed that foreign aid and technical assistance, which used to contribute substantial financial support to higher education has been gradually drying up because of the inability of the institutions to apply the funds for the purposes intended. The point being made in this paper is that if the funds at the disposal of our higher educational institutions were genuinely utilized in the interest of the institutions, the dilapidation, the rot, the lowering of standards would not have reached the present irredeemable limits.

3. **Wrong concept of human development:** It is apparent that Nigerian leaders believe that going to school is the same thing as being educated. So within a space of 69

years (1948 — 2016) we opened over 140 universities and about the same number of polytechnics and colleges of education. Most of these institutions, especially the Federal and State ones enroll far more students than the available qualified lecturers, facilities such as classrooms, laboratories, desks, reading materials and equipment.

The Way Forward

The recommendations that follow are made because it is evident that Nigeria is a failed state. It is a failed state because nothing tends to work in Nigeria. It is a failed state because a majority of the people have no clean water to drink; electricity, where it is available is epileptic, low in current, unreliable for domestic and industrial purposes; urban and industrial waste cannot be managed resulting in polluted air and polluted environment; the schools have become uneducative and provide safe accommodation for devilish cult- groups and uncommitted and uninterested teachers; life and property are unsafe and those who are murdered by the police outnumber those they save; unemployment is uncontrollable and rising by the year; more than 70% of industrial establishments have collapsed and the remaining are working far below installed capacity; life is generally brutish for the common man, while the rich is unable to enjoy his wealth in the comfort and safety of his home for fear of robbers and assassins; so he lives in a self-made prison fortress surrounded by unreliable security men of assorted hues.

A government exists for three main purposes:

1. security of life and property,
2. proper upbringing of the young
3. provision of the four essentials of life, viz: clean environment, clean water, sufficient food and enough houses for the people.

In my estimation, the Nigerian Government is unable to obtain 20% success in any of the three essential functions of government.

Recommendations

Omolayole (1997) has concluded that the state of education in Nigeria is such that the future will need some drastic paradigm shift. To bring Nigeria back to life, to sanitize it, to enable it work through making the education system produce disciplined and selfless leaders two realistic and complimentary solutions, we suggested; privatization and globalization of higher education institutions.

Privatization

Our higher educational institutions owned by states and the Federal Government should be advertised and sold to individuals, church organizations, groups, educational institutions, corporate entities both local and foreign; all made to operate in accordance with government guidelines. The Federal Government will then set up a body to be known as Higher Education Commission (HEC) which will be to all higher educational institutions what the Central Bank of Nigeria is to all banks operating in Nigeria. In addition to regulating. and coordinating higher educational institutions in Nigeria, the body will be responsible for receiving scholarship and grants-in-aid funds. The scholarship funds will ensure that no Nigerian is denied higher education for no other reason than poverty. The grants-in-aid funds. will be for payment of a certain percentage of capital expenses and staff salaries. The percentage will differ from one institution to the other and from year to year in accordance with the extent of compliance to laid down rules and regulations. Institutions unable to meet minimum standards will be closed down. The HEC will have a branch in each of the six geopolitical zones and every institution must be fully inspected every year and the high-lights of such inspection reports published for public consumption. It is here suggested that a certain percentage, about 10% of the Federal Government budget and 5% of the State government budget, be paid from source into the HEC account from which it will run the scholarship and grants-in expenses and for its own maintenance too. No new higher institutions must be opened except with, the approval of the HEC which will assure itself that the funds available will be enough to meet the requirements of the new institutions.

2. Globalization

According to Levin (2006:39), "the opening of national borders to the flow of goods, services, information and especially people, has made universities a powerful force for global integration, mutual understanding and geopolitical stability" Universities in Europe, Russia, the U.S.A; Asia and Australia are becoming global by responding to the same forces that have propelled the world economy. They now seek students and lecturers from around the world, send their own students and lecturers abroad to prepare them for global careers, and more importantly open satellite campuses in different parts of the world.

Summary/Conclusion

The period 1970 to 2016 has shown that no Nigerian government is capable of providing fairly tolerable, and acceptable governance of the Country. None is capable of fighting corruption, ethnicity, and religious bigotry. The major reason for this is the failure of the education system which is unable to impart discipline and selflessness. Because of the pervading corruption in the higher institutions, the educational parastatals and education ministries it is obvious that no amount of funding can rehabilitate the dilapidated physical structures, provide the necessary facilities and equipment, redirect the psychological mindset of students and staff that has come to believe in the none existence of duty, respect, reverence, and selflessness. Under this condition only the application of business principles by private proprietors can make higher educational institutions perform its major role of producing middle and high level manpower capable of raising Nigeria from her present 18th century developmental status to that of the 21st century.

References

- Aguba, C.R. (2006). *Philosophy of Education: A funding Approach*. Enugu: Computer EDGE Publishers.
- Aguba, C.R. (2009). *Educational Administration and Management: Issues and perspectives*. Enugu: Tons and Tons Production.
- FRN (1960) *Investment in Education: The Report of the Commission on Post School certificate and Higher Education in Nigeria* Lagos Ministry of Education.
- FRN (1991) *Higher Education in the Nineties and beyond*. The Longe Commission Report, Lagos Ministry of Education.
- Levin, R (2006) "World of knowledge" in *Newsweek* August 21, 2006/August 28, 2006.
- Nwangwu, N.A (2001)" Issues in the financing of Higher Education" in Maduewesi, E.J (ed.) *Financing of Education in Nigeria*. The Nigerian Academy of Education Year Book No.3.
- Ocho, L.O, (2005) *Issues and Concerns in Education & Life* Institute for Development Studies, UNEC.
- Omolayole, M.O. (1998) "Community and Private Participation in Education in Nigeria" in Badmus, A & Osiyale A.O. (eds) *Private & Community Participation in Education in Nigeria*. The Nigerian Academy of Education.
- Sokunbi, W. (2006) "Where are the teachers" *Daily Sun Wednesday, April 5, 2006 p.9*.
- Underhill, W. (2006) "Sowing seeds" in *Newsweek* August 21, 2006/, August 28, 2006.
- Underhill, W. (2006). "Sowing seeds" in *Newsweek* August 21, 2006, August 28, 2006