

## **Restructuring of Political, Economic, Social and Technological Factors: Implication on Sustainable Funding of University Education in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*University education in Nigeria is saddled with numerous surmountable problems which make the realization of the National objectives and those of the university difficult. Some of those problems range from inadequate infrastructural facilities, poor staff and students' welfare service, issue of brain-drain among others have bearing on the lingering issues between the federal government and various unions in the universities resulting to incessant strike actions by the unions. Experiences in most Nigerian universities could be described by a critic as "teaching centers", devoid of research and knowledge creation. The massive expansion and proliferation of the Nigerian university system without adequate policy on the revitalization for sustainable funding poses national challenges among which the production of high quality graduates who will compete favourably with their counterparts globally is unforeseeable in the nearest future. With all these expositions made, one is left without any doubt that the university education in Nigeria is in a serious crisis. Hence, the purpose of this study is to critically investigate the political, economic, social and technological (PEST) factors hindering achievements for sustainable funding of university education in Nigeria. The research method for the study is qualitative, using secondary sources of data. The study pointed out that low funding of education by the government was largely due to population explosion, socio-economic downtrodden, inefficient application of funds, policy inconsistency, endemic corruption and marked preference for other priorities among others negatively affects funding of university education. Therefore this paper concluded by making appropriate recommendations for sustainable funding of university education in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Political, Economic, Social and technology factors, Sustainable funding.

### **Introduction**

The university belongs to the tertiary level of the system of education. It is also seen as the ivory tower of learning. This implies that it is the highest level of the whole education system established to produce the required professionals and manpower needed for any nation. University education is established to produce trained manpower to function in the various socio-economic and political sectors of the country. Unfortunately, University education in Nigeria has been facing a declining government budgetary allocation in the face of increased student enrolment, ageing

and dilapidating infrastructural facilities and increase staff emolument. Level of funding of education sector has long been recognized as one of the major factors that contribute to quality education. This in turn, determines growth and development of a country, as no nation can rise above the quality of its educational system.

Quality education is the pivot around which all the other 16 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) evolve. Thus, Oduro (2022) asserted that, the youth constitute the backbone of sustainable development in every country. Indeed, no country can survive the environmental, cyber, or food security challenges without a generation of quality-indexed educated young people. Oduro reckon that provision of quality education is a costly venture, but the cost of managing security threats posed by half-baked educated or miseducated youth far outweighs investment in quality education. In this era of globalization and massification of education, Nigeria cannot afford to run a university system that compromises quality, if she is to compete in the global economy. Quality education determines the level of success in achieving the national sustainable development goals.

The National Policy on Education (2016) as revised, explicitly states that education is a government affair in which free education is to be provided by the government at all levels when practicable. It is quite unfortunate that university education has never been funded to achieve its dynamic goals. This could be the reason why some writers described Nigerian universities as "teaching centres" due to their focus on knowledge dissemination and insignificant contribution to knowledge creation and management or usage, through academic research, due to largely inadequate funding. Teaching, research and community development which are the basic functions of academic staff are being jeopardized daily due to poor funding and brain drain.

The take-over of university education by the Federal government in 1975 virtually made the Federal government the sole financier of the universities. According to Yakubu (2009), the serious financial doldrums in the university system was manifested by the downward trend in the funding of universities since 1976. In fact, the general consensus in Nigeria today is that the existing universities are not adequately funded (Aliyu, 2012; Famurewa, 2014; Famade, 2015; Abiodun-Oyebanji, 2017; and Omobola & Success, 2019). The inadequate funding, unstable academic calendar, systemic corruption and over-reliance on

government for fund have put the management of these institutions under undue stress and strains; hence, they are incapacitated in providing adequate essential services.

It is important to note that while federal government maintains the policy of no tuition fees in virtually all federal government owned universities in Nigeria thinking that the government has a duty to provide qualified Nigerians with free university education, the government has however failed to provide adequate funds that will sustain university education in producing quality graduates. Perhaps, increase of tuition fees might become the only surviving option in the face of dwindling economic situation orchestrated by inefficient application of funds in the long run. This is because, the country is confronting current economic challenges such as debt burden, growing inflation, poor living standards and increasing unemployment accentuated by our growing youthful population. However, dash-in a hope was when the federal government reiterates his commitment in his 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2022 Independence Day Speech to continue to mobilize resources both internationally and nationally towards funding education to ensure her citizens are well educated and skilled in various vocations knowing that education is a leading determinant of economic growth and employment generation (Daily Independent Nigerian Newspaper, 2022).

The resultant effect of inadequate funding hatches in poor infrastructure, poor staff quality, poor training, low research output, poor institutional ranking, poor staff remuneration, over-crowded lecture rooms, intellectual brain drain, unstable academic calendar due to industrial actions among others (Abati, 2022). In essence, ‘does Nigeria government ever care what becomes of public universities in the next 20 years if this trend continues? This rhetorical question is, no doubt, injurious to Nigeria’s aspiration to become an active player in the global knowledge industry. It must therefore be given the attention it requires in terms of political will and economic viability reforms to prioritize funding of education especially university education in order to salvage it from imminent collapse.

Currently, funding of university has been problematic due to endemic corruption and marked preference for other priorities. This is because of several reasons chief of which is poor management of economy resources which has given rise to leakages in the revenue of government at all levels. There is wasteful spending, misappropriation of fund and outright stealing of our collective patrimony. Professor Sola Akinrinade on an online platform (pulse.ng) on 7th July 2015 expressed fear on the increasing level of corruption in Nigerian universities when he

said that, the high incidence of corruption in the university system threatens Nigeria's future (Abiodun-Oyebanji, 2017).

It is pertinent to note that this present administration has made significant progress in the eradication of deeply entrenched corruption that permeates all fact of our national development and several measures were put in place to curbed the ugly menace as confessed by the President in his 1<sup>st</sup> Oct, 2022 Independence Day Speech. However, it is believed that, if the leakages in the management of the country's resources are controlled and stopped, there will be more than enough to meet the nation's revenue and expenditure targets without borrowing and plunging the country into a debt crisis as it is the case now (Abati, 2022). Economically, Abiodun-Oyebanji, (2017) purported that majority of these problems stemmed out of weak financial system to adequately support Nigerian institutions of higher learning.

In a paper presented by the acting executive secretary of the Tertiary Education Trust fund in 2011 at the public hearing for the consideration of a bill to amend the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (Establishment Act), he was of the opinion that TETFUND will ensure a more effective deployment of resources and adequate disbursement of education tax to public tertiary educational institutions, expressly defined under section 20(1) of the act of public universities, polytechnics and colleges of education which are owned by the Federal and State governments (Omobola & Success 2019). It is however pertinent to ask, 'how many of these institutions are adequately funded'? How adequately are the provisions of physical infrastructures, learning resources and training of the manpower in the universities? For example, the acting secretary claimed then that, when the new TETFUND Act takes effect, the allocation to tertiary institution would have risen considerably from N303m for each university in 2011 to N912m in 2014, thereby making available more funds for the transformation of university education. Now, with the current geometric increase in student enrolment into Nigerian universities, is the available fund still enough for viable transformation of university education? Obviously not feasible, this paper asserts that, there is urgent need to restructure the political will and commitment on the part of the federal government to adequately increase funding of university education in Nigeria and make it a priority.

To this end, Omobola & Success (2019) further laid credence to this that, under funding of the Nigerian education sector, higher institutions of learning inclusive, is the bane of the university crises, and often times, this had led to incessant strike actions in the sector. Other factors identified

by Famurewa (2014) are huge foreign and domestic debts, declining revenue from non-oil sectors due to neglect, declining revenue from the oil sector which the government highly depend upon, huge budget that government earmarked for debt servicing on yearly basis, mismanagement of economic resources, high rate of corruption in all sphere of the economy linked to weak institutions amongst others had made it difficult for the government to generate adequate resources to fund university education in the country.

Another bone of contention is the proliferation of university education in 2019, which witnessed 170 approved universities- 43 federal, 48 state, 79 private, and provisional licenses to 20 newly approved private universities (Omobola & Success, 2019).. Today, Nigeria is experiencing a crucial manpower development handicap occasioned by the fact that the number of prospective students seeking for admission into tertiary institutions is projected at over 1.2 million. However, only about 20% of this number actually secures admission to such institutions private or public due to largely universities' carrying capacity (Abati, (2022)). The programme director, Reform Education in Nigeria, Mr Ayodamola Oluwatoyin, stated that, the incessant strike action left so many admissions unprocessed from year 2020 till date especially in the universities in terms of carrying capacity. This is to say that university education in Nigeria has witnessed a significant growth in terms of expansion of access through increase in enrolment and establishment of additional institutions. However, it is saddening to note that many of the indices that can guarantee qualitative higher education are not taken into consideration in the country's quest to meet quantitative target.

Sustainable funding in this context is the act of providing a primary stream of financing and raising funds that sustain the cost of running university system. Sufficient financial allocation is required for provision of infrastructure, facilities and equipment, staff remunerations, training and development, and other needs. These trends necessitated this study to critically analyze the political, economic, social and technological (PEST) factors affecting funding of university education in Nigeria. Restructuring the PEST factors to guarantee sustainable funding of university education in Nigeria by the year 2030 and beyond is simply, the way of re-organizing the political will, socio-economic reforms and substantial technological advancement so that it can be sustained and guaranteed in the long run.

### **Political Factors**

It is pertinent to note that, the lingering issues boarding the nation's universities and the unions stem out of Federal Government ill-political will to substantially finance education which has never gone beyond 10.7% since 2001 till 2021 as against UNESCO recommendation (Onyeji & Ileyemi, 2021), a lamentable budgetary allocation to the nation education sector. This resulted in incessant strikes, brain-drain unstable academic calendar, corruption, poor research, unethical behaviours among others. Political factors seems to be the main motives behind many of the expansion polices such as proliferation of university by state governments, when capital projects to meet the expanding programmes could not take off, in case where they took off, they had to be abandoned due to lack of funds. The resultant effect according to Ekundayo in Famade, (2015) was a summon table pressure on the available limited resources thereby resulting in downward quality of graduates together with deteriorating working conditions.

Another catalyst is policy inconsistency (policy summersault) and political interferences negatively affect funding of university. Sometimes, partisan politics get in the way of rational distribution of educational funds and sometimes government engages in activities purely to score political points, inefficient application of funds by the federal government and universities among others. Sacrifice for national growth and development made a system great and formidable. There is urgent need to recalibrate Nigerian political structure and reforms that guarantees national growth and development that is missing in Nigeria's journey to greatness. There is need to identify and recommend viable means of averting corrupt practices among educational managers and administrators who for political reasons, manipulate educational plans and provisions to score political goals.

### **Economic Factors**

Education as a very important segment of the nation's economic sector cannot survive without adequate human resources, financial and teaching facilities. This requires human resources to participate in teaching and research, aimed at production of skilled, high manpower development. The recession, according to Osinubi, (2021) and Oduro, (2022), has affected everybody's pocket, it has affected universities, just the way it affects other sectors of the economy. Effective private sector participation in the funding of university education

is therefore very key at this point in time. There is need to introduce the macroeconomic strategy where the government needs to diversify to other sectors of the economy.

A multi-directional economy will provide a head long attack on poverty and a macroeconomic strategy will improve the Gross National Products (GNP), Gross National Income (GNI) and the Per Capital Income (PCI) that will enable the government, and the households to have additional resources to efficiently and effectively fund education. In some developed countries, individual citizens get involved in financing of university education. For example, in Britain, a citizen named Mr. Robinson, at his death in 1970, gave all his life savings of £20m to the University of Cambridge (Ziderman & Albrecht in Osinubi, 2021). There should be synergy to exploring alternative strategies of influencing the three ties of government to develop political will to pave way for upward review of the annual budgetary allocations to education as most of the laws pertaining to the country's educational development are obsolete which need an urgent review.

### **Social Factors**

Inadequate investment in education plunges societies into higher costs in terms of public spending on social and economic crime control as well as curative health management. Naturally, performance of workers is higher when they are adequately motivated. When a worker's take home salary is substantial, his welfare in terms of accommodation, health care delivery services, provision of social amenities are provided, these motivate such a worker to work harder and thus improve the productivity. Crime rate of various categories ranging from kidnaping, cyber warfare, banditry, terrorism, cultism, security and peaceful coexistence among others continue to cripple Nigeria socio-economic life day by day. UNESCO, (2019) reported that, Boko Haram has killed 2,300 teachers in the North-East in 2009 and today the whole Nigeria appears to be facing insecurity challenges of kidnaping and banditry causing schools to operate in physical and emotional distress affecting productivity in higher education. University in Nigeria seems to earn less than other counterparts with similar qualification and ranks in other developing countries. The staff also suffers irregular payment of salaries and without incentives to motivate them. This ugly scenario often triggers strike actions and brain-drain with negative consequences for research and academic productivity. Onyeji & Ileyemi, (2021) noted

that some lecturers engages in other profitable venture like part-time jobs and extra mural lessons thereby devoting little or no time for research and publications for advancement.

Obviously, it is noticed on how Nigerians suffer unnecessary hardship with poor social services, in terms of poor education, poor health services, lack of portable water, poor hygiene, lack and unstable electricity among others. The consequences are social menace and corrupt practices of different sorts in the society to make ends meet. Restructuring Nigeria socio-economic factors for sustainable funding will go a long way in addressing this menace.

### **Technology Factors**

To meet the challenges of the 21<sup>ST</sup> century and absolute internalization, there is a need for education to imbibe the global culture and adopt ardent consideration of development in line with the current technological trends. The main purpose of the strategy in ICT enforcement in global education is to provide the prospects and trends of integrating information and communication technologies into the general education activities. Therefore, the components of ICT are those aspects or parts of the information technology that when integrated, make up the functionality or effectiveness of the system. They are parts that make up the complete system. However, these components in the view of Gregersen (2021) could be explicated as follows: Computer Hardware, Computer Software, Telecommunications, Database and Data Warehouses and Human Resources and Procedures. ICT is a factor of globalization, the situation has impacted so much that lecturers and students rely on information produced by others especially that of developed nations without actually developing its own relevant information based on vibrant scientific research that can make them technologically advanced.

A situation where universities and research institutes rely on generator to provide electricity and power vital research equipments does not augur well for industrial growth to make meaningful impact towards technological advancement in the country. This is evidenced in the outbreak of COVID 19 pandemic and the short down of educational institutions in Nigeria disrupted academic activities and revealed to Nigerians the backwardness in technological advancement (Musa, *et als*, 2022). In the same vein, Oduro (2022) articulates his view by saying that, despite a seemingly large number of varsities, Nigeria technological growth is still stunted. Microsoft, Toyota, Boeing and many of the research institutes in Nigeria are some of the institutions that have exploited the power of education to leverage economy through research and



expand job opportunities and helps people improve their status in the society. Thus, the institution that educates our younger ones in human and capital development is the university education and should be watched carefully in matters of promoting technological advancement and sustainable funding.

### **Implication of PEST Factor on Sustainable Funding of University Education in Nigeria**

The United Nations Sustainable Development agenda is a hot topic on the march to 2030. As good as the foregoing sounds, Nigeria continues to experience its share of social, economic, political and technological upheavals which have often stunted its growth and development into the regional economic power that it strives to attain by the year 2030 and beyond. The university education and other tertiary institutions in Nigeria are in a state of advanced decay as indicated in the PEST factors. Nigeria population is put at 216.7m rated 26th in the world as the most populous country in Africa. However, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is getting lower day in day out of which is used to measure the level of a country domestic performance index but Nigeria was rated number 162 position in 2021 ranking. This is because the current statistics showed that, Nigeria GDP stood at \$510bn, while GDP per capita stood at \$2,353 (Idris, 2022). The truth is Nigeria is near broke with these statistics meaning we cannot compete with the rest of the world unless we acknowledge our true poverty and aggressively and collectively turn things around and improve the nation's economy. There is need to introduce the macroeconomic strategy where the government needs to diversify to other sectors of the economy.

Crime rate of various categories ranging from kidnapping, cyber warfare, banditry, terrorism, cultism, security and peaceful coexistence among others continue to cripple Nigeria socio-economic life day by day. Another serious threat orchestrated by the ongoing strike action by the varsity unions as reported by Saturday Punch is that, a total of 461,745 admissions are suspended due to the strike action which means the nation human capital is threatening. Okebukola (2022) stressed that, inadequate investment in education plunges societies into higher costs in terms of public spending on social and economic crime control as well as curative health management. The author concluded by a parable, "Fix leadership, Fix Education and Nigeria will be Fixed". Perhaps, this statement pointed to rejuvenating the Nigerian leadership architecture. Akinyemi & Bassey (2012) posited that, the stock of highly-educated individuals produced by higher education institutions plays an important role in the innovation and the sustainable

development of any society and cautioned that attention should be paid to critical sector of the economy like energy and steel production. This topic is farsighted because of the education angle. It is commonly said that while education cannot solve all of humanities' problems, without education, no solution is possible. In the same vein, Okebukola, (2015) purported that money cannot solve the higher education's entire problem, but without money, no solution is possible. In this context, effort is made at recalibrating the PEST factors to guarantee sustainable funding of university education in Nigeria by year 2030 and beyond. It is simply, the way of re-organizing the political will, socio-economic reforms and substantial technological advancement so that it can be sustained and guaranteed in the long run.

### **Conclusion**

The circumstances surrounding restructuring political, socio-economic and technological bottlenecks have great impact in the gap between translating knowledge into practical contexts useful for development in society. The fundamental role played by the university in national development is enormous, therefore, individuals and government should join hands together to give it substantial financial backing. The cost of education is constantly increasing due to population explosion and the socio-economic downtrodden may not enable the government alone to do much in terms of adequate financing of university education, hence the need for every stakeholder to rise up to these challenges and bail out university education from the verge of total collapse. The universities also should be proactive by looking inward and exploring every legal means to generate funds for its operations. There should also be partial deregulation of the education sector so as to ensure the provision of additional resources for universities funding. Methodical approach to improving education funding for Nigeria must be targeted, intentional, deliberate and sustainable. These would appear to steer us on a reasonable note to conclude that the management of universities should also be judicious in the use of available resources as other beneficiaries join efforts together in the funding of university education in the country, because if there is no effective and efficient utilization of resources, the university system will still be underfunded even if all the indices identified are put in place in the funding process.

### **Recommendations**

1. Fundamental reforms by federal government that will make for a more productive economy in which approach for revitalization must be pragmatic, realistic and practical;

2. Taxation from salaries of Nigerian Ex and serving presidents and governors, serving legislative members, ministers and other highly placed public officers;
3. Revenue diversification strategy by the university management such as cost sharing strategy using course variability to increase school fees to reflect the true economic cost of running the universities as agreed by all stakeholders;
4. Institution of a realistic and workable data bank by universities' Pro and Vice Chancellors that must be transparent, predictable to ensure accountability, and permits freedom to innovative ideas. The University should build strong internal support and reduce resistances to change. This should be encouraged participation and open discussion among faculty and staff, however, avoid criticism, threats, and coercion. The activity is also committed sufficient time, effort, and resources to manage participation effectively. The University should also build the supporting for and commitment to change among interest groups such as students, parents, public and private sectors with a stake in the University.
5. Increase in government allocation to education sector should be a priority;
6. Government should lay embargo on proliferation of universities until the existing ones are duly revitalized;
7. Public university pro-chancellors should include people from outside countries and other African nations for cross-breeding of ideas for sustainable funding of universities; and

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