



ASSESSING THE CHALLENGES IN OWNERSHIP AND FUNDING PRACTICES OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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(Received 10, February 2024; Revision Accepted 19, March 2024)

ABSTRACT

This study explored the challenges in ownership and funding practices of university education in Cross River State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey design was adopted in conducting the study. Three research questions were answered through the data collected from all the Heads of Department in the sampled Universities in Cross River State including University of Calabar (UNICAL) and Cross River State University (CRSU), Havilla University, Nde-Ikom and Arthur Javis University Akpabuyo. The population comprised 228 Heads of Department in the study area. The census approach was adopted in drawing the population because they are manageable. A 20-item validated questionnaire titled: Challenges in Ownership and Funding Practices of University Education Questionnaire (COFPUEQ) was employed for data collection. The instrument was tested for reliability using Cronbach Alpha at a statistical index .86 which was adjudged good enough for data collection. Data collected were analyzed through mean and standard deviation. Findings revealed that the key challenges in ownership and funding practices of universities in the study area include but not limited to insufficient funding, complex bureaucratic processes, inadequate infrastructure, difficulty in attracting and retaining faculty. It was concluded that by examining these challenges and proposing potential strategies for sustainable funding, the study recommends the importance of diversifying funding sources and engaging in public-private partnerships to enhance the financial sustainability of universities in the State.

KEYWORDS: Challenges, University Ownership, Funding, Institution, Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

University education is a critical component of human capital development, and it plays a significant role in fostering economic growth, innovation, and social progress of any country.

Human capital development through education is the only viable solution to solving the problem of low productivity and unskillfulness (Ekpo, Nnaji, Onabe and Ovat, 2023). However, in Nigeria, particularly in Cross River State, the ownership

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and funding practices of university education are facing significant challenges. Cross River State, located in the south-South region of Nigeria, has a population of approximately 4.5 million people (Idika et al, 2024).

The state has two public universities, the University of Calabar and the Cross River State University, in addition to several private universities. Despite the state's efforts to provide access to higher education, the sector faces several challenges, including inadequate funding, lack of autonomy, and limited diversity in academic programmes. It is a great challenge for owners of institutions of learning to combine the financial running of their various homes with that of their owned educational institutions (Ekpo, Nnaji, Ekarika and Eyo, 2023).

The challenges in ownership and funding practices of university education in Cross River State are complex and multifaceted. The state government faces difficulties in providing sufficient funding for its public universities, leading to a lack of resources, infrastructure, and faculty development (Onyinye et al, 2024). Moreover, the limited autonomy of public universities hinders their ability to make decisions and take action towards improving the quality of education. The range of academic programmes offered in public universities is also limited, which can restrict the options for students and hinder their ability to pursue their desired fields of study.

Furthermore, the state's geographical location and socio-economic factors contribute to the challenges in accessing university education, particularly for students from rural areas. Poverty, lack of infrastructure, limited access to information and communication technology are some of the factors that affect the ability of students to access and complete quality higher education (Abraham, 2018). For quality education to have effect on human capital development, the educational programmes taught in the university system must be adequately funded for growth and development (Ekpo, Egbula and Abang, 2016). However, this study aims to assess the challenges in ownership and funding practices of university education in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study will examine the adequacy of funding, autonomy, diversity in academic programmes, accessibility, and the impact of socio-economic factors on university education in the state. The study will also identify possible solutions to address the challenges and promote sustainable development

in university ownership and higher education sector in Cross River State.

University ownership refers to the legal and administrative control over a higher education institution, which can be held by the government, private organizations, or individuals (Onabe, Ekpo, Akuh & Edoho 2024). Public universities are owned and funded by the government, while private universities are owned and funded by private entities, such as foundations, religious organizations, or for-profit companies. According to Basse, Effiom, and Okon (2020), the ownership structure of a university affects its autonomy, funding, and academic programmes, and can also impact the accessibility and affordability of higher education for students and can cause stress (Ekpo & Ndum, 2021). However, in Cross River State, university ownership is primarily public, with the state government owning and funding the two main public universities. However, the state government faces challenges in providing sufficient funding for these universities, leading to a lack of resources, infrastructure, and faculty development. As a result, the universities rely on other sources of funding, such as tuition fees and donations, to augment their finances.

EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have been carried out on the challenges in ownership and funding practices of university education in Nigeria and beyond. For instance, Eya, Esu and Enang (2018) conducted a study exploring the challenges facing state-owned universities in Cross River State. Through interviews and focus groups with university administrators, lecturers and students, they identified inadequate funding as a major issue. The state government was unable to fully fund operational and capital expenditures, leaving institutions struggling with infrastructure deficits, unpaid salaries, and lack of teaching resources. In a similar vein, Okon and Effiong (2019) surveyed vice-chancellors of state universities in the region to understand budget constraints. They reported chronic underfunding characterized by late or partial budget releases that disrupted academic calendars and activities. Insufficient funding prevented upgrading of laboratories, libraries and other learning facilities. Effiom and Agbor (2020), analyzed enrollment figures from 2005-2015 and found state universities experienced declining admissions rates during that period which they

attributed to deteriorating infrastructure deterring prospective students. Dilapidated facilities and poor learning environments impacted the quality of education. Several studies have found that inadequate financial support from state governments has created budgetary shortfalls that materialize as infrastructure gaps, unpaid salaries, low student intake and compromised standards – posing substantive challenges to effective operations of state-run universities in Cross River (Eya, Esu & Enang, 2018).

Ojong, Ubang and Okon (2017) conducted a mixed-methods study of two state universities, surveying students and conducting interviews. They reported politics as a major hindrance, with frequent changes in administration and management due to politician interference in appointment of vice-chancellors and deans. This created instability preventing long-term strategic planning. Similarly, Akpan, Effiong and Efiom (2019) interviewed lecturers who complained that lack of autonomy due to state control makes universities vulnerable to political intrigues. Partisan decision-making compromised recruitment and promotion exercises, lowering staff morale. A survey by Edet, Eneji and Williams (2020) of legislative members revealed lack of coordination between government and university leadership as another challenge. Unclear lines of authority resulted in duplication of roles, conflict of interests and diminished accountability over universities' supervision.

Other studies have found that partisan politics appears to substantially influence governance, structures and processes in state-controlled universities, introducing instability and compromising the independence needed for quality assurance. Autonomy from state control could mitigate these challenges (Eya et al, 2021). Efiom and Okon (2015), surveyed university administrators and found deficits in human capital development due to brain drain. Lecturers left state schools for better pay and promotions in federal universities, private sector, and abroad. This created staff shortages hindering quality of teaching. Akpan and John (2020) analyzed admission statistics and identified dwindling student enrollment as a persisting problem.

State universities were less attractive to prospective students relative to their federal and private counterparts due to infrastructure issues, lack of programs, and unstable funding affecting standards. Onabe (2022), observed that, during

accreditation, some panels are often found wanting in many ways to ensure that the process is successful; they do not insist on seeing physically all the names listed as academic staff, some universities hire external academics for a day or two to improve their staff-strength just for accreditation and so on. Eya et al (2021) conducted focus groups with university leaders who reported weak regulatory frameworks and oversight of operations from state governments. Absence of well-defined standards and guidelines bred inefficiency, mismanagement and reduced accountability in the administration of state schools. Utuk (2017) interviewed state officials and vice-chancellors and found poor systems of performance evaluation and quality assurance.

State universities struggled with accreditation due to lack of periodic reviews and emphasis on continuous improvement by government agencies tasked with regulatory duties. Offong (2019) examined data on female students and staff numbers across state universities. Their findings revealed gender disparities and relatively low participation of women attributed to cultural biases and higher security risks in the unstable campus environments of underfunded state institutions. The reviews point to deep-rooted, multifaceted constraints undermining quality and effectiveness of university education provision by state governments in Cross River State, Nigeria. Akpan and Abam (2018) analyzed admission statistics from 2005-2015. They found declining enrollment contributed to underfunding, as fees from fewer students covered a smaller proportion of operational costs.

This cycle of decline challenged fiscal viability. Efiom et al (2019) surveyed 300 undergraduate students across 3 state universities. Poor learning facilities like outdated laboratories and intermittent internet negatively impacted research productivity. Students expressed dissatisfaction with the learning experience. Akpan and Edet (2020) interviewed university administrators about human resource management. They reported difficulty retaining qualified academics due to delays in payroll processing and meager welfare packages. High turnover disrupted curriculum development and teaching quality. Udombat,, Efiom & Okon (2021), conducted a comparative study of admission requirements between state and federal universities. They found varying entry criteria across institutions within the state system

created inconsistencies in student quality and preparedness, affecting learning outcomes.

Efiom and Udon (2016) analyzed incident reports and identified insecurity on state university campuses as a growing concern. Security lapses stemmed from lack of dedicated personnel and surveillance infrastructure. Safety issues discouraged student and staff recruitment and retention. Okon et al (2017) surveyed 200 students across computer science, health sciences and engineering. Laboratory facilities were inadequate to deliver courses requiring hands-on skills training and applied learning. This compromised compliance with specialized accreditation standards in certain disciplines. However, multiple systemic challenges including underfunding, poor infrastructure, insecurity and inadequate regulation have undermined the capacity and effectiveness of Cross River's state universities over time. Eneji et al (2019) conducted interviews with lecturers who reported a lack of autonomy in academic decision making due to government interference.

Political influence over curriculum development and research priorities compromised scholarly output and relevance. Akpan and Nkanu (2017) analyzed available data on research grants awarded to professors. They found lower funding for cutting-edge projects in state universities compared to federal counterparts, hindering innovation and knowledge production. Umoh et al (2020) surveyed 300 secondary students and found more favored federal and private universities due to perceptions of better resources and quality. Declining preference for state schools affected admissions. Effiom (2021) examined procurement processes through document review. Compliance requirements and bureaucratic bottlenecks in state governance systems delayed acquisition of essential supplies and equipment. John and Eya (2020) interviewed education ministry officials about inter-university collaboration. They reported that political loyalties disincentivized cooperation between state schools and collaboration with other institutional types. Silos limited learning opportunities.

Other studies have found that insufficient autonomy, financial constraints, reputational issues, rigid processes and political divisions due to state control of universities have negatively impacted numerous facets of education provision in Cross River. Williams (2016) conducted a survey of lecturers which found low morale

attributed to discrimination in promotion prospects within state institutions compared to federal counterparts despite similar qualifications. Effiong and Atim (2017) interviewed administrators about industrial action notices gradually increasing over 2010-2015 due to unaddressed grievances like unpaid allowances.

This disrupted the academic calendar. Abraham (2018) analyzed 5-year campus master plans and identified lack of long-term strategic infrastructure development led to overconcentration of resources in short-term repairs instead of expansions to meet growth. Nta and Antigha (2019) reviewed policies and found state universities were excluded from opportunities for consortium arrangements and funds by international donors preferring federal institutions seen as more stable partners. Bassey et al (2020) sent questionnaires to university accountants and bursars who reported inadequate budgeting processes impeded multi-year financial planning due to uncertainty of annual funding from state legislatures. Adekunle and Ogunlela (2020) found the importance of seeking research grants, philanthropic donations, corporate sponsorships, and establishing endowment funds to ensure a sustainable financial base. The challenges faced by owing and funding of universities education and other institutions of higher learning in stressful (Ekpo and Ndum, 2021).

The study emphasizes the need for universities to actively engage with external partners and stakeholders to diversify their funding sources and reduce dependence on government funding. In the same vein, Okon and Udoh (2019) highlighted the benefits of collaborating with private entities, such as corporations and foundations, to access additional resources and funding for universities. The researchers emphasize the need for effective partnership frameworks, clear governance structures, and mutually beneficial arrangements to ensure the success of Public Private Partnership in sustaining funding for universities. The study provides insights into the potential challenges and success factors associated with implementing PPPs in the Nigerian higher education sector.

The NUC policy of carrying capacity will no doubt enhance quality (Oduwaye 2008), what then happens to thousands that cannot gain access because available facilities cannot take them. Closely related to the issues or challenge of facilities expansion is the demand for funding.

Funding and expansion go hand in hand. It was discovered in this study that funding is a major challenge to access to university education. Annual budgetary allocation to education has been on the decline, from 11.2% in 1999 to 5.9% in 2002 and 1.83% in 2003 (Akpan & Undie 2007:79).

The minimum standard set for developing countries is 26% but rather than moving upwards, it is declining. Poor funding also denied many university courses from being accredited by NUC, thereby reducing the access of many who could have been admitted. The education Tax Fund (ETF) has been very helpful in infrastructural development. Government should increase budgetary allocation to education. Funding is central to unhindered access to university education. As it has been found that virtually all the problems of universities in Nigeria are attributable to inadequate funding (Ajayi and Ademiji 2009). Ehiemetalor (2005) revealed in his study that 70.2% of Nigerians are poor and also said that 29.8% of families live on one dollar (N158.00) or above a day. Williams (2004) agreed by stating that out of the population of 150 million Nigerians about 120 million are poor

Many cannot afford to pay their children's school fees. This is in agreement with the findings of this study that due to lack of funds, school fees are hard to pay by parents and the result is that many are deprived access to university education. Gender discrimination is another challenge that hinders access to university education in Nigeria. Some of the possible steps or strategies are that government should increase funding and expand facilities. Also, more distance learning centers should be created and training programmes for ICT usage be emphasized for both staff and students of the university. Creation of flexible loan schemes and reduction of school fees are ways that can be used to ameliorate the plight of students and increase access for the economically less privileged ones in the society.

According to Okebukola (2006), expansion and diversification in higher education, driven by the demand of an upwardly mobile population and the needs of a globalized economy, are important factors underlying the rising demand for university education in Nigeria. Universities should be well funded by government so that there will be expansion

Old buildings should be renovated and new ones built to accommodate and give access to more

candidates. · Loan scheme should be introduced to the less privileged students by the government. More academic staff are required for effective course delivery across the disciplines to · address the challenge of large staff students ratio so as to reduce the stress on the academic staff on ground. · Academic staff should be retrained in the use of ICT/e-learning by the authorities concerned., the NUC. · Revision of Education Trust Fund support for Books and Journals production. The financial assistance should be directed to establishing distance learning materials that would serve the greater populace seeking access to university education.

The NUC should mandate all universities to establish distance learning programmes. literature review, some of the studies have assessed the challenges in ownership and funding practices of university education in Nigeria but non has assessed the challenges in Cross River State using Heads of Department. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify and evaluate the challenges faced in the ownership and funding practices of university education in Cross River State, Nigeria, in order to understand their impact and propose effective strategies for improving the administration and financial sustainability of universities in the state.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Ownership of university education in Cross River State, Nigeria has faced various challenges over the years. While individuals and the government have established several Universities, there are issues regarding adequate funding, infrastructure, staffing and governance that have hindered optimal performance. Specifically, the State faces difficulties in providing adequate funding, infrastructure, and resources for its public universities, leading to a lack of autonomy and independence for these institutions. Additionally, there is a lack of diversity in the range of academic programs offered, which limits the options for students and hinder their ability to pursue their desired fields of study. Furthermore, the state's geographical location and socio-economic factors contribute to the challenges in accessing university education, particularly for students from rural areas. This has resulted in a significant number of students seeking education outside of the state, leading to a brain drain and diminished opportunities for economic growth and development in Cross River

State. Despite enormous interventions from various organizations, the ownership of university education in Cross River State still poses significant challenges that need to be assessed. It is therefore against this backdrop that this study is situated to find out the extent to which the various issues surrounding ownership and management of university education in the state influence funding, infrastructure, governance structures and overall standards.

Research questions

The following questions were raised to guide the study

- (1) What are the key challenges faced in the ownership and governance of university education in Cross River State?
- (2) How do ownership and funding challenges impact the overall management of universities in Cross River State?
- (3) What potential strategies can be implemented to enhance sustainable funding for universities in Cross River State?

Significance of the Study

This study will be relevant to: the government, Universities' management agencies, administrators and members of the public. The government will identify the potential strategies which can be implemented to enhance sustainable funding of universities in Cross River State. Universities' management agencies, will have insight into the challenges involved in ownership and governance of university education in Cross River State

Administrators will understand the level at which challenges in school ownership impact on the

overall management of the universities and proffer solutions.

Members of the public will have awareness of possible solutions to the identified challenges of universities' ownership in Cross River State.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey design was adopted in conducting the study. Data were collected from Heads of Department in all the Universities in Cross River State: University of Calabar (UNICAL) and Cross River State University (CRSU), Havilla University, Nde-Ikom and Arthur Javis University Akpabuyo. The population comprised 228 Heads of Department in the study area. The census approach was adopted in drawing the population because they are manageable. A 20-item validated questionnaire titled: Challenges in Ownership and Funding Practices of University Education Questionnaire (COFPUEQ) was employed for data collection. The instrument was tested for reliability using Cronbach Alpha at a statistical index .86 which was adjudged good enough for data collection. The questionnaire comprised three parts (Section A, B and C) based on the objective of the study. Section A was on demographic data, while section B focused on the challenges of Universities' ownership and Section C focused on challenges in universities' funding in Cross River State. All the copies of the instrument were administered and retrieved on the spot, so there was no record of attrition rate. They were rated as follows: Always (A) =3.1-4.0; Sometimes (S) =2.1-3.0; Rarely (R) =1.1-2.0 and Never (N) =0.1-1.0 while the criterion mean score was 2.50.

Research Question One

What are the key challenges faced in the ownership and governance of university education in Cross River State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation scores of the responses to the challenges faced in the ownership and governance of university education in Cross River State

S/N	Items on the challenges of university ownership	N	X	S.D	Remarks
1	Insufficient funding from the government and other sources poses a significant challenge to the ownership of universities	228	3.12	1.08	Always
2	Complex bureaucratic processes and inefficient governance structures can hinder effective decision-making in university management	228	3.09	1.16	Always
3	Many universities in Cross River State face challenges related to limited infrastructure, insufficient classrooms, laboratories, libraries, among others	228	3.35	1.34	Always
4	Attracting and retaining highly qualified /experienced faculty members can be challenging due to competition with better-funded institutions	228	3.53	1.52	Always
5	Ensuring quality assurance and accreditation processes in line with national and international standards can be challenging	228	3.71	1.70	Always
6	Limited funding, lack of research facilities, and inadequate incentives hinder the development of a vibrant research culture within universities	228	3.92	1.99	Always
7	Insufficient collaboration between universities and industries in Cross River State restricts opportunities for internships	228	3.14	1.27	Always
8	Universities struggle to provide comprehensive support services/career guidance which are crucial for student success and well-being.	228	3.26	1.45	Always
9	High socio-economic disparities, geographical location, and limited infrastructure contribute to inequitable access to university education	228	3.48	1.63	Always
10	Some universities in Cross River State may face challenges in effectively engaging with the local community, including inadequate outreach	228	3.60	1.81	Always
Criterion mean score			2.50		

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the response on the key challenges faced in the ownership and governance of university education in Cross River State. The items were evaluated using a modified 4-point scale, with the highest response score being 4 and the lowest being 1. The cut-off mean score of 2.50 was determined as the average of the highest and lowest score. According to the descriptive statistics, items 1 to 10 scored above the cut-off mean of 2.50 which

indicate that the respondents strongly agree that there are various challenges associated with university ownership in Cross River State, Nigeria. Addressing these challenges could help improve the ownership and management of universities in the study area.

Research Question Two

How do ownership and funding challenges impact the overall management of universities in Cross River State?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation scores on how challenges impact the overall management of universities in Cross River State

S/N	Items on the impact of challenges on managing university	N	X	S.D	Remarks
1	The challenges in ownership and funding practices impact the decision-making processes within universities in Cross River State, leading to delays, inefficiencies, and difficulties in implementing necessary changes and improvements.	228	4.71	2.00	Always
2	The challenges related to ownership and funding can affect the overall governance structure of universities, potentially leading to bureaucratic hurdles, lack of transparency, and limited autonomy in decision-making, hindering effective management.	228	4.98	2.11	Always
3	Insufficient funding and ownership challenges may impact the ability of universities to attract and retain qualified faculty, develop relevant and up-to-date academic programs,	228	4.52	2.38	Always
4	Limited funding and ownership challenges can hamper infrastructure development in universities, leading to inadequate classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and other facilities,	228	4.36	2.55	Always
5	The challenges in ownership and funding practices can impact the research and innovation capacity of universities, limiting their ability to conduct high-quality research	228	4.10	2.73	Always
Criterion mean score			2.50		

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the response on how ownership and funding challenges impact the overall management of universities in Cross River State. The items were compared on a modified 4-point scale, making the highest response score on each item to be 4 and the least response score to be 1. However, the cut-off means, 2.50 was obtained as the average score of the highest and least score on each of the items. The descriptive statistics output showed that items 1 to 5 were above the cut-off mean

score of 2.50. This suggests that the respondents strongly agree with the various challenges of university ownership in Cross River State, Nigeria. Addressing these challenges could improve the ownership and management of universities in the region.

Research Question Three

What potential strategies can be implemented to enhance sustainable funding for universities in Cross River state?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation score on the response for potential strategies which can be implemented to enhance sustainable funding for universities in Cross River State

S/N	Items on the potential strategies for sustainable funding	N	X	S.D	Remarks
1	Diversification by seeking research grants, philanthropic donations, corporate sponsorships, and establishing endowment funds to ensure a sustainable financial base	228	3.02	1.29	Always
2	By cultivating a sense of loyalty and pride among alumni, universities can encourage financial contributions, sponsorships, and other forms of support to sustain funding for various initiatives	228	4.18	2.48	Always
3	Collaborating with private entities, such as corporations and foundations, can provide universities with access to additional resources and funding	228	5.27	3.61	Always
4	Encouraging entrepreneurship and facilitating the commercialization of research outcomes can generate revenue streams for universities	228	6.56	4.32	Always
5	By adopting energy-saving initiatives, streamlining administrative processes, and implementing responsible financial practices, universities can allocate their funds more efficiently and sustainably	228	3.91	1.79	Always
	Criterion mean score		2.50		

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of the response for potential strategies which can be implemented to enhance sustainable funding for universities in Cross River State. The items were compared on a modified 4-point scale, making the highest response score on each item to be 4 and the least response score to be 1. However, the cut-off means, 2.50 was obtained as the average score of the highest and least score on each of the items. The descriptive statistics output showed that items 1 to 5 were above the cut-off mean score of 2.50. The results indicate that the respondents strongly agree with the potential strategies for sustainable funding in universities, such as diversification, cultivating alumni support, collaborating with private entities, encouraging entrepreneurship, and adopting energy-saving initiatives. These strategies could help generate additional resources, improve financial practices, and ensure a sustainable financial base for universities.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first research answer pointed out the key challenges in ownership and funding practices of universities in the study area. These include but not limited to insufficient funding, complex bureaucratic processes, inadequate infrastructure, difficulty in attracting and retaining

faculty, ensuring quality assurance, limited research culture and insufficient industry collaboration. This finding corroborates that of Eya, Esu and Enang (2018) and Okon and Effiong (2019) who identified inadequate funding as a major issue. The state government was unable to fully fund operational and capital expenditures, leaving institutions struggling with infrastructure deficits, unpaid salaries, and lack of teaching resources.

The second research answer showed how the ownership and funding challenges impact the overall management of universities in the study area. These include complex bureaucratic processes, inadequate infrastructure, attracting and retaining faculty, ensuring quality assurance, limited research culture, insufficient industry collaboration, inadequate support services and inequitable access to education. This finding is in consonant with that of Akpan, Effiong and Efiom (2019), who interviewed lecturers who complained that lack of autonomy due to state control makes universities vulnerable to political intrigues. Also, that partisan decision-making compromised recruitment and promotion exercises, lowering staff morale.

The third research answer indicates the potential strategies which can be implemented to enhance sustainable funding for universities in

Cross River state. The potential strategies include diversification, cultivating alumni support, collaborating with private entities, encouraging entrepreneurship and adopting energy-saving initiatives among others. This finding is in agreement with that of Adekunle and Ogunlela (2020) who found the relevance of seeking research grants, philanthropic donations, corporate sponsorships, and establishing endowment funds to ensure a sustainable financial base. The study emphasizes the need for universities to actively engage with external partners and stakeholders to diversify their funding sources and reduce dependence on government funding.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the challenges faced in the ownership and funding practices of university education in Cross River State, Nigeria. By examining these challenges and proposing potential strategies for sustainable funding, the study emphasizes the importance of diversifying funding sources and engaging in public-private partnerships to enhance the financial sustainability of universities in the state.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the followings are recommended:

1. The institutional administrators should increase collaboration between universities in Cross River State and private industries, non-profit organizations, and government agencies to establish sustainable funding partnerships. This can involve actively seeking research grants, philanthropic donations, corporate sponsorships, and establishing endowment funds to diversify funding sources.
2. The institutional administrators should strengthen alumni engagement programs to foster a sense of loyalty and pride among former students. By cultivating strong connections with alumni, universities can encourage financial contributions, sponsorships, and other forms of support to sustain funding for various initiatives and programs. This can be achieved through targeted alumni outreach, alumni events, and fostering a sense of community and belonging among graduates.

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