

Funding Tertiary Education for Students' Academic Performance in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined funding tertiary education for students' academic performance in Rivers State, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study which adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study consisted of all the Deans of all the faculties in the three universities in Rivers State (University of Port Harcourt, 15 Deans; Rivers State University, 12 Deans and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, 7 Deans). The total population was 34 Deans of Faculties. The selected population size was manageable; hence the reason for sampling was jettisoned. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled "Funding Tertiary Education for Students' Academic Performance Questionnaire" (FTESAPQ). The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha which yielded a coefficient of 0.76 indicating positive reliability. Data obtained were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions. The results showed that increase in school funding and sponsorship with an increase in equal provision and distribution of funds to schools contributed to a very high extent in students' academic performance. It was concluded that increase in funding tertiary institution helps in students' academic performance. It was recommended amongst others that; government should increase the rate of funding tertiary education in Nigeria.

Keywords: funding, tertiary education, academic performance, resource provision

Introduction

Higher institutions of learning are charged with the responsibility of discharging academic values that can be of good benefit to the students and the society at large. However, the achievement of such academic values cannot be effectively discharged and implemented without the help of finance and funding. It is difficult for an individual in the society to sponsor, provide finance or fund educational institutions. Therefore, in order to record good academic achievements, there is need for government being the highest sponsor of education to fund tertiary education for students' academic performance particularly in Rivers State. Uzor (2017) posited that financing and funding of tertiary education by the government takes education to the highest realm. Bath and Clinton (2020) also agreed that, government intervention of funding helps to rescue the epileptic state of the school in any country.

Funding is seen as a bulk of money being saved, given or made available to educational institutions by the government in order to carry out either long term or short term projects within the school vicinity. According to Ezeugo (2019), funding comes either as a cash gift, grants, bank credits, allowances or discounts. Government has many ways of funding tertiary education especially in Nigeria, which either by giving physical cash, releasing grants, giving soft and no interest loans, granting waivers to old debt and even raising a structure within the school environment. However, the functionality of every tertiary institution is dependent on the availability of the above stated factors.

Academic excellence of students is the expectant result every sponsor of education is expected to see. Lack of provision of finance and funding makes it very difficult for both the

students and the lecturers to excel and put in their very best in achieving educational goals and objectives (Nwadike & Amaewhule, 2023). The ability of a student to finish and finish well on completion of educational benchmark like secondary education, university education and or advanced degree is likened to academic performance. Edun et al. (2021) stated that academic performance is how well to which a student and higher institution of learning finishes or contributes towards achieving either short or long term educational goals which most times are measured either by evaluation or cumulative grade point average (CGPA). Students and lecturers rejoice when the performance of students at the end of a programme is positive. Also, there are some factors that can contribute perfectly towards the academic performance of every student and these are good library, availability of teaching and learning materials, parents' contribution, society and lecturers input. Planning the school by ensuring all resources and facilities are properly and effectively provided for academic purposes, proper placement of staff (staffing) based on areas of specialization to fit in and provide services to a particular level of people at a particular time and assessing, reporting, monitoring and evaluating students properly on the area covered help to contribute towards academic performance of students in tertiary institutions of learning.

Tertiary institution basically, no doubt is a breeding ground where talents, character, composure and behavior are being molded for the use and betterment of the society at large. Uzor (2017) defined tertiary institution as any institution of higher learning that offers and issues post-secondary education degrees and diplomas. The higher a student grows, the higher or more certificates he acquires so as to contribute positively in solving societal problems. The aim of establishing tertiary institutions is to produce professionals in different areas who in turn give back to the society either through charity organization for non-profit purposes or profit purposes.

Finally, academic performance of every student is dependent on the provision, allocation, maintenance and sustainability of funds provided by both government and other non-governmental organizations of interest. Therefore, in the course of achieving a sustained academic performance of students, school administrators, management staff and policy makers need to set up machineries that will ensure proper allocation and maintenance of funds made available by concerned bodies.

Statement of the Problem

Financing and funding tertiary education is wholly the responsibility of the government at all level and to an extent some known organizations within and outside the country. Without full funding of the school, the academic performance and goal attainment of the school will be in doubt and this is because of the lack of funds and other resources that aid learning. Most students attend school because of how subsidized education is as it has been funded by government and in most cases made free for all. Also, lack of full funding of tertiary education negatively affects the performance of students and teachers in the school. Lack of motivation of teachers in the areas of promotion, salary increment, prompt payment of salaries and allowances, sponsorship of conferences and workshops contributes to poor academic performance of students. Based on these numerous concerns, this study sought to investigate the problem of funding tertiary education for students' academic performance in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the funding of tertiary education for students' academic performance in Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. find out the extent funding tertiary education contributes to students' academic performance in Rivers State, Nigeria.
2. find out the challenges of funding tertiary education for students' academic performance in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. To what extent can funding tertiary education contribute to students' academic performance in Rivers State, Nigeria?
2. What are the challenges of funding tertiary education for students' academic performance in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Theoretical framework

The study is anchored on the theory of organizational productivity as propounded by Gilbert (1947) and cited in Kpee (2018). The theory states organizational productivity outcomes are dependent on the quality and quantity of the resources employed in the production. Additionally, it implies that for an organization to make an appreciable progress in achieving its goals, it means that there must be a reasonable provision of material resources. Therefore, this theory is best suitable for this study because it encourages the provision, allocation and maintenance of resources like funds in tertiary education.

Concept of funding

Funding means a good sum of money kept aside or being provided for a singular project either by government or some organizations in order to rescue other institutions like schools which are in dire need of financial help. Funding can as well be called fiscal or financial resources which help to provide and balance other educational resources in institutions of learning. Stone (2017) defined funding as any physical cash, bank credits, allowances, unremitted proceeds and grants that are been provided, granted or allowed by government or other organizations in order to achieve organizational goals. In the same vein, Ume (2018) saw funding as a process of rescuing an organization, especially educational institutions by the government or non-governmental organizations through cash or financial gift so as to achieve its goals. Adequate funding of educational institutions to a high extent provides balancing and equity in and among other educational resources particularly the recruitment and maintenance of human resources within the educational institutions. Financing education can be done by both individual and corporate bodies, but funding majorly is being provided for by the government and other international bodies like UNESCO, World Bank etc. whose aim is to see educational institutions grow. On the other hand, financing is an act of providing money to finance projects either to pay salaries and wages, maintain school equipment or carry out conferences and workshops within and outside the school. Schools on their own can finance and sponsor their own projects most times with the host communities of the educational institution.

Concise history of funding tertiary education in Nigeria

Etymologically, funding of tertiary education is as old as tertiary education itself. As posited by Osuji and Nwadike (2023) that, the Yaba College was the first higher educational institution in Nigeria, which was established in the year 1934 and was funded majorly by the Nigerian government alone and with the little proceeds derived from school fees. Furthermore, Nigerian government spent thousands of pounds both for infrastructural development and staff maintenance who are mostly Europeans in order to keep the school

going. Again, the University of Ibadan, Oyo State formerly known as University College Ibadan was founded in the year 1948 and was financed and funded by the Nigerian government and the United Kingdom's government. The financing and funding of the two institutions by the two governments, gave room for expatriates (foreigners) to dominate the teaching wing of the institutions respectively. Going further, the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) 1960, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria 1962, University of Ife 1962 and University of Lagos 1962 were all established in the respective years. UNN was funded by Eastern Nigerian government, University of Ife was funded by Western Nigerian government with little grants from the federal government. Ahmadu Bello University and other universities were funded as at then through the National Universities Commission (NUC).

Types of funding

Funding educational institutions are of two ways, the investment funding purpose and the consumption purpose, (Ola, 2020). Investment funds are basically used for investment and capital projects. These are:

- Grant: in many occasions, government do give grants to educational institutions just to help them actualize their aims. The money given as grant can be used for infrastructural development or human capital development.
- Loans: soft and no interest loans from government to schools is also a way of funding higher institutions of learning. Different organizations borrow money from government to help them carryout some projects and solve some pressing needs within the school.
- Emergency funds: in the case of emergency, government usually comes in and funds the institution so as to rescue the situation.
- Permanent funds: these are money kept aside or save by the government for school financing and funding. Usually, it comes like government allocation or running cost which can be referred to as statutory right of the institutions.

Consumption funds: these funds are mostly not used for projects; rather they are used for consumption and welfare of personnel. These are:

- Retirement funds: these monies are used to settle retired staff and also for gratuity payment. Government in her usual way, push out allocated monies for this activity.
- Bailout funds: in order to pay backlog of owed salaries in arrears which usually run into billions, government normally issues out funds to help solve the problem so as to avoid protest and unrest in the society by the workers.

Sources of funds

Stone (2017) stated that, funding is of two types internal and external but educational institutions can source for internal funds from their surroundings. Therefore, internal funds in educational institution can be sourced through the following ways:

- Leasing of school properties
- Honorary award
- Bob - a- job
- Bank loans
- Friends and family
- Alumni
- School fees and levies
- Endowment funds
- Community inputs

External Sources of Funds: these include (i) capital grants, (ii) recurrent grants, (iii) teaching /research grants, and (iv) sponsorship.

Importance of funding tertiary education

Every educational manager understands the importance of funding and financing to education. The importance is as follows:

- ❖ It helps to stabilize and maintain smooth running of the school
- ❖ It helps to provide other resources
- ❖ It helps to achieve goal and objectives faster
- ❖ It serves as a motivating factor
- ❖ It gives hope to the hopeless

Problems of funding tertiary education

The problem of funding tertiary institutions is too numerous and it hinders the smooth operation of school activities. The problems are as follows:

- ❖ Bad government: this brings about corruption both in government sector and within the school management. Bad government as a result of lack of checks and balancing, supervision and monitoring of where the allocated resources go to.
- ❖ Insecurity: unrest in the society hinders both the availability and allocation of funds to higher institutions.
- ❖ Administrative error: incompetency, low mentality or low knowledge of how, when, where, and who such funds is to be given also affects funding of tertiary education.
- ❖ Nepotism and Favoritism: most time the initiation, process, allocation and distribution of funds by government are usually one sided in order to favour a particular set or group of people who are supporting the government and disqualify people who are not supporting the government.
- ❖ Economic meltdown: global economic meltdown also affects individual countries in the area of fund provision and other economic resources.

Steps of managing tertiary education funds

Financial management of higher institution is one of the major duties of a Vice Chancellor thou under the supervision of the council members headed by the chairman of council of that school. Finance, funding and sponsorship are made available by the state government, federal government and foreign bodies like UNESCO, USAID, World Bank etc. to schools in custody of the management. The government releases funds to schools; then the Council Members, through the Chairman, approves money for the Vice Chancellor after the preparation of the school budget for a fiscal year. The Vice Chancellor then spends the money based on the budget already prepared which reflects the basic needs of the university. At the end of the fiscal year, the Auditor General audits the school accounts and expenditure made.

Tertiary education in Nigeria

Osuji and Nwadike (2023) stated that tertiary education is a vital instrument for human capital development and very essential to the growth and all round development of any nation. In the same vein, tertiary education is an advanced level or ground for character molding and individual specialization of different fields for the betterment of the society at large. More so, it is an academic knowledge acquired after secondary school which can be got either from the university, polytechnics, colleges of education, technical colleges, among others.

Academic Performance

Effective provision and utilization of funds and other educational resources depend on the level of performance of students. The performance of every student can be measured or ascertained either monthly, yearly or at the end of the programme cumulatively. Abdulahi (2018) agreed that students' academic performance is measured by the students' CGPA.

Methodology

The study examined funding tertiary education for students' academic performance in Rivers State, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study which adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study consisted of all the Deans of all the faculties in the three universities in rivers state (University of Port Harcourt 15 Deans, Rivers State University 12 Deans and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education 7 Deans). The total population was 34 Deans of faculties. The selected population size was manageable, hence the reason for sampling was jettisoned. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled "Funding Tertiary Education for Students' Academic Performance Questionnaire" (FTESAPQ). The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha which yielded a coefficient of 0.76 indicating positive reliability. Data obtained were analyzed using the mean and standard deviation for the research questions. The instrument utilized a 4-point modified rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE), and Very Low Extent (VLE) for research question one and also Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) for research question two with scoring scale of 4,3,2, & 1 respectively. Mean score of 2.50 was used as acceptance mean. Items scoring below 2.50 were rejected and items that scored above the acceptance mean were accepted.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent can funding tertiary education contribute to students' academic performance in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation score of the responses of the Deans of faculties on the extent funding tertiary education contribute to students' academic performance in Rivers State, Nigeria

S/N	Items	DEANS of UPH, RSU & IAUE (N=36)		Remarks
		\bar{X}	SD	
1	Increase in school funding and sponsorship	3.14	1.01	Agreed
2	Increase in equal provision and distribution of funds to schools	3.14	1.01	Agreed
3	Increase in transparency in the side of government and school management to other staff	2.85	0.74	Agreed
4	Increase in doubling the motivation of staff with good welfare package	2.94	0.88	Agreed
5	Increase in funding helps in students retention and performance	2.76	0.70	Agreed
6	Increase in adequate provision of infrastructural resources in schools	2.82	0.72	Agreed
7	Increase in recruitment and retaining of highly qualified lecturers	2.70	0.71	Agreed
8	Increase in providing professional opportunities and balancing for lecturers	2.58	0.89	Agreed
Grand mean		2.86	0.83	

Table 1, showed the mean ratings and standard deviation of the Deans of faculties of the three universities in Rivers State on the extent funding tertiary education can contribute to students' academic performance in Rivers State, Nigeria. The grand mean of 2.86 revealed that the respondents agreed to a very high extent that an increase in funding of school features like sponsorship, provision and motivation of staff all contribute to students' academic performance in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What are the challenges of funding tertiary education for students' academic performance in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation score of the responses of the Deans of faculties on the challenges of funding tertiary education for students' academic performance in Rivers State, Nigeria

S/N	Items	DEANS of UPH, RSU & IAUE (N=36)		Remarks
		\bar{X}	SD	
9	Over population of students and tertiary institution	3.38	1.01	Agreed
10	Wrong statistical data from government	2.64	0.70	Agreed
11	Corrupt practices from the management and government	3.05	0.69	Agreed
12	Diversion of funds	3.14	0.91	Agreed
13	Indiscipline and negative vibes from both management and government	2.58	0.71	Agreed
14	Strike actions from different unions	2.85	0.76	Agreed
15	Brain drain	2.70	0.88	Agreed
16	Poor maintenance and abandonment of existing structures	2.76	0.73	Agreed
	Grand Mean	2.88	0.80	

Table 2, showed the mean ratings and standard deviation of respondents on the challenges of funding tertiary education for students' academic performance in Rivers State, Nigeria. The grand mean of 2.88 revealed that the respondents strongly agreed that all the items are the challenges of funding tertiary for students' academic performance in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The research question 1 investigated the extent to which funding tertiary education can contribute to students' academic performance in Rivers State, Nigeria. The results revealed that the respondents agreed that increase in sponsorship, equal provision of funds, transparency, and motivation etc, to a high extent contributes to students' academic performance. Also, they agreed that provision of infrastructure, recruitment of staff and professional opportunities all are contributory factors to students' academic performance. The finding of the study is in agreement with Osai (2020) who stated that increase in sponsorship and motivation of lecturers is a boost to students' academic performance in tertiary institutions. More so, character transparency he maintained plays a good role in students' academic performance.

The research question two, examined the various challenges of funding tertiary education for students' academic performance in Rivers State, Nigeria. The results revealed that over population, wrong data, corruption and diversion of funds are all challenges of funding tertiary education. Furthermore, the respondents also agreed that strike action, brain drain and lack of maintenance, all pose major challenge to funding tertiary education. In the same vein, the results are in agreement with Mustapha (2018) that corruption is a major challenge to funding and financing tertiary education in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that increase in funding tertiary education is a major element to students' academic performance in school. Also, corruption

and strike actions are major threats to funding tertiary education. Therefore, working towards avoiding strike action and corruption with an increase in funding tertiary education will help in students' academic performance in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government should increase the rate of funding tertiary education.
2. There is need to recruit and retain more lecturers in tertiary institution with the help of available funds.
3. Government should work towards avoiding strike actions.
4. There is need for the provision of more infrastructural development and reduction in establishing more tertiary institutions.

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