

## A Review on Students' Housing in Nigerian Universities

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### Abstract

*Students housing in Nigeria Universities has witnessed several policy interventions, yet the challenges of deficit and satisfaction persist - requiring an overall review. This paper utilized a desktop review approach to collate and process secondary data which were sourced from published academic and governmental documents. It discovered that the challenges of student housing in Nigeria cannot be disconnected from the establishment of new universities and an increase in student admission to the universities – which affected funding. Unfortunately, the uncontrolled involvement of the private sector and full entrants of non-residential universities, rather than improving students' housing, further magnified the challenges – as private investors are only interested in profits. The paper concluded by recommending increased funding, build, operate and transfer model for the development of hostels, and the introduction of student villages.*

**Keywords:** Students, Housing, Nigeria, Universities

### Introduction

A house refers to a residential structure, where people live and grow (Amole, 2002; Aluko, 2004). It is a basic human need, and a fundamental right of every individual (Yusuf, 2011). Housing is the complex process of evaluating, providing, and managing houses and their ancillary services to meet the needs, demands, and satisfaction of its users. Students' housing otherwise known as students' hostel, a special type of housing provided for students, is an essential component of institutions of learning in all cultures and climate (Akingbounbe *et. al.*, 2012). Apart from reducing the distance between students and education as well as promoting students' academic performance, Students' housing plays a vital role in imbuing morals and discipline among students.

In Nigeria, the responsibility of providing students with housing at primary and secondary levels (boarding schools) is relatively simplistic. However, at the tertiary level, students' housing assumes a different dimension with an interplay of complex factors. For instance, students at the tertiary level, unlike those in the primary and secondary levels, possess a relatively high level of maturity, exhibit freedom, and are not easily compromised. Therefore, housing this category of students, requires not only a high level of coordination but also well-thought planning. It is in this regard that housing this category of individuals is done to meet their social, psychological and educational needs. However, like every other form of housing, students' housing remains a challenging venture for tertiary institutions in Nigeria (Dabo *et. al.*, 2013).

Currently, there are over two hundred tertiary institutions in Nigeria comprising 129 approved universities, and 148 approved polytechnics, monotronics, and specialized colleges educating about 4 million students (Nigerian Tribune, 2021). These tertiary institutions are operated by governments at different levels (except local governments) and private individuals or organizations. The current figure of tertiary institutions in Nigeria is huge compared to the numbers in the early post-independent period when tertiary institutions were few and regional based. Just as there is an increase in the number of tertiary institutions in the country, the challenges associated with housing students in these institutions have

grown to be more compounded and complex. Addressing these has attracted different government interventions and despite these, the challenge of students' housing in Nigeria's tertiary institutions persists.

This paper focused on universities. This is bounded by the relatively high rate of increase of this category of tertiary institution in the past few years. The number of universities in Nigeria has more than doubled in the last 30 years. There are three categories of universities in Nigeria which are Federal, State and Private universities. To meet the challenges of students' housing in these universities, particularly in federal and state universities, commonly called public universities, various interventions and models have been utilized. These include full residential, selected residential, public-private partnership, and non-residential options (Akingbounge *et. al.*, 2012). Yet, lack of access to housing, deterioration of hostels, increase in accommodation fees, cultism and immoral acts in these hostels, signals the failure of these policies. With the increasing number of universities and students' admission into both new and existing universities, the challenges of students' housing are not only magnifying but more daunting— thus requiring an assessment. This paper, therefore, evaluates students' housing in Nigerian universities to trace its history, policy interventions, status, and challenges. This is done to proffer recommendations towards the achievement of educational-supporting students' housing in Nigeria Universities.

This paper is subdivided into four sections. The first section explored the definition and characteristics of hostels, the second section traced the history of student housing in Nigeria Universities and various interventions that have been made, the third section evaluated the models of students' housing interventions in the country and the last section explored the challenges of students' housing in Nigeria.

### **Defining Hostels: Home away from home**

Oxford Advance Learners English Dictionary (2000) defines hostels as buildings that provide cheap, inexpensive, supervised, short lodging, especially for young people. However, with the high cost of accommodation in Nigerian universities especially in non-residential ones; this definition may not be applicable. It can therefore be simply put that, in Nigeria, 'Hostels' are educational supporting buildings that provide accommodation and convenience to students in proximity to their institutions. They are residences that are predominately occupied by students.

From the earliest hostels in Oxford and Cambridge Universities to other ones at Harvard, Yale and Princeton, the goal of students' housing is to merge both classroom and out-of-class experience in halls of residence. Living in students' hostels not only provides interesting experiences but also offers a unique opportunity for students to interact with their colleagues outside the faculty and even beyond the school. These interactions help them to appreciate their communal roles and societal responsibilities. Students living in learning centres, which are under the umbrella of On-Campus residences, tend to be more engaged in student organizations (Inkela, 2009). Other benefits of students' housing include facilitation of reading and learning, involvement in co-curricular activities, security, moral training, national integration, private relationship and student personal management (Ubong, 2003).

A hostel is meant to be a home away from home, except that biological families are left behind and a new academic family, whose relationship may extend beyond school, is made. Hayward (1975) and Darwey (1985) show that for a home to be a home it must satisfy haven, order, connection, warmth, identity and maintain physical stability. For a hostel to be a home away from home, it must have the characteristics that make it a contributor to student satisfaction which implies that the basic elements of a home as propounded by Hayward and Darwey must be associated with it. Hostels, therefore, should have adequate facilities to create a conducive atmosphere for living and learning. For a standard hostel, the facilities should include electricity, good water supply, security, library, bank, sports/ recreational facilities, shop, kitchenette/ cafeteria, medical centre, post office, business centre, laundry, car park and refuse disposal facilities. The design of hostels, in addition to bedrooms, should provide for common rooms, meeting

rooms, management office/ reception/ waiting area, general store, managers and wardens' flats (Joachim and Olachi, 2010).

To ensure developmental trends, institutions of higher learning around the world, including Nigeria, have successfully incorporated student housing schemes into their master plan to integrate the formal aspect of learning with the informal, therefore student housing has become an inherent part of campus planning (Amole, 2009). Unfortunately, the non-adherence to campus masterplans, as well as its update, has affected all fragments of students' housing. In some instances, lack of focus by the university management also affects the quality and quantity of hostels in Nigeria's tertiary institutions. No doubt, existing facilities even in these universities are over-stretched as a result of an increase in student enrolment in these universities thereby making these hostels a shadow of home away from home.

### **Students' Housing in Nigeria Universities: The Synopsis and Interventions**

Until recently, the accommodation of students within the immediate environment of tertiary institutions is an integral part of the layouts of tertiary institutions in Nigeria (Joachim and Olachi (2010). Up till the early 1970s, there was no problem with providing accommodation for university students on campus, however, with an increase in student enrolment and the establishment of more universities in the late 1970s, adequate funding of the universities became a problem to the extent that provision of students' hostels for all students on campus was no longer feasible. In response to this, Brigadier T.B Ogundeko's committee was set up in 1977 by National Universities Commission. The committee was saddled with the responsibility of looking into funding problems in the Nigerian university system with a view to submitting recommendations.

The Ogundeko committee recommended that only 75% of the university students should be housed on campus, while the remaining 25% should be off-campus to enable the students to interact with the public. To relieve the pressure on government finances, older universities are recommended to finance the construction of students' accommodation with loans while government should finance one-third of the accommodation. The committee also recommended that the students should pay for their accommodation and that the universities should employ the service of estate agents to undertake a feasibility survey of the best avenues of raising loans from mortgage establishments, insurance companies, provident funds, and banks. The recommendation further stated that designs for students' hostels should be more modest, simple, and functional so that they can be affordable and be within the reach of students - with a proposal that students should be charged N150.00 per session for lodging.

Based on the Ogundeko committee's recommendations and the reality of the unavailability of bed spaces, a new policy that guaranteed accommodation for fresh students and final-year students was put in place. Many universities introduced the concept of double bunk beds to increase available bed spaces without a corresponding increase in the number of conveniences such as toilets. Despite this sad reality, the number of student enrolment continues to increase without an increase in facilities.

The birth of new universities (second-generation universities) in the year 1975 led to the reduction of fund allocation to universities. Capital allocation to universities, therefore, dropped sharply and only academic buildings were accorded priority in project execution (Dabo *et. al.*, 2013). The policy which provides for accommodation of 33% of the total students was therefore enforced in the 1980s. This led to social menace like squatting in the hostels and compounded with the fact that student residential areas are located at distance from school and municipal transport facilities could not conveniently support off-campus living. The problem got worsened as pressure was placed on existing bed spaces and associated utilities like water supply, electricity supply, and toilets resulting in their frequent breakdown.

Off-campus residences which are associated with the problems of insecurity, epileptic water and electricity supply, and inefficient municipal transport became a better alternative to the acute problem of students' accommodation in Nigerian universities in the mid-1980s. Congestion in the students' hostels

reached an alarming stage to the extent that in some universities, female students had to wake up as early as 4:00 am to take their bath in the open within the hostel premises (Ezenwa, 2007). Population explosion and paradigm shift in university on-campus accommodation combined to give rise to spontaneous development of commercial off-Campus students' hostels in university towns across Nigeria (Akingbounge *et. al.*, 2012)

The establishment of state universities in the middle of the 1980s brought a new dimension to the provision of hostel accommodation (Ezenwa, 2007). State universities were established as non-residential universities. For example, Lagos State University (LASU) was established as a non-residential institution. Similarly, Nnamdi Azikwe University, Awka, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomosho all came into existence as non-residential universities. State universities relegated the idea of students' housing to the background due to high maintenance costs (Dabo *et. al.*, 2009). In a sharp response to the challenge of students' housing deficit, local landlords in university towns and private entrepreneurs provided all sorts of accommodation for the teeming population of students and this made innocent students victims of shylock landlords. In the federal universities, students were charged N90.00 per bed space per annum. (Ezenwa, 2007). The amount generated by the government in these hostels was far below the maintenance cost of the hostels while students who were overlords of desperate squatters resold their bed space at an exorbitant price ranging from ₦20, 000 – ₦40, 000 each (Okoh, 2012).

As past solutions available proved abortive, the federal government, in 1996, set up the Etsu – Nupe committee and Vision 2010 committee respectively. The recommendations of these committees were synchronized by the harmonization committee established in 1998. The comprehensive recommendations submitted by the harmonization committee include that students' accommodation and feeding should be fully privatized. The committee further suggested that government should provide adequate funding, through scholarships and bursaries, for the students to meet their needs. The questions here are: how much did the bursary disburse to students and how many students are the beneficiaries of these government scholarship schemes?

By the end of the 1990s, nearly 1 million students were enrolled in more than 200 institutions in Nigeria (Joachim and Olachi, 2010). By the year 2001, the total students' enrolment figure in federal universities alone stood at 393,007 while the total available bed spaces in the hostel were 111, 355(28%), giving a shortfall of 72% (Ezenwa, 2007). Joint Admission and Matriculation Board, the tertiary institution admission agency in Nigeria, also reveals that a total of 78,112; 88,246; 118,056; 162,122; 191, 911 and 346,919 students were offered admission into public universities in the years 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 respectively. Also, the NEEDS Assessment report handed over to the former Minister of Education, Mrs Ruqqayat Rufai, during the National Economic Council meeting in 2013 reveals that there are presently 1,252,913 students in public universities with 85% as undergraduates, 5% as sub-graduates, 3% as postgraduate diploma, 5% as masters and 2% as PhD students (NEEDS REPORT, 2013).

In the year 2017, there are not less than 1.7 million undergraduates and about 234 thousand postgraduate students in Nigeria Universities (Statista, 2020). Although a national account of hostels in these universities is unavailable, reports from different universities inform a deficit in housing provision in these institutions (Inyang *et. al.*, 2018). For example, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile - Ife has four halls of residence plus a hall of residence established for postgraduate students whose total capacity is less than 15,000. As of 2009, the provision of hostel accommodation in Nigerian Universities was below 30% of what was needed (Joachim and Olachi, 2010). The question is where are the excess students housed? The answer to this is not far-fetched, they are either illegal occupants of the hostels or are tenants of Off-Campus residences controlled by private individuals or organizations. If they are illegal students, they increase the pressure on the available facilities and utilities which, in the long run, reduces the efficiency of hostels. Indeed, the challenge of students' housing is not only replicative but alarming, and with the rate at which additional hostels were provided in these universities, it was recognized that there is no way

that the university's management can solve the challenges of students' housing deficit without private sector intervention (Ezenwa, 2007).

In 2002, having known fully well of its incapacity to finance students' housing, the federal government came up with a policy on private sector participation in the provision of students hostels in recognition of the fact that stress occasioned by poor and inadequate hostel accommodation on and off campus contributes to the depression in the quality of learning and display of antisocial behaviour in students (Olanrewaju, 2011; Ezeanah, 2021). The highlights of the policy are to encourage private sector participation in the provision of hostel facilities in the universities and to provide a conducive environment for learning. It also aims to encourage private sectors to plough back some of their profit into very critical areas of national needs hence fostering their acceptance by the local community. Despite this policy and full private sector interventions, more problems with students' housing are evolving gradually with time without solving the already recognized ones (Olanrewaju, 2011). Possibly because private developers are out to make a profit from their investment (Olatubara, 2008).

Like many other tertiary institutions in the global south, tertiary institutions in Nigeria are faced with the challenge of providing comfortable and affordable accommodation for their growing student population. With inadequate spaces to house these students, the latter are faced with the reality of tenants in the hand of shylock landlords. The issue of high rent and decreasing satisfaction with housing facilities are major issues in students' housing delivery in Nigeria. Unfortunately, the institutions, on their part, have over the years not been able to keep their hostels, even, in a minimum residential condition because of the paucity of funds (Ubong, 2001). The burgeoning challenge of student housing in Nigerian universities is a result of poor funding by the federal government. For example, the Federal Government's 2022 budgetary allocation to education is 5.39 percent, which is N923. 79 billion out of the total budget of N17. 13 trillion. This is below 15% - 20% that is recommended by of United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

### **Problems Associated with Students' Housing in Nigeria**

Having explored the history of students' housing in Nigerian Universities, the following challenges can be summarized:

*Inadequate Number of Hostels:* with a geometric progression of the numerical value of students in Nigerian universities, there exists little capacity of university management to sustain these teaming population and hostels supplied by private individuals are not sufficient. There is a wide gap in the demand and supply chain which made Aguda (2005) express fear that estate surveyors are scared of taking up the management of students' hostels because of volatile and troublesome characteristics of students. This fear is not only allayed in the mind of estate surveyors as revealed by Aguda, but it also extends to every other landlord. Hence, these individuals reject students in search of accommodation

*Limited Facilities and Poor Funding:* the level of corruption, insincerity and unaccountability coupled with politically established universities have thrown Nigerian universities into the dark era. Money is being siphoned by the political class with little cognizance of educational and societal needs and these have effects on the provision of adequate student hostels. Existing hostel facilities are overstressed without provision for new ones hence the existing ones are wearing out. The level of underfunding of universities can be deduced from the stipend allocation being provided for education in the budget of the nation and it is reflected in the maintenance culture of hostels as school management can do nothing more than manage available hostels with little finance appropriated to it.

*Poor Maintenance Culture:* The sustainability of development depends on its maintenance. Hostels in Nigerian universities are poorly maintained as there exists no organized plan for their maintenance. Most of the maintenance done in the institutions are done to correct impromptu faults.

*Epileptic Water and Electricity Supply:* water and electricity are two important things that are basic to the sustenance of both man and the economy. Students as a subset of the university population also need to sustain their life and activities with access to electricity and water. With the epileptic nature of their supplies, life gets miserable and boring for the students. This situation is tenser in hostels owned by private landlords.

*Off-Campus Accommodation Cost:* Students in non-residential universities are faced with the reality of the high cost of accommodation. The increase in students' enrolment yearly without a corresponding increase in accommodation supply explains the reason for an increase in the annual cost of accommodation in these universities. Hostels are expensive to the extent that the cost of accommodation is higher than the cost of acquiring education itself.

### **Recommendations and Conclusion**

Having explored the challenges of student housing in Nigeria. The following recommendations are proffered:

- i. Government should fund universities in the country, especially in the provision of Hostels. This will enhance the efficiency of the hostels as well as their facility and this will create a resultant effect of knowledge stability and academic excellence.
- ii. Build Operate and Transfer (BOT) system should be introduced to replace private investor building hostels and operate them perpetually. BOT is a system where private investors are invited to build hostels on schools' land, and manage it for a particular period of time, depending on the agreement with the school management so as to recuperate the amount spent as well as make a profit and then transfer back to the school management at the lapse of the timeframe.
- iii. The concept of a student village should be developed where developers are allowed to build in line with the specification of the school but such hostel accommodation prices will be regulated by the school management. The system will force students to engage in self-cleaning, self-Kettering and self-fixing of damaged facilities by students themselves.
- iv. The school management using the office of the dean of student affairs should regulate the cost of hostels especially those in proximity to the school. This can be achieved through mediatory monthly meetings between the school management, student union officials and hostel managers.

Having carefully dissected the problems associated with student housing, it is evident that the past government efforts toward addressing these have created a new dimension of challenges. One of such is the emergence of private individuals who exploits students in the name of accommodation provision. It is therefore concluded that the recommendations above if implemented, will not only aid in solving housing challenges in Nigerian universities but help in the creation of educational supporting environments.

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