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The Precarity of the Nigerian Public University Education: Considering Alternative Models

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Abstract

Nigerian public tertiary education has witnessed many industrial crises in recent times which has consistently led to the closure of public tertiary institutions on several occasions and for more than a continuous period of up to eight months in the public universities in 2022. This is a result of elongated strikes embarked upon by the workers in Nigerian public tertiary institutions. At the core of the problem is underfunding of the tertiary institutions characterized by decaying infrastructure, low wages and low morale. Government is the significant financier of public tertiary education in Nigeria. However, it is now generally agreed by all stakeholders, including the government, and workers' Unions that the government is finding it increasingly difficult to fund tertiary education. With dwindling resources and increasing government expenditure across all sectors, it has become evident to all that the government cannot continue to almost solely fund tertiary education. The focus of this paper is to examine the challenges presented by the current funding model, the implications of inadequate funding and the recommendation of possible alternative models which has the potential to enhance effective and qualitative higher education and put an end to perennial strikes in the Nigerian public tertiary institutions.

Keywords: Funding, Public University, ASUU Strike, Higher Education, Brain Drain

1. Introduction

Higher education otherwise known as tertiary education is post-secondary school learning, training and education. The benefits of quality higher education are numerous to the individual and the society. Amongst others, it increases the knowledge and efficiency of the labour force, thereby increasing productivity. However, it is generally agreed that the Nigerian University educational system is in a state of comatose. The problems are multilayered, it includes paucity of funding for the University arising from inadequate funding by the federal government and the state governments, lack of autonomy as a result of government interventions through policies and directives, failure of strategic planning, stalled development, under staffing, bloated administrative work force, recurring unpredictability, dilapidated infrastructures and teaching facilities, and corruption among others. These problems have become overwhelming and are now undermining the university education system in Nigeria. The root cause of the problems is funding. Without adequate funding, there is an unsatisfied and poorly motivated workforce, inequality, low quality training, learning and teaching, limited research capacity resulting in inability

of graduates and trained work force to solve Nigerian socio-economic, industrial, medical, insecurity, unemployment, brain drain, religious and political problems. Invariably, necessitating capital flight, dearth of foreign investments and development. The doctrinal and qualitative, non-numerical, empirical legal methodology has been deployed to analyze relevant legal instruments and information extracted from published document in this research. This paper has four segments. The first segment is introductory. The second segment interrogates the funding mechanism for Nigerian public tertiary institutions and its inadequacies. The third segment examines some specific challenges to the public higher education caused by paucity of funding. The fourth segment recommends other viable funding alternatives and concludes.

1.1 Statutory Framework

In Nigeria, higher education consists of Colleges of Education, Monotechnics, Polytechnics and Universities (Abdu 2003). An efficient, qualitative and functional higher education system promotes national growth and development, reduces poverty, promotes civility and good national values, healthier society, good governance and high level of citizen participation and engagement in governance. It is because of these benefits that the United Nations encourages member states to commit to the progressive realization of qualitative higher education. Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966 (ICESCR) provides that "higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education". Article 17 (1) of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, 1981 provides that every individual shall have the right to education. In addition, Section 18 (3) (b) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as amended provides that the government shall strive to ensure that illiteracy is eradicated through the provision of free University education. And the National Policy on Education (NPE), 2004 recognizes the importance of education for national growth and development and that the pre-condition for the national growth is functional and impactful educational revolution, S.1 (9) (a). The objectives the tertiary education is set out in S.8 of NPE 2004. Tertiary education should contribute to the promotion of national unity, inclusivity, community service and national development through the training and development of the capacity of the students and by inculcating proper values for the development of the student and the survival of the society. The reception of higher education should equip the students with physical and intellectual skills for self-reliance and towards contribution to the national growth. All the above instruments and objectives are lofty ideas and ideals that are more observed in breach than compliance by all tiers of the Nigerian governments.

2. Sources of Funding in Nigerian Public Tertiary Institutions

From inception, when the University College Ibadan then an affiliate of the University of Ibadan was established in 1948, it was adequately funded by both the British and the Nigerian governments, between periods of 6 years the federal government's capital expenditure on the university was in excess of £3.6 million with recurrent expenditure about £112, 269. The federal government later established additional 5 universities between 1960 and 1973. Scholarships and bursary were paid to the students and annual subventions were released by the government on time, "the annual federal grants to the five first generation universities in the country at that time rose from £2.56 million in 1963/1964 to £5.9 million in 1968/1969" "(Ogbogu, p. 3: 2011; NUC, 2003). At the time, most often, these first-generation universities received 100 per cent subsidies from government and there were no private universities. However, financial challenges began to set in when the second-generation universities were established between the period of 1975 and 1980. Government revenue started dwindling, inflation set in and there was also devaluation of the Nigerian currency (World Bank, 2020) resulting in balance of payment deficits (Odebiyi and Aina, 1999). At about the same time, the federal government introduced the free education policy of no tuition or almost tuition free policy. Thereafter, despite the obvious funding problems, the third-generation universities were established between the period of 1980 and 1990. Then the fourth-generation universities started springing up (Ekundayo and Ajayi, 2009), most often because of political considerations. Since, then there have been unrelenting downward trends of funding in the Nigerian public universities, resulting in abandonment and deterioration of infrastructure and brain drain.

2.1.1 Income from budgetary Allocation/Subvention

This constitutes 90 percent of annual incomes of the budgetary allocation which is otherwise known as subvention (Akinyemi, 2013). Education right is entrenched in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 as amended. Hence, tertiary institutions are established by the Federal governments and state governments. The underlying problems for these public institutions are poor funding for teaching, research and remuneration. These institutions offer free or low tuition education and accommodation. The institutions are heavily depended on government for funding. It is increasingly difficult for these different tiers of government to fund higher education primarily because of the dwindling financial resources occasioned by over dependency on mono-economy and the inefficiency, prolificacy, galloping inflation, and the challenges of insecurity. This pathetic situation calls for diversification of sources of funding for Nigerian higher education. The Federal government policy of free education has abysmally failed and is inhibiting the growth, quality and efficiency of higher education in Nigeria (Akintayo, 2004). Nigeria has Colleges of Education consisting of 27 federal 54 state colleges of education. Monotechnics, Polytechnics and 43 federals, and 52 are state universities with about 1.8 million undergraduate students (Sasu, 2022). The higher intuitions keep growing while the resources dwindle.

At the moment, the federal government allocates between 5 – 7 per cent of the total budget to education as opposed to international benchmark set at 26 per cent of annual minimum budget of a nation as proposed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (Akinyemi, 2013; Osinulu and Daramola, 2013). The meagre allocations are inadequate to maintain and effectively administer the tertiary institutions with overwhelmingly growing population. The unabated thirst of establishing more tertiary institutions for political reasons and without adequate financial provisions keeps exacerbating the problems.

The percentage of the annual budget allocated to education is abysmally low, in 2011 9.96%, 2012 9.75%, 2013 10.21%, 2014 12.05%, 2015 12.28%, 2016 9.17%, 2017 7.41%, 2018 7.1, 2019 7.05%, 2020 6.7%, 2021, 5.6% and in 2022 the federal government proposed budgetary allocation to the education sector is 7.2 per cent which includes, allocation to the Federal Ministry of Education and its agencies covering recurrent and Capital expenses; transfers to the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) for infrastructure projects in Nigeria's tertiary institutions, refund of Borrowed Funds from The Education Tax Pool Account (TETFUND) and budgetary allocation to the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) support to state governments (BudgIT, 2022). This proposed allocation covers all expenditures for public universities, polytechnics, Colleges of Education. For example, only a pastry sum of 963 million is the proposed capital allocation for the University of Lagos (BudgIT, p.7 2022). This budgetary allocation is disbursed through the National Universities Commission (NUC). Each of the University presents its annual budget to the NUC. The NUC usually prunes the university budgets to the barest minimum. Meanwhile, in 2015 Ghana allocated 23.81% of its national budget for education, in 2016, 22.09% in 2016, 20.1% in 2017 and 18.6% in 2018. And for South Africa, there is a continuous increase from R246 billion in 2018, to R416 billion by 2023, (Wahab, Vanguard 2:17: 2022)

In reality percentage of approved funding actually provided by federal government to federal universities in 2019 ranges from 62.3 percent at Nnamdi Azikwe Univerity to 100 percent at the Bayero University. Percentage of approved funding provided by the state government to the state universities ranges from 50 percent at Ekiti State University to 100 percent at Akwa Ibom State University (NUC, p.398: 2019). The average annual undergraduate tuition fee varies at the federal universities from free tuition in most federal universities to the maximum of N81, 500.00 at Nigeria Maritime University (NUC, p.402: 2019), for state universities tuition ranges from N 2,763.00 at the Delta State university to a maximum of N500,000.00 at the Edo State University (NUC, p.403: 2019). Average Annual Undergraduate Other Charges from zero at the University of Lagos, N 8,500.00 at the University of Jos and N108,500.00 at Michael Okpara University of Agric, while at the state universities other charges varies from zero at Edo University to N549,500.00 at the First Technical University (NUC, p.407: 2019)

2.1.2 Capital grant

Capital funding for universities are issued to acquire capital infrastructure, land, construction and maintenance of building, major renovations, repair and renovations, acquire and renew instructional facilities and learning

resources. The purpose of which is to support an effective and sustainable environment for learning, research and innovation. For example, laboratories, libraries, books, hostels, roads, classroom with latest technologically enabled teaching facilities. The total capital released to the universities varies from N 104,732,856.40 to the University of Calabar and N955,307,579.33 to the Federal University Gusau, from the state government Benue State University was paid N181,524,580.00 while a maximum of N 965,660,513.00 was released to the Kano University of Sci. & Tech. (NUC, p.410: 2019)

Unfortunately, research findings reveal that the meagre capital is not being efficiently utilized by the public universities for diverse reasons including leakages, released of allocation towards the end of the window for effective utilization, corruption and bottlenecks in accessing the released funds (Odewole & Salawu, 2020). It is therefore imperative that a federal body with specific oversight functions in respect of capital utilization be set up to consist of representatives of the federal ministry of finance, federal ministry of education, representative of the NUC and representative of the ICPC to monitor and guarantee efficient use of capital grant to the universities.

2.1.3 Overhead Grant

This may otherwise be known as administrative costs, funding for administrative expenses, including cost of consumables, costs of experiments, cost of electricity, cost of internet access, cost of water etc. Some Universities incur in excess of N90, million per month on electricity, while spending N45 million to buy diesel quarterly (Ogunyinka, 2020). It is the statutory responsibility of the government to meet this obligation to public universities. Total Overhead Grant Released by federal government include, the lion share of N 244,672,482.00 to the National Open University of Nigeria, Federal University of Technology Akure was paid N 71,311,763.81. State Zamfara State University N100, 000,000.00 to Cross River University of Technology N767, 902,192.34 (NUC, p.430-31: 2019). Odewole et al. 2020, in their study evaluated the overhead grants efficiency among the federal institutions in Nigeria and concluded that the federal educational institutions recorded high efficiency rate in the utilization of overhead grants, which is seemingly has a result of inadequate overhead grant in face of mounting overhead expenses in the Nigerian federal educational institutions.

2.1.4 Personnel Cost Grant

This includes salaries and fringe benefits of Faculty members and other university staff members. The total Personnel Cost Grant Released from Nigerian Army University N 812,515,619.72 to the University of Nigeria 16,819,581,308.03. State from the N253, 273,971.76 released to the First Technical University to N4, 942,218,654.00 released to the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. (NUC, p.438-39: 2019). This is sometimes inadequate to pay existing staff and universities often have to look for extra fund to pay their staff members. The table set out below highlights inadequacy of the personnel cost grant released to the University of Ibadan and the shortfall of 7.58 % of our personnel cost from December 2015 to May 2016.

| S/No | Month | UI Personnel Cost (N) | Personnel Grant Received (N) | Amount of Shortfall (N) |
|------|---------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | December 2015 | 965,508,185.70 | 663,872,634.60 | 301,635,551.10 |
| 2 | January 2016 | 878,148,127.28 | 782,346,495.59 | 95,801,631.69 |
| 3 | February 2016 | 888,545,476.96 | 782,346,495.59 | 106,198,981.37 |
| 4 | March 2016 | 877,193,065.55 | 782,346,495.59 | 94,846,569.96 |
| 5 | April 2016 | 879,134,419.41 | 782,346,495.59 | 96,787,923.82 |

| | | | | |
|---|--------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 6 | May 2016 | 878,756,811.03 | 782,346,495.59 | 94,898,518.25 |
| | Total | 5,367,286,085.93 | 4,575,605,112.55 | 790,169,176.19 |

Source: University of Ibadan website: Update on Funding of Personnel Cost by the Federal Government
<https://www.ui.edu.ng/news/update-on-funding-of-personnel-cost-by-the-federal-government>

Apart from the inadequacy of the payment structure it is also grossly insufficient. In addition, the university being a peculiar institution, welcome temporary staff, staff on sabbatical leave, visiting professors etc. These set of staff members are not captured on IPPS platform. The highest paid professor (on CONUASS Grade 7 Level 10) earns N416, 743 per month as net salary, which is roughly about \$500 at official exchange rate.

2.1.5 Total Cost of Running the University

Total Cost of Running a Federal University ranges from N1,551,857,739.68 Nigerian Army University to University of Lagos N15,071,921,214.00 and Nnamdi Azikiwe University 25,685,269,584.40. And the total cost of running a State University ranges from N1,008,136,770.90 released to the Ondo State University of Sci. & Technology and N2,556,614,452.58 to the Enugu State University of Sci. & Tech. (NUC, p.442-444: 2019) while the average Cost for Training an Undergraduate Student ranges from N712,310.00 at the University of Lagos to Federal University Lafia 242,813.71 and N228,000.00 at the Akwa Ibom State University N600,000.00 Enugu State University of Sci. & Tech. (NUC, p.446-449: 2019). For illustration purposes, if the total cost of training an undergraduate is N712, 310.00 and UNILAG has a total population of 40,000 undergraduates, (UNILAG, 2022). The university will require an average of N28, 492,400,000 per annum. UNILAG was allotted N15, 071,921,214.00 in the year under consideration, leaving a shortfall of N13, 420,478,790 in that year and will continuously be carried forward in subsequent years. This loss and resultant shortfall are unsustainable. Government authorities, university councils and university trade unions are aware of this,

2.1.6. TETFund

Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), abbreviated as TETFund was established by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2011, it was formerly known as the Education Trust Fund (ETF) to disburse, manage and supervise education tax, it was a scheme under the Education Tax Act of 1993 allotted to the tertiary institutions. The Education Tax Act was repealed and replaced by the Tertiary Education Trust Fund Act 2011. TETFund income primarily comes from the 2% which has now become 2.5% education tax paid from the assessable profit of companies registered in Nigeria. The Federal Inland Revenue Services (FIRS) assesses collects the tax on behalf of the Fund. The funds are disbursed to tertiary institutions in Nigeria for essential physical infrastructure, equipment, research, publications, academic staff training and development and other essential needs for the improvement and maintenance of standards in the tertiary institutions as approved by the Board, across the country. Hence, the primary focus of the Fund is to arrest the infrastructural decay in Nigerian tertiary intuitions. It is observed that TETFund has intervened greatly in addressing the infrastructural decay in the Nigerian tertiary institutions but all the public institutions are still in dire need of infrastructure. TETFund interventions so far has been no more than a drop in the ocean. However, there has been allegations that some projects sponsored by TETFund are distressed or non-performing (Anuku, 2022). Favouritism and political consideration in the course of intervention has been alleged (Onyeike, 2018). Hence, the process, procedure and guidelines of accessing TETFund is opaque. There is a need for more credibility and transparency in the administration of the Fund.

2.2 Income from External Sources

Article 14 of the World Declaration on Higher Education for the 21st Century issued in 1998 and reemphasized in 2003 state that, “the funding of higher education requires both public and private resources”. The role of government remains fundamental and critical though, diversification of university funding is very essential in

strengthening and development of higher education and for assurance of quality efficiency (UNESCO, 2004). Experiences from China that has “established a complete system of student financial assistance for economically disadvantaged families and has, effectively protected every student from dropping out of school because of family difficulties” (Wen, 2012) through the setting up of different funding assistance, including grants, part time jobs, scholarships, and tuition exemption.

2.2.1 External grants

External grants for universities are a form of financial aid that are gifts to the universities and does not usually get repaid. They are abysmally low or nonexistent in Nigerian public universities. External grants are given by charitable organisations, foundations and individuals. It covers a variety of education-related expenses, buildings, books, libraries etc. They are gift aids. They may come in the form of scholarships for brilliant students or endowments of assets or fund to the university in perpetuity and over generations, the income must be used for the stated purpose in the charter. For example there is FirstBank Endowment programme designated for Institutions which was instituted in 1994. It is aimed to provide funding for research projects that enhances academic excellence, to complement federal government efforts, and the Bank’s corporate responsibility & sustainability strategic approach in about 10 public federal universities, across the six geographical regions of the country. The seed money cannot be spent it must be held in perpetuity, it should be aimed at generating income for different projects. Similarly, in 2001, MacArthur Foundation approved multi-year grants of between \$2 and \$3 million to each of four Nigerian universities: Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria; Bayero University Kano (BUK); the University of Port Harcourt (UPH); and the University of Ibadan (UI) under the Global Security and Sustainability Program for sustenance and development of democracy and good governance (Fine, 2005)

2.2.2 Internally Generated Revenue (IGR)

The National Policy on Education (NPE) recommends alternative sources of funding for higher institution of learning. It is imperative for universities to supplement government funding of universities. Averagely, IGR forms about 10 per cent of income of the universities (Ogbogu, 2011). However, some institutions of higher learning generate more than 10 per cent while some others generate less than 10 percent revenue outside the subventions (NUC, 2019). This includes fees generated from consultancy, sale of admission forms, change of course forms, transcripts fees, parking fees, medical services incomes, hire of university vehicles income, house rent investments, and tuition, but only eight federal universities charge tuition fees (NUC, 2019). Somehow, there has been a lack of accountability in this area. The institutions of higher learning must be compelled to publish all revenues derivable from IGR and be subjected to oversight functions of the National Assembly and the state House of Assemblies.

3. Some Specific Challenges of the Public Higher Education

3.1 Dearth of Essentials

Across the globe, Higher Education institutions are citadel of learning and research. Their primary functions is to advance the state of knowledge, seek truth and propagate innovative ideas that will result in national development and growth. However, higher education institutions are very expensive to establish and maintain. They have overhead, capital, personnel and recurrent expenses. Some of the significant problems confronting the public university administration are high recurring running cost, lack of or extremely slow internet connection, meagre and delayed budgetary allotment, epileptic power supply and shortages of manpower. Presently there are just about 100, 000 academic staff to teach, undertake research, perform community service function and supervise over 2.1 million students (NUC, 2022). Regardless of these facts, there is currently an embargo on new employment in the public universities. In spite of the public universities being stretched beyond limit, they still take significant part of students’ enrolment every year, 94% of students enrolled in the public universities in 2019 (Sau, 2022).

3.2 IPPS

Enakirerhi and Temile (2017: p. 4) contend that IPPS is an ICT driven salary payment platform that has enhanced efficiency, transparency and eliminate ghost workers in the federal government payment structure. Thus, the Federal government has been able to save billions of naira through the elimination of ghost workers (Office of Accountant General of the Federation, OAGF, 2020). It is however, significant to note that till date, no one has been charged or convicted in relation to abhorring or benefiting from the ghost worker scam. Federal government workers have been complaining of under payments (Nduka, 2019) It follows therefore, that complaint by ASSUU, SNNAU and other university unions that their members salary are being amputated by reason of illegal deductions and inconsistent salary payment might be tenable. The so-called savings from elimination of ghost workers appears to be the unlawful deductions from workers' salaries through the deployment of IPPS. With the deployment of Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) payment system in the Nigerian Higher Education system, the problems have only been compounded. For example, IPPIS does not recognize academic staff on sabbatical, neither does it make provision for external assessors nor capture visiting fellows, and adjunct academics within and outside the country. The implication is localization of higher education and inbreeding of higher education. External assessors and academic staff from across the globe will not be able to come to Nigeria. This is negatively impacting the standard, quality and ranking of Nigerian higher education. In addition, IPPIS does not recognize academic staff in the professorial cadre over 65 years of age. IPPS also infringes on the autonomy of the University by restricting its ability to engage temporary staff and specialized academic staff. In addition, it is the perception of ASUU that the IPPS is not suitable for the peculiarities of higher education (Mela, 2019). ASUU further contends that the deployment of IPPIS in the University is unlawful. "The introduction of IPPIS is not backed by law. The Union's position is that there are extant legal provisions and negotiated agreements arising from the nature and peculiarities of Nigerian universities, which make IPPIS unnecessary and inapplicable to the universities" (ASUU Bulletin September, 2019). IPPIS infringes on university autonomy as provided in section 2AA of the University (Miscellaneous) provisions Amendment Act 2003 that circulars and policies that contradicts the laws of the University shall not apply to the University.

3.3 *The Endless ASUU Strike*

Academic Staff Union of Universities, ASUU is a trade union consisting of majority of academic staff in the Federal and State universities in Nigeria. Its primary aim is to promote, protect and advance the interests of its member. ASUU strikes have become an albatross that prevents the public universities from running smooth academic calendar by constantly truncating academic activities in universities across Nigeria. Consequently, negatively impacting the quality of university education (Bello, 2008). It has been noted that ASUU has embarked on 16 strikes in 23 years (Tolu-Kolawole, 2022). This is worrying and calls for a sober reflection and introspection by all stakeholders. The bane of these many disruptions occasioned by endless strikes is the failure of government to properly fund university education and failure of government to efficiently resolve the protracted crises. ASUU has achieved significant benefits for its members and the university system in the past, including, right to collective bargaining, autonomy to the university, increase wages for its members, autonomy to the university, and some revitalization fund for tertiary institution, particularly through the establishment of TETFund. However, the issues of insufficient funding, infrastructural decay, and low wages persist. In 2022 ASUU was on strike for upwards of eight months for issues revolving around the funding of the universities by government (Tolu-Kolawole, 2022). Government functionaries have however argued that government does not have sufficient fund to run the universities.

4. Finding the Right Combination Requires New thinking

It has become obvious that despite the consistent ASUU strike, the problems of paucity of funding for tertiary institutions persist. And in the face of many competing interests for government income, dwindling revenue, debilitating debts, worsening foreign trade deficits, increasing numbers of universities, students and staff members, government revenue cannot continue to be the sole or substantial university revenues. Responsibility for funding tertiary education cannot continue to rest solely with the government, that model has become unsustainable. The government is bearing a disproportionate share of the cost of higher education. Neither the federal, state or other

fees nor charges can provide sufficient funding to meet the funding requirements of the Nigerian tertiary institutions. But the right combination of funding will be adequate. Hence, new sources alternative, effective, reasonable and viable sources of revenue must be explored. University education cannot continue to be free if our universities intend to keep competing in the global knowledge economy. To attract and retain top academic and non-academic staff and bright students, the universities must have world class and conducive learning facilities and environment. It can however be argued that tertiary education should remain free in Nigeria because tertiary education is free in some countries in Europe, North America and Africa. The problem with this argument is that Nigeria is not as rich as many of those countries and in many of the countries where tertiary education is free, income tax is high and tax collection is very efficient. The precarious financial situation of the Nigerian Higher institutions of learning demands the application of new thinking, innovations and prudent management of resources. Transparency, accountability and application of financial management techniques which encompass a broad range of actions, including, diligence use of available resources through careful planning, realistic budgeting, record keeping, cost forecasting, staff level management, regular auditing by independent and external bodies.

4.1 Payment of appropriate tuition

Knowledge is key to living a quality life. It aids critical thinking, offers access to good job and helps with the attainment of individual's aspirations. Higher education is a path to the attainment of the aspiration to become a professional. The National Policy on Education acknowledges that higher education is to serve as platform for individual, societal and the national development. The higher education is to focus on students' acquisition of skills, development of mental, physical and social competence which are critical to the development of the country. However, higher education does not come cheap, as shown above, lecturers have to be paid, classrooms built, technological equipment purchased, libraries frequently updated, laboratories well equipped and conducive learning environment maintained. All these require humongous amount of money and capital lay out. In addition, Nigeria has a growing population of over a million citizens with a significant youth population who are interested in higher education. In a dwindling economy and with decaying infrastructure in the higher institutions, it has become imperative for the federal government to reconsider its free education policy in higher education. It is simply not sustainable any more. This paper recognizes that it is a seemingly justifiable argument that some Nigerian youths cannot afford to pay adequate tuition. In response to this augment, scholarship and students grant for indigent students should be introduced by every public university.

4.1.2 Mode of selecting indigent student

Scholarship and grants are ideal to give equitable access to higher education and to prevent discrimination against the poor and educationally disadvantaged. It must however, be well structured, visible and transparent to be effective. Each public university must establish easily verifiable, open, transparent, fair and just eligibility criteria for scholarship, grants and financial assistance to indigent and deserving students. Indigent student should be defined by each university in the school's regulation and be a part of student's handbook and each university Council should be able to determine its sustainable tuition fee per student and course with the NUC being charged with oversight functions so that university education will not be unreasonable and completely unaffordable. The needs of the universities differ by reasons of their respective student population, staff strength, size, location and facilities needed.

An indigent student can be anyone whose parents do not earn up to a pre-determined sum to be benchmarked by the civil service salary structure. Every university must have a Scholarship Committee. Applications should be open to all indigent students and a certain proportion of the student population must be beneficiaries of the scholarship. Selection should be based exclusively on merit. Top 10 to 20 percent of indigent students in all the university qualifying examinations should be automatically entitled to the scholarship. Thereafter, maintenance of minimum of 3.5 CGPA may be a prerequisite for continuance enjoyment of the scholarship. Scholarship Committee of Senate should be established in all the public and state universities, comprising of the DVC Academics as Chair, all Deans of Faculties and all the Head of Departments, final recommendations should be

submitted to the Senate of the University for approval before a final approval of the beneficiaries by the Council of the University.

4.2 Full autonomy

The 1997 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel, on University Autonomy defines the concept in Paragraphs 17-21 as follows:

Autonomy is that degree of self-governance necessary for effective decision making by institutions of higher education regarding their academic work, standards, management and related activities consistent with systems of public accountability, especially in respect of funding provided by the state, and respect for academic freedom and human rights.

One of the fundamental problems besieging the universities and causing problems between ASUU and government is the issues revolving around university autonomy. A University Governing Council is the apex governing body of each University. Policy decisions and general administration of a university reside with the University Council. The autonomy of the universities is guaranteed under in the Universities (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Amendment) Act 2003, otherwise known as the Universities Autonomy Act. University autonomy has a tripartite part; academic, administrative and finance. It simple empowers every university to have freedom in teaching and research activities, have the freedom to employ staff needed and the liberty to determine their conditions of service, and also guarantees the freedom of the university to deploy its financial resources as it deems effectively and prudently fit. It is generally agreed that the universities in Nigeria enjoy academic freedom to a large extent, same cannot be said of administrative and financial freedom. One of the major contending issues in the ongoing ASUU strike is the deployment of IPPS as the salary payment platform by the federal government. ASUU argues that the inflexibilities of IPPS does not accommodate the employment of sabbatical staff, temporary staff and visiting Professors from foreign universities. The government insists on continued payment of salaries through IPPS. This is a clog in the freedom of the university to function without interference from external forces. For this reason, academic activities and calendar is being disrupted for upwards of eight months by both ASUU and the Federal government for failing to reach a compromise on this issue. What manner of higher education is this? For how long will academic calendar be disrupted because of mundane issues like this? And how will the national policy on higher education be achieved in this circumstance? This paper recommends that the provisions of the Universities Autonomy Act should be strictly adhered to and every university governing council should be allowed to determine a suitable salary payment platform subject to auditing by NUC and the ICPC if need be. The other infringement on the university autonomy is in relation to funding. Government is still the biggest financier of university education. This gives the government functionaries the impression that they have the right to regulate how the funding is being deployed. In addition, universities are not allowed to charge appropriate tuition, Hence, the heavy dependency on government for funding. A university, for smooth administration should have the freedom to control its financial resources without restrictions or interference from government and its agencies. This freedom should include the freedom to raise financial resources through tuition fees, grants, endowments etc.

4.3. Student jobs on campus

Students should be considered for part time jobs in the University community to alleviate the burden of tuition fee payments. There are many job opportunities for student job placements at the universities. Students can be employed to assist in the library, as student brand ambassadors, in the bookshop, babysitting, at halls of residence etc. Aside from alleviating the burden of tuition, it brings added benefits of learning and preparing for future work skills. It offers students the opportunity to link academic theory to real work environment and to imbibe employability skills, including multi-tasking, teamwork, communication, time management, commercial awareness, drive and initiative etc.

4.4. *Proper auditing and accountability*

Transparency, openness and accountability by the University management is fundamental to attract and sustain public funding for the universities. It is recommended that the university management comply with the 1997 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel in respect of open governance and accountability through the entrenchment of the principle of non-discrimination, effective communication, efficient use of resources, honest accounting, commitment to quality and excellence in teaching, research and scholarship, international academic cooperation, integrity of internal control and audit mechanism. The limited resources available should be deployed in a prudent and effective manner (Afe-Babalola, 2014) The University accounting system and processes should also be made subject to mandatory oversight functions of the NUC and the National Assembly.

4.5. *Encouraging alumni associations*

Encouraging alumni associations to provide scholarships and mentoring for students. Alumni are culturally and psychologically connected to their *alma matters*. The universities must learn to embrace and engage with their alumni associations. Alumni associations must be established and managed by the universities and the alumni. The alumni association must have a proper structure, building, staff and working tools. Schools must maintain alumni register, with alumni data, including contact addresses, telephone, social media contact information etc. The alumni associations can be encouraged to provide grants and funding for the universities. They can also be helpful in providing job placements and mentoring of students and mentoring of new graduates. Equipping vocational and technical schools

4.6. *Temporary Positions*

University positions need not be permanent employment of temporary academic staff and none academic staff should be considered. Some position should be source out to independent contractors. For example, gardening services and janitorial services should be source out to the most economical bidder. The system must ensure that that no one should be on a temporary contract for more than 10 years beyond the beginning of their PhD

5. Conclusion

As it has been shown above, Nigerian public tertiary institutions are experiencing many challenges and in recent years, there has been increased public concern about low quality of graduates, perennial ASUU strikes, dearth of learning facilities and infrastructural decay. This has amplified the debate about rethinking the funding model of public tertiary institutions to address the genuine need of the tertiary institutions for effective training and learning environment. The time has come to reevaluate the original intention of the National education policy and revise tertiary education funding formula. Hopefully, by deploying the recommended financial tools, Higher Education institutions in Nigeria will be able to accelerate growth and maximize the use of available resources.

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