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ANALYSIS OF STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEIVED STRATEGIES FOR ADEQUATE FUNDING OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Dr. V. O. Igbinewaka

Lecturer in Educational Planning, Department of Educational Foundations and Management, Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma, Nigeria.

Dr. J. K. Adeyemi

Associate Professor in Educational Planning, Department of Education and Management Studies, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria

Abstract

The paper analysed level of adequacy of perceived strategies for funding universities in Nigeria. Two out of the five (5) questions raised to direct investigation were answered while the remaining one (1) question was hypothesized. Data for the study were collected with a questionnaire titled "Strategies for Adequate University Funding Questionnaire, SAFUQUE". The questionnaire was administered on 7317 major stakeholders out of which the responses of 6227 (i.e. 85.10 percent) were found usable for analysis. The findings revealed that five (5) strategies: sponsorship of special academic programmes by employers of labour; payment of realistic tuition fees; payment of reasonable bursary awards; synergic management of available resources and; government allocation of grants based on ZBB were unanimously adopted for university adequate funding. The study also found out that major stakeholders in Nigerian universities do not significantly differ in rating the level of adequacy of university funding strategies. Stakeholders in Nigerian universities are positively disposed towards sharing the cost of university administration. On the basis of this conclusion, it was recommended among others that universities should on a continuous basis ascertain total cost of financing administration and work out appropriate and acceptable sharing formula amongst stakeholders

Introduction

Education is the process of transmitting preserved cultural values from one generation to another. Additionally, education is a continuous process that imposes a mandate on every member of the society to acquire functional knowledge and skills, without which performance of assigned social roles will

be difficult. Therefore, education is severally believed to be a pre-requisite for national development. In Nigeria, the government strongly believes that education is a tool with which the country's national goals can be achieved (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council Report, 2004). It is on the basis of this aspiration, that the Nigerian government is implementing several policies to increase access to education, particularly at the university level where critical professional skills (like doctors, technologists, agriculturists, teachers) are expected to be produced. For instance, total number of universities that was just 14 in the 1970s was increased to 73 in 2005 while enrolment skyrocketed from a modest figure of 53,000 to 780,000 during the same period (Okebukola, 2005). This notwithstanding, universities in Nigeria are inadequate in terms of quantity and quality. According to Okebukola (2005), there were only 130,000 places for the over 800,000 candidates that sought placement in the 2005/2006 session. What is however more worrisome is the problem of gross under-funding that even characterise the inadequate universities.

Table 1 sheds light.

Table 1: University Budget Estimates and Actual Releases, 1990-2001 (in Naira)

Year	Amount Requested	Actual Amount Received	% Actual Amount Received
1990	1,216,601,329.00	734,770,950.00	60.40
1991	1,453,291,051.00	783,816,895.00	53.93
1992	3,663,212,945.00	2,985,237,346.00	81.49
1993	5,075,859,925.00	3,801,529,278.00	74.89
1994	7,342,861,713.00	4,370,880,770.00	59.53
1995	11,328,520,902.00	6,056,784,806.00	53.46
1996	12,442,699,358.00	7,535,594,529.00	60.56
1997	15,520,155,501.00	5,348,173,942.00	33.80
1998	22,767,530,158.00	8,974,631,294.62	39.41
1999	40,884,109,125.00	11,831,930,271.93	28.94
2000	65,579,997,692.00	30,143,004,497.91	45.96
2001	68,911,759,219.11	31,170,080,668.17	45.23
Total	256,486,598,921.11	113,736,435,428.68	44.34

Source: Directorate of Research and Statistics, National Universities Commission, 2005

As shown in the table, only 44.34 percent of the total fund requested for during the period under consideration was received. Specific years analysis shows that actual amount received decreased from 60.40 percent in 1990 to 53.93 percent in 1991. It again increased in the following year, 1992 to 81.49 percent but crashed to 74.89 percent in 1993. The trend continued till 2001 when actual amount received dropped slightly from 45.96 percent in 2000 to 45.23 percent. It needs not to be over-emphasized that in such a situation, it will be difficult or practically impossible for the universities to expand and maintain available facilities, or even improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The problem of under funding that today characterizes the public university system in Nigeria started in 1978 when government forcefully took over the control of existing universities, abolished undergraduate tuition fees and pegged all other administrative charges (Aminu, 1986). He argued that the surplus revenue earned from oil sales in the 1970 decade beclouded the vision of government to appreciate the importance of allowing students pay fees. Hartnett (2000) emphasized this importance when he reported that allowing the wealthiest one-third of university students to pay tuition fees equal to one-half of government's contribution per student (assuming US\$ 390) would increase system-wide resources by 14 percent. Similarly, if the middle third of income-ranked students were asked to pay tuition equal to one third of government's per capita contribution by participating in a student loan programme, university financing would be boosted by an additional 10 percent, *centeris paribus*. Assuming the government's contribution remains unchanged, tuition fees structure in this way could increase the current university budget by 24 percents.

It is clear from the foregoing that the government's policy of abolishing tuition fees and the subsequent assumption of the responsibility to solely finance university expenditures is the bane of insufficient funds in the universities, hence the need for review of the policy. The matter arising therefore is; how should universities in Nigeria be adequately funded? The framework that celebrates the convergence of rigidity and responsiveness in organizations like the university system answers this question (El-Khawas, 2001). Rigidity in organizations resists making changes in institutional behaviour and often rejects possible change without openly considering whether they are feasible or desirable. In the case of a responsive institution, adaptability characterises its orientation. El-Khawas postulates that responsive institutions consider changing circumstances with deliberation, identifies ways to adapt, and take responsive action. Adopting the El-Khawas (2001) rigidity - responsive model, any responsive model for

financing universities in Nigeria that will guarantee adequate funding should be able to :

- increase access of all those that have the willingness and ability for university education;
- provide subsidy for certain academic programmes critical for national development and;
- ensure priority attention is given to the production of critical professional skills – such as teachers, engineers, doctors etc that positively impact the quality of life.

The point being emphasized is that all stakeholders in the university system be given opportunity to participate in the decision making on how to share or contribute operation cost . This is important especially now that it has been observed that the ability of graduates from the university system to perform in the work place is in doubt .

Under-funding, no doubt has negatively impacted the input-output-process of the Nigerian University System. All inputs according to Nwandiani (2003) are in short supply except students. The problem expresses itself in overcrowded lecture halls; inadequate and obsolete library facilities; very high students-teacher ratio exacerbated by brain drain. Worse still, unstable school calendar occasion by incessant strike actions by university staff unions characterise the university system. The result of this is graduates from university system are observed to be of very poor quality. Apart from the fact that several of such graduates are not able to communicate effectively, many lack the skill to perform in the work place, hence the usual extra cost borne by employers of labour for re-training of the graduates before employment. The need therefore to reverse the problem of under-funding in the Nigerian University system for quality service delivery cannot be over-emphasized. The objective of this paper therefore is to analyze the level of adequacy of strategies perceived by stakeholders that will guarantee adequate funding. To achieve this objective, the following questions will be answered:

- (i) What strategies should be adopted for adequate funding of universities in Nigeria?

- (ii) What is the level of adequacy of perceived strategies for funding Nigerian universities?
- (iii) Do major stakeholders (students; government and employers of labour) in university education in Nigeria differ significantly in rating the strategy that is most adequate?

Method

This is a descriptive research that adopted the survey design. The population of study comprised all the major stakeholders (students, government and employers of labour) in the Nigerian university system. A sample size of 10 percent of the major stakeholders chosen, using the multi stage sampling technique was used for the study. During the first stage, all the 50 public universities were classified into six (6) groups on the basis of the six geo-political zones that make up Nigeria. Thereafter, ten (10) percent of the universities in the geo-political zones were randomly selected. Lastly, ten (10) percent of the total number of regular undergraduate students in the selected universities was randomly chosen bringing the number of students that participated in study to 7017. For the other stakeholders that participated in the study, all the 187 Executive Council members in the six (6) States that participated in the study including all the 113 Chief Executive Officers (C.E.O.) of Public Liability Companies (PLC.) in the selected States. In all, 7317 stakeholders participated in the study.

Data for the study were collected using a questionnaire titled "Strategies for Adequate University Funding Questionnaire (SAFUQUE)" that comprised two sections. The first part contained 17 alternative sources of ensuring adequate availability of funds in Nigerian universities out of which the respondents were requested to tick (+) the ones perceived to be most adequate. Section "B" of the questionnaire contained a 5-point Likert scale on which the respondents were further requested to assess the adequacy level of only the perceived alternative sources of adequately funding Nigerian universities. The level of measurement of the scale was operationally defined as:

Very Adequate – 4 point

Adequate – 3 points

Fairly Adequate – 2 points

Minimally Adequate - 1 point

The questionnaire that was content validated had its reliability status ($r = .72$, $N = 40$) estimated using the test- retest method.

Administration of the questionnaire lasted for 15 weeks. The Chiefs of Staff of Government Houses in the affected States were used as research assistants to administer the questionnaires on government stakeholders during the States' Executive Council meetings of the respective States. Similarly, company secretaries of the affected public liability companies also served as research assistants in collecting the responses of employers of labour. The first 22 weeks were spent on personally retrieving the questionnaires from both government and employers of labour stakeholders. Students Union Governments' Presidents in the sampled universities also served as research assistants in administering the questionnaires on students. Out of a total number of 7317 questionnaires that were administered 6459 (i.e. 88. 27 percent) were returned with 6227 (i.e. 96.41 percent) usable for analysis using means and simple anova.

Results

The first and second questions sought to find out whether stakeholders' perceived strategies for funding universities in Nigeria have the same level of adequacy. The result of analysis of the strategies that were unanimously chosen for funding but differently rated on the adequacy scale is shown in table 2.

Table 2: Level of Adequacy of Stakeholders' Perceived Strategies for Funding Nigerian Universities

Strategy	N	X	Remark
Sponsorship of special academic programmes by employers of labour	6227	2.62	Adequate
Payment of realistic tuition fees	6227	2.78	Adequate
Payment of reasonable bursary awards by Government to students throughout the period of study	6227	2.45	Fairly Adequate
Synergic management of available university resources	6227	3.64	Very Adequate
Government grant to the universities based on Zero Based Budgeting (ZBB)	6227	3.11	Adequate

The result shows that the strategies of getting special academic programmes sponsored by employers of labour; payment of realistic tuition fees by students and; government grant based on ZBB are rated to be adequate sources of funding Nigerian Universities. Synergic management of available university resources is rated to be very adequate (3.64) while payment of reasonable bursary awards to students throughout the period of study is however rated to be fairly adequate (2.45).

Question 3 was hypothesized and tested using simple analysis of variance. The result of analysis is shown in table 2.

Table 2: Mean Difference of Stakeholders' (students, government and; and employers of labour) Perceived Strategies for Adequate Funding of universities

Source of variation	SS	df	MS	Cal. F	Crit. F
Between groups	1.7200	2.0000	.8596	.0105	.0299
Within groups	5076.50	6224	.8156		
Total	5078.22	6226	.0928		

As shown in the table, the computed F – value (.0105) is smaller than the critical F – value (.0299). The null hypothesis that students, government and employers of labour will not significantly differ in rating the adequacy of perceived strategies for university is retained at .05 alpha level. The conclusion therefore is that level of adequacy of university funding strategies as perceived by stakeholders does not significantly differ.

Discussion

This study sets out to analyse stakeholders' perceived strategies for reversing the problem of inadequate funding in Nigerian universities. The findings revealed that stakeholders unanimously perceived five strategies: sponsorship of special academic programmes by employers of labour; payment of reasonable bursary awards by government to students throughout the period of study; synergic management of available university resources and; allocation of grant by government using ZBB to the universities as adequate for reversing the problem of under-funding in Nigerian universities. The unanimity of the perceived

strategies, even though adequacy level is rated differently, suggests that stakeholders are favorably disposed and willing to ensure that adequate funds are available in the universities. This favourable disposition is supported by Johnston (2002) who reported that university available fund gets boosted by an additional 10 percent when shared costs are promptly paid by stakeholders. This is likely to be true because the Nigerian universities prior to the time government took over the sole responsibility of funding in 1978 and did not significantly lack fund.

The finding that level of adequacy of the funding strategies of universities as perceived by stakeholders does not significantly differ is not surprising. This is because the strategies are the unanimous suggestions of stakeholders who probably believe that adequate funding will enhance quality assurance in service delivery. University education can only be given the priority the nation can afford to give it. The favourable disposition to share the cost of university education similar to what is reported elsewhere by Hartnett (2000); El-Khawas (2001) and; Johnston (2002) is likely to provide the boldness that the universities need to charge appropriate fees.

Conclusion and Recommendations

There is a unanimous decision amongst stakeholders in Nigerian universities to share cost of funding. The positive disposition with which whatever share of the cost is expected to be paid by stakeholders will no doubt reverse the problem of inadequate funds that characterize the universities. It is on this note that the following recommendations are made:

Total cost of running the university system should be ascertained and shared among stakeholders, using appropriate and acceptable formula;

Eclectic application of the five (5) strategies as perceived by stakeholders for adequate funding of the universities should be adopted by universities for management decisions and;

Autonomy should be granted to the universities to determine and enforce cost-sharing formula.

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