



Accessibility, Affordability, and Quality of Higher Education in Nigeria

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Abstract

The National Education Policy has created circumstances to increase access to education. It further specifies that every effort would be made to ensure that those who can benefit from higher education have access to it. Regrettably, the Nigerian public has expressed unhappiness with higher education admittance now that there is widespread knowledge of the importance of university education in the development of the person and the nation. Today, access to higher education is a difficult issue in Nigeria. This paper investigated the barriers to university education, such as insufficient funding and leadership recklessness, a lack of absorption capacity, problems of accessibility and the quality of education in Nigeria. The report advocated for the establishment of new federal higher institutions, with enough funds and facilities/equipment. The catchment area/quota system should be reconsidered to allow for merit. The study suggested that human capital development should be prioritized for Nigeria to join the rest of the world in pursuing sustainable development.

Keywords: Accessibility, Affordability, Quality, higher education

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Introduction

Nigerian higher education is beset by too many flaws that have become a stumbling block in higher education governance, generating tremendous worry due to the low quality of its products, which are unemployed and unproductive in the labor market. This development, on the other hand, might be linked to the quality

of lecturers, infrastructures, and instructional facilities, among other things, that these institutions of higher learning have. The ever-increasing worry over the inadequate quality of these institutions' outputs demanded comprehensive efforts on the part of all stakeholders, including the government, to solve the slew of issues impeding the



healthy expansion of higher education in Nigeria. According to Asiyai (2014), only high-quality education can sharpen people's brains and assist society evolve economically, socially, and politically. Continuing, Asiyai (2015) stated that the quality of knowledge created in higher education institutions is extremely important for national competitiveness. It is critical to examine the essential factors that constitute educational excellence. Quality is never an accident, as it has always been the outcome of lofty objectives, earnest efforts, and an intellectual purpose statement, as well as focused and skilled implementation. There is considerable agreement in education on a number of factors that determine excellence. Higher academic standards, rigorous curriculum, trained and experienced instructors, updated textbooks, state-of-the-art laboratories and computing facilities, small class numbers, modern buildings and conducive learning environments, tight discipline, and parental involvement are just a few examples (Asiyai, 2015).

Examining three broad elements is really beneficial. Higher education is a critical instrument for a country's economic, social, and political growth. The expense of higher education in Nigeria, on the other hand, is becoming a significant worry (Davis, 2012)

Scholars have been warning about the grave consequences of denying our youngsters the opportunity to pursue higher education owing to rising costs. The cost of education, equipment, libraries, administrative and basic hostels are all examined in this article academic computing, research demands, and student (Asiyai (2015)

The following concerns of growing higher education costs in Nigeria were also examined in this paper: the formation of illiterate dynasties, high school drop-out of undergraduates, increased crime rates, increased violent crimes, increased IT crimes, prostitution, and a shortage of trained workers. The study suggested that a comprehensive and realistic strategy be taken, involving the government, philanthropists, parents, and multinational corporations, as well as a special education fee.

Challenges/ Effects of Rising Cost of Higher Education in Nigeria

Education is viewed as a general and organic process including a series of actions aimed at helping an individual to integrate and develop information, skill capabilities, and values that are not limited to a single field of endeavor. Following basic and secondary school, higher education is pursued. At the turn of the century, Davis (2012) emphasized that the growing expense of higher education has major consequences for educational companies all over the world, particularly in poor nations. Nigeria's federal and state governments restricted educational spending before to independence, lowering the cost of funding in the country. According to Akinyemi (2012), the burden on parents' resources has increased in recent years due to tuition fees and school levies, particularly for higher education. The distributive impacts of such reforms on student enrollments, as well as their unforeseen repercussions, have received little attention. The burden of escalating higher education costs in Nigeria cannot be solely borne by the federal and state governments. The federal government's scholarship strategy aims to make higher



education more accessible to competent Nigerian students while also assisting destitute and disabled students (FME, 2013). However, the ongoing Federal government scholarship and award program for postgraduates, undergraduates, and handicapped students in all federal and state universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education is merit-based, with little consideration for low-income families, resulting in a decrease in enrolment. In several fields, there is a gender divide in the number of male and female students enrolled (Akinyemi, 2012). In the early 1970s, amid Nigeria's oil boom, the federal and state governments began to distribute grants, subsidies, and scholarships to as many people as who were accepted into higher education institutions. Many applicants who were poor and had never dreamed of entering the four walls of a university had the opportunity to go to school since they were accepted into the BE.D (Bachelor of Education) program and were automatically granted a scholarship. By 1978, the help had been cut off, culminating in the "Ali must go" saga, in which the military slaughtered both students and civilians. Parents began paying full costs for their children and wards, thereby excluding out destitute applicants who could not afford school fees. Fees at the higher education level have steadily increased since then. The federal government's requirement that universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education obtain funds domestically contributed to this. Similarly, according to Davis (2012), running an academic institution is always challenging, but it is especially so during times of economic downturn. The quality of a student's learning outcome at the end of a learning session determines the student's

success. As a result, higher education institutions attempt to quantify the cost of instruction by increasing fees or tuition. The findings revealed that reduced government participation has invariably affected the cost of higher education in Nigeria, with the attendant effects of lower enrolment, higher drop-out rates, student exposure to off-campus residence, and a non-conducive environment for effective and serious academic activities that could have launched Nigeria into the twenty-first century. Education is a costly social service that requires appropriate financial allocation from all levels of government for successful execution of educational programs, as stated in the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). The Nigerian educational finance strategy aims to make education free at all levels, with the federal, state, and local governments, as well as the private sector, sharing financial responsibilities (local communities, individuals and organizations). The most generally acknowledged share reduction technique for tackling educational finance challenges originating from escalating educational and faculty costs is to charge and increase tuition fees. Expense sharing in education is advocated by Akinyemi (2007), Sanyal and Martains (2006), who argue that the cost of education should be, divided among the government, tax payers, parents, students, and institutional donor groups.

Furthermore, Davis believes that cost control is a "defining moral and business issue for principled academic leaders," and that "if college presidents do not take steps to address cost, we will fail our students by graduating them into an uncertain economy with huge debt burdens, endangering both our institution



and the higher education sector's long-term viability."

The problem of cost conservation in higher education must be pursued vigorously, deftly, and deliberately. The objective at the policy level should be to keep the same issue in mind as the institutional and community level approaches: how can we modify our educational system to guarantee that more students are academically and financially capable of pursuing and finishing a post-secondary degree? The nature of the cost increase Basic costs of instruction: these are the costs of faculty and staff salaries, equipment, libraries, administrative, and basic academic computing, as well as certain capital or location costs such as rent. In effect, this is what it costs the institution to do its mission of teaching as well as whatever basic research or scholarship faculty are expected to do in the absence of special grants or contracts. Costs connected with sponsored research or special activities that are paid by their funding or appropriations and would probably not be incurred if such specifically earmarked revenues were not available. Despite the fact that the expenditures incurred at a specific university by conducting sponsored research and other special activities may be substantial, the costs to the institution's primary goals of teaching and scholarship should be below or nil due to the non-transferability of the earnings. The cost of students' living rooms (hostels), entertainments, and laundry, as well as other expenditures that would be paid as students of institutions of higher learning attempting to equip the modern-day hostel, leads to the establishment. Spending a lot of money, and these costs are absorbed by the pupils.

Increase in the number of students seeking enrolment: According to Oyetakin and Oshun (2009), the massive increase in students' enrolment at the primary and secondary levels of education has put a lot of economic, political, and social pressure on tertiary education/institutions, with financial consequences for students, governments, and the economy in general. In most countries across the world, the expense of higher education presents three major concerns (Johnstone, 2007). To begin, how much of a country do overall resources should or may be committed to higher education? The unit costs of higher education are illusive due to the numerous and difficult to quantify outcomes. At the most basic level, per-student expenditures are determined by faculty workloads (class size, course loads, etc.).

The second important issue is how to spread the costs of higher education among citizens (tax payers, parents, students, philanthropists and donors). Whatever the expenses, and whatever the country, they must be shared by some combination of the following: all citizens via taxes, parents through tuition payment, students through tuition payment by working and schooling (salaries/ earnings), and loan plan. Philanthropists- either through current contributions or the investment return on previous gifts.

Quality of Education in Nigeria

Quality in higher education is defined as the value of the system's input, processes, and operations, such as lecturers, instructional facilities, and assessment systems, which convert to output that meets desired standards and social expectations (Asiyai, 2013). According to



Igwe (2007), quality in higher education extends from policy formation to the execution of educational processes that span the breadth of the curriculum, the teaching/learning process, resources and facilities, students and instructors, and the environment. According to Baird in Asiyai (2015), the growth of intellectual independence is related to the quality of higher education. He then advocated for collaborative action research as a way for enhancing quality, emphasizing those institutions of higher learning must take the lead in supporting quality improvement at all levels of education. In this sense, higher education may be considered to be of high quality when it develops a whole person who is intellectually promising, morally sound, mentally or emotionally stable, physically and socially developed, and benefits both the individual and society. As a result, it is correct to claim that education without quality is worse and more hazardous than no education at all. This means that when high-quality education is provided, it ensures a high level of product in terms of employability and productivity in a knowledge-driven society and economy. Quality assurance as a concept aid in the coordination of school activity designs in order to enhance the quality of education's input, process, and output (Okebukola, 2012). According to Ajayi and Akindutire (2007), quality assurance is about consistency in achieving product standards or doing things correctly the first time and every time. Furthermore, Oduma (2013) noted that quality assurance in the Nigerian education system entails the capacity of the different arms (particularly higher schools) to satisfy the expectations of manpower consumers in terms of the quality of skills required by their outputs. The capacity to maintain ongoing

monitoring and supervision of quality assurance policies and processes is vital to the realization of university education's aims and objectives, particularly in today's knowledge-driven economy (Giami and Nwokamma, 2019).

Challenges of Quality Higher Institutions Education in Nigeria

Lack of competent teachers

There are a slew of issues plaguing higher institutions in Nigeria, all of which have an impact on educational quality: Incompetent teachers are common. The teacher factor is the most important of the country's higher institutions' quality concerns (Giami and Nwokamma, 2019).

This is due to the fact that it is the teacher's responsibility to instill desirable information, skills, values, attitude, and competence in the students. When a teacher is inept, he cannot accomplish these duties. The quality of every educational system is determined by the caliber of its instructors. The academic and professional qualifications, as well as the degree of competence and attention to the primary role, all contribute to a teacher's quality. A key flaw is the low quality of admissions into full-time (university-based regular teacher education programs). As a result of this predicament, many people consider teaching as a vocation for those who never succeed. Furthermore, the majority of students in the sandwich/part-time programs are teachers. However, the program's organization and quality leave much to be desired. Furthermore, in Nigeria, teaching has become a generic trade into which any Tom, Dick, or Harry can enter and go away at whim. In support of this viewpoint, Mohammed (1999) said that such instructors arrive at school with their minds made up that if a



better job comes up, they will leave. In the classroom, we have people who have not been schooled in the methodology of teaching. In the classroom, they are civil engineers, geologists, radiographers, quantity surveyors, and other professionals. As a result, many people question if teaching is a profession. Even with the establishment of the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN), the situation is worse on a daily basis since teacher recruitment is highly politicized. Again, the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) has been woefully inadequate in this area, failing to project and communicate the lofty goals of the teaching profession. Inadvertently, this circumstance has resulted in an infusion of quacks and mediocre politicians into the teaching profession. This unfavorable tendency has had a significant impact on the caliber and quality of teaching and learning in Nigeria.

Poor Teacher Motivation

Motivation is the inner desire that pushes, guides, or influences an individual's attempts to complete a job. Individuals must be motivated in order for them to put up their best efforts toward the achievement of organizational goals. Teacher motivation refers to aspects inside the educational system that, if offered to teachers, will assist increase their teaching efficacy and, as a result, the quality of students' output. Such motivators may aid in propelling, channeling, sustaining, and influencing instructors' behavior toward aiming for excellence. Teachers' tasks are broad, comprising a wide range of responsibilities, which might be jeopardized if they are not motivated. Nigeria is in this scenario. Several studies

have found low teacher motivation in Africa, particularly in Nigeria (Asiyai, 2009, Ingwu and Ekefre, 2006). According to a UNESCO report by Wire (2003), African school teachers are uninspired, underqualified, and underpaid, and many choose their careers out of a lack of other options. According to Ingwu and Ekefre (2006), underpaying Nigerian teachers has a number of negative motivating repercussions, including decreased production, poor quality, and absenteeism. Furthermore, society's attitude toward teachers has resulted in repeated NUT strikes, which have harmed secondary school quality. This is due to poor treatment and low regard granted to Nigerian teachers.

Inadequate Basic Infrastructure and Educational Facilities

Another significant problem of high-quality secondary education is this. The infrastructure amenities in most Nigerian public secondary schools, such as classroom blocks, scientific labs, workshops for vocational and technical education, and libraries, are drastically inadequate to accommodate the student population. Due to a scarcity of desks and seats in certain schools, kids are forced to sit on shattered bricks and windows during class. The scientific laboratories and workshops in the majority of secondary schools are vacant, missing the necessary equipment and reagents for practical activities. SS3 pupils are often introduced to practicals only a few days before the external assessment begins. The topic of secondary school libraries is no longer an issue. The insufficiency of school infrastructures and instructional facilities has been linked to lower academic attainment in schools, according to studies (Ikoya and Onoyase, 2008).



Lack of and Non-Application of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs)

A problem with excellent secondary education is the unavailability of ICTs and the internet, as well as their non-application in teaching and learning. The federal ministry of education adopted information communication technology as one of the policy innovations and reforms in the educational system in 2004. Every level of the educational system was mandated to use ICT, and an agency was responsible for providing information technology (IT) facilities at all levels. Establishments such as the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and the National Youth Service Scheme were used to "train the trainers." ICT integration in secondary school teaching will serve to improve teaching and learning by providing information sources, assisting instructors in instructional planning, enhancing problem-solving abilities, and improving the quality of teaching and learning (Asiyai, 2009). ICT integration in education leads to a fundamental shift from the traditional teacher-directed or didactic approach, according to Lopez, Kirschner, and Woperies (2003). Telia (2007) discovered that students may access information resources at any time that which saves time for students that it allows schemes to be completed on time, that it accommodates different learning styles, and it caters to a diversity of learners in her study. Despite the benefits of ICTs in secondary schools for teaching and learning, the majority of Nigerian institutions of higher learning lack ICTs. The availability, use, and computer knowledge of students and instructors are all at an all-time low. This "situation" is a boon to the country's secondary school system.

Lack of In-Service Training for Teachers

In-service training is the instruction given to employees while they are working to improve their task performance. Higher instructions of learning instructors must constantly refresh their knowledge and abilities in this era of knowledge and digital transformation. This is because today's information is only good for today. Furthermore, incorporating ICT into the curriculum necessitates the presence of computer-literate instructors. In-service training is required for teachers to keep up to speed on creative learning strategies and the usage of contemporary instructional tools. Teachers that are computer proficient will then pass on their knowledge and abilities to the (earners). Inadequate in-service programs for teacher training and retraining have been a major obstacle in providing high-quality secondary education.

Allocation and adequacy of budgetary provisions for Higher Education in Nigeria

Funding of education in Nigeria involves the Federal, State, and Local Governments' Appropriation and Releases as Capital and Recurrent Expenditure for the education sector. It also includes the Education Trust Fund, Donor Agencies, and Interventions, as well as Scholarship awards by Federal, State, and Local Governments (National Bureau of Statistics, 2011). The bulk of financing of all federal universities is received from the Federal Government through the National Universities Commission (Hartnett, 2000). The budgeting processes and expenditures have to adhere to the budgeting and expenditure formula stipulated by the National Universities Commission (NUC) as follows: 60 percent for total academic expenditure; 39



percent for administrative support; and 1 percent for pension and benefits (Hartnett, 2000). It is mandatory for all federal universities to generate 10 percent of their total yearly funds internally through various revenue diversification means (Odebiyi and Aina, 1999). The Education Tax Decree No. 7 of 1993 stipulates the payment of 2 percent of assessable profits of limited liability companies registered in Nigeria as an education tax to be disbursed according to the ratio of 50: 40: 10 to higher, primary, and secondary education respectively. The share of higher education is further allocated to the universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education in the ratio of 2: 1: 1 respectively (Ajayi and Alani, 1996).

Overcrowded Classroom

This is just another issue that jeopardizes high-quality higher institutions. In most Nigerian higher institutions, class sizes are too large for instructors to manage. The federal ministry of education advised a teacher-to-student ratio of 1:40 in regular classrooms and 1:20 in practical lessons (Giami and Nwokamma, 2019). However, a visit to several secondary schools in metropolitan areas reveals a class size of 1:80.

Data from research

The overcrowding in the classroom poses a significant challenge to the instructors and the quality of their instruction. When the classroom grows too big, instructors spend a lot of time dealing with disciplinary issues and relationships that aren't conducive to teaching and learning. According to studies, a variety of factors influence instructors' teaching efficacy and students' educational outcomes, the most important of which is the school

population and class size (Fabunmi, Brai-Abu & Adeniji, 2001; Al-jark, 2006).

Students Negative Attitude to Learning and Examination Malpractice

The bad attitude of students toward study and their participation in examinations: Malpractices and corruption are two evils that have plagued Nigeria's higher institutions system. At this level, the majority of pupils are uninterested in learning. Their desire to make money has harmed their desire to study. They choose the easy way out, which has harmed students' motivation to learn new skills and information necessary for national growth. Students' negative attitudes are a reflection of society's moral decadence, as Onyeha (2006) put it: "Nigerian students are faced with the temptation to get wealthy quick." This is due to the fact that the wealthy are held in higher respect than the well-educated without wealth. As a result, Nigerian students acquire a taste for programs that would put money in their pockets right now. As a result, pupils are missing from school. They engage in examination misconduct during exams. Exam malpractice is a heinous crime against society, the future of children, and God. It degrades the educational system's credibility.

The Pains of Denied Accessibility to University Education

The pains include:

- (1) The difficulty of acquiring entrance due to the discriminatory admission policy, as well as the need to pass various screening exams and the costly entry fees (Onyeha 2006)
- (2) The dreadful physical screening of thousands of candidates for admission, such as that which occurred in the 2016/2017 academic year due to the



discontinuation of Post University Matriculation Examination (PUME) (Onyeha2006).

(3) The National Universities Commission (NUC) has cancelled all university diploma programs that had previously offered students with options to acquire admission to university (Onyeha2006).

Strikes that cause unwarranted delays and disruptions in academic activity will prevent students from knowing when they will graduate if they are admitted to the university. Nigerian universities' degradation, falling standards, and poor present ratings in comparison to other African and overseas institutions are additional cause for worry (Onyeha2006)

Other terrifying experiences include faulty curriculum (Ajayi & Adeniji 2009), the label of un-employability for Nigerian graduates, and the worries and disappointments of not being able to acquire a job or fix-up after graduation, despite having a wonderful diploma or result. Admission to Nigeria's public colleges is like the proverbial camel passing through the eye of a needle. Only a few students are able to get into their selected course during the JAMB first or second sitting. The candidate is given the option of accepting or rejecting the offer. Adelakun (2013) bemoaned the fact that the present admission trend into higher education has not changed, noting that over a million applicants sit for the UTME each year, yet only a tiny fraction get accepted. According to Abang (1988), Nigerian institutions lack disability-friendly teaching and learning environments.

Gender and Higher Education Access Concerns

Gender and Higher Education Access Concerns regarding educational fairness and gender imbalance have grown in the previous two decades at various levels. In Nigeria, like in the rest of the globe, female enrolment and access to education, particularly at the secondary and tertiary levels, is low. According to Osagie (2008), female enrolment in elementary school is low, which may have an influence on university education. Except in the South East, the average male enrolment is greater than the average female enrolment at the regional level, according to the findings of much research (Atuora 2006). Gender disparities in enrolment at Nigerian universities occurred throughout geopolitical zones and disciplines. It was reported that the rate of female enrolment was steadily increasing, but it was small (Imogie and Eraikhuemen 2008; Adeyemi and Akpotu 2004).

Enriching the students learning through Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) Courses

MOOCs offer opportunities to wrap on-campus courses around existing MOOCs (Koller, 2012). When MOOCs are offered using hybrid formats, it can improve student outcomes and reduce costs (Griffiths, 2014). Bruff et al. (2013), Caulfield et al. (2013), Firmin et al. (2014), Griffiths et al. (2014), and Holotescu et al. (2014) took steps to integrate MOOCs in traditional classroom settings to enhance learning experiences. This approach has been termed as "distributed flip" (Caulfield et al., 2013) or blended/hybrid model (Bruff et al., 2013; Griffiths et al., 2014; Holotescu et al., 2014) in which teachers can integrate online content and



activities with face-to-face to enhance the optimal learning process. Garrison and Vaughan (2008) described the basic principle of blended learning as, “face-to-face oral communication and online written communication are optimally integrated such that the strengths of each are blended into a unique learning experience congruent with the context and intended educational purpose”. The proportion of face-to-face and online learning activities may vary considerably. In fact, the Babson Survey Research Group which conducted a survey of chief academic officers in 2800

College and universities in Nigeria found that typical blended learning has 30% to 79% of its content delivered online using online discussions, video lectures, quizzes, and assignments (Allen & Seaman, 2013). But the key assumptions in designing blended learning are: Thoughtfully integrating face-to-face and online learning, fundamentally restructuring and replacing the course design, and class hours for effective student engagement (Garrison and Vaughan, 2008).

Conclusion and recommendations

Throughout the country, there are disparities in access between men and women. Early findings of low male enrolment in the South East are contradicted by higher male enrolment in that region. There is also a disparity in access between fields. Candidates are recruited to these fields to make up for their admission quotas because most candidates are not interested in studying certain courses, according to the justification given for the high access rates in particular disciplines despite a low number of applications. The discrepancy in access to university education that has been found in Nigeria necessitates

enforced attention and affirmative action to correct it. Based on the findings of this article, the following suggestions are made: - To ensure ease of access and characteristics such as openness to a diverse population and support for a diverse clientele, admission procedures that favor some regions over others, regardless of the school-age population, should be investigated by policymakers and educational authorities. - Government-owned institutions' current infrastructure should be enlarged, when necessary, while private schools with adequate land to spare should be encouraged to expand their facilities with government help. In addition, additional tertiary institutions like polytechnics and colleges of education should be extended and improved with up-to-date facilities to grant Bachelor's degrees in order to alleviate the overcrowding in universities and allow for more new admissions. - Secondary school should be investigated since it is the threshing floor for higher education; ill-prepared secondary school pupils will have low results on the School Certificate, and so will not be able to progress to a higher level of education; - The funding of all levels of education should be taken seriously; the government and other stakeholders should share responsibility for the system's funding; the government should reconsider the issue of university autonomy, as it will allow institutions to seek alternative sources of funding for their programs. However, vigilance should be given so that higher education institutions should not diverge from their fundamental mission of teaching and research to pursue economic ventures.



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