Funding of Tertiary Institutions and Academic Performance of Students in Nigeria

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Abstract

Research Purpose: This paper investigates how inadequate funding impacts the academic performance of students in Nigerian tertiary institutions. With a focus on the Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), it seeks to determine the relationship between funding levels and student outcomes.

Methodology: Data were gathered from secondary sources, including Capital and Recurrent Receipts from the Enugu State Government and the Tertiary Education Trust Fund for 2016 to 2019, alongside student performance metrics. Hypotheses were tested using the coefficient of determination (r^2) and t-statistic at a 95% confidence level with 3 degrees of freedom.

Findings: The analysis revealed a significant relationship between external funding and student performance at ESUT. Improved funding correlates with better academic outcomes for students.

Conclusion: The study concludes that insufficient funding adversely affects student performance in tertiary institutions. Sustained and increased funding is crucial for enhancing the quality of education and student success.

Recommendations: To improve academic performance, the study recommends enhanced and continuous funding for tertiary institutions. Additionally, further research should explore other factors influencing student performance beyond funding.

Key words: *External funding, Education, Tertiary institutions, Performance, Significance.*

1.0 Introduction

By tertiary education is meant the third level of education, that is, after the primary and secondary school levels. In the view of Famade, Omiyale and Adenoma (2015) tertiary education refers to that level of education that comes after secondary education, obtainable from institutions of higher learning, such as universities, polytechnics and colleges of education. It also includes other institutions of higher learning that offer online tuition programmes or correspondence courses. Every organization has challenges. In the same vein, tertiary institutions have challenges of management, funding and so on. Of interest here is the matter of funding challenges. As posited by Nwangwu (2005), the foundation of education could be unstable when it is not well funded. The consequence of such unstable foundation is the turning out of graduates who are most likely to be weak intellectually.

Greater burden of funding tertiary institutions in Nigeria is borne by the federal and state governments. The fact that these levels of government have other responsibilities presupposes that, in a situation of limited resources, there is the likelihood that tertiary education may not be accorded the required attention in terms of adequate funding. This appears to be the case with the attendant instabilities in tertiary education system in Nigeria, as well as the frequent closure of schools leading inevitably to the extension of the school calendar. This development could be traced to either poor funding, insufficient infrastructure and delay, or sometimes failure, in the payments to workers. The effort to find solution to the problem of inadequate funding of tertiary institutions in Nigeria gave birth to the creation of Education Tax Fund (ETF). The ETF was created by the Education Tax Act No 7 and amended by Act No 40 of 1998. The Act requires payment of tax of 2% of assessable profits of companies doing business in Nigeria. Such assessable profits of companies are determined in line with the stipulations of the Companies Income Tax Act (CITA) or the Petroleum Profit Tax Act (PPTA). The Education Tax Fund Act had been repealed and replaced with the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) Act of 2011. The main objective of the Fund, as stated by Ajayi (2018), was to arrest decline in educational standards and decay in infrastructural facilities at all levels of the educational system in Nigeria. To achieve this, it became necessary to work out means of improving the funding arrangement that would enable tertiary institutions to upgrade their infrastructural facilities, improve on their training and development of teachers to shore up their morale. This would also create conducive teaching and learning environments which would, in turn, improve the overall educational standards in the country. In specific terms,

Section 7(1)(a) to (e) of the TETFUND Act 2011 states, among other things, that the objectives of the fund are to oversee the distribution of the amount available to the Fund to federal and state tertiary educational institutions, to assist them in providing physical infrastructure for teaching and learning. It is also designed to enable the tertiary institutions acquire instructional materials and equipment. Other objectives include support for research funding and for publications. Also included in the objectives of the Fund is the provision of financial assistance to support the training and development of both academic and non-teaching staff. Additionally, the objectives also include support for other needs of the public tertiary institutions which the Board of Trustees considers basic and which are required for the sustenance of quality and the maintenance of high standards in Nigerian tertiary institutions (TETFUND Act, 2011).

Attempt would be made in this study to investigate whether a relationship exists between poor funding and performance of students in tertiary education in Nigeria, using Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) as a reference point.

This study is based on external funding of Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) and students performance represented by those who passed with second class honours (lower division) and above, among the graduated first degree students, over the period of study.

The Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) was originally founded as Anambra State University of Science and Technology (ASUTECH) in July 1980, by Act No. 7, 1980 enacted by the then Anambra State House of Assembly. It became the first University of Science and Technology and the first state-owned university in Nigeria. The University was conceived with the aim to establish an institution that will be closely related to the society, its industry and, above all, serve as a stimulant in the technological advancement of the people (ESUT, 2012, p.27). Consequently, the University's motto has remained "Technology for Service." The administrative stucture of the University at inception was patterned along the American system with a President who was the Chief Executive as well as the Chairman of the Governing Council. This arrangement was changed in 1985 (by ASUTECH Edict No. 20 of 1985) to what obtains in the Nigerian university system, with a Pro-Chancellor as the Chairman of the Governing Council and a Vice-Chancellor as the Chief Executive (ESUT, 2012, p.28). With the creation of Enugu State in 1991, the University assumed

its current name of Enugu State University of Science and Technology. Presently, the University has eleven faculties that offer graduate and post-graduate programmes.

Part of the University's source of funding comes from the Enugu State Government as monthly subventions. Occasionally the University also receives capital grants from the State Government for capital projects. Another source of funding comes from the Tertiary Education Fund (TETFUND). The University receives grants for capital projects as well as grants for academic staff training and development from the TETFUND. Funds are also received from the TETFUND to support researches, publications and conference attendance. Other important sources of revenue available to the ESUT are tuition fees and sundry service charges paid by students. However, the tuition fees charged to students are reasonably subsidized in recognition of the subventions being received from the State Government that owns the University.

2.0 Literature Review

The focus of this study concerns effect of funding on the performance of students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Many scholars have carried out studies on this topic and most of them seem to agree that tertiary institutions are not being properly funded. In stressing this point, Sani Ahmed cited World Bank 2010 report which indicated that Nigeria was not doing enough to support higher education compared to some of her less-endowed African countries that allocate appreciable proportion of their yearly budget to education (Ahmed 2015). He did not foresee a change for the better because he argued that governments in Nigeria facing limited and scarce resources, have several competing interests with the results that government-owned higher institutions will continue to be underfunded. As a result, the prevailing situation of insufficient funding occasioning inability to maintain student-teacher ratio, over-crowded lecture halls, dilapidated infrastructure, obsolete equipment and lack of proper investment in research will ultimately result to deterioration in quality of graduate output (World Bank 2010). As a remedy Ahmed (2015) suggested that universities in Nigeria should explore alternative viable sources of funding in order not to depend more on funding from government which will always remain insufficient.

Some commentators do not see inadequate funding of tertiary education by government as due to insufficient resources but as a deliberate action. Asserting that there is no doubt that tertiary institutions in Nigeria are underfunded, Abdulrafiu O.

Bolatito (2017) attributed this situation to the perception by some policy makers that education does not provide immediate returns on investment. He also added, as reasons for poor funding of education, the issue of poor leadership, corruption and mismanagement of resources. He listed some of the adverse effect of poor funding of tertiary education as high level of staff attrition, particularly among the teaching staff, frequent strike actions by staff as well as riots and boycotts of lectures by students. He suggested that tertiary institutions in Nigeria need to respond quickly to the financial challenges confronting them by developing creative and sustainable fundraising alternatives.

A practical example of low-level allocation to education can be gleaned from the budgets of Enugu State of Nigeria for 2017 and 2018. The allocation to education was N18.459 billion and N18.726 billion for 2017 and 2018 respectively, representing 17.46% and 17.25% of total budget of N105.719 billion and N108.563 billion, respectively. This is below the 26% recommended by the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). However, it is pertinent to note that this situation is not peculiar to Enugu State but wide-spread among other states of the federation. Adetula, Dorcas and others (unpublished) expressed worry that on account of poor funding virtually all tertiary institutions in Nigeria lack basic facilities for teaching and learning such as well-equipped laboratories, residential and lecture halls, security and healthcare for both students and staff. They argued that in order to revive the economy the education sector should be aggressively and purposefully funded so as to be able to produce well-educated and skilled manpower. In other words they appeared to be on the same side with those arguing that quality of education is a function of adequate financing.

Afolayan (2015) is of the view that the overall goal of Nigerian tertiary education is to ensure that people acquired requisite knowledge, skills and capacity to enable them attain high quality of life, but that the achievement of this objective is being hampered by the inability of government to provide the required funding. This has not always been the case because the first generation universities in Nigeria that were few were all well-funded in all aspects of teaching and research which enabled them to maintain internationally-acclaimed standards. Reports had it that there were years in which universities received even more than what they requested for, unlike what obtains presently (Okebukola, 2003). One can simply suggest, from the foregoing, that inadequate funding may have resulted not only from the dwindling resources

available to government but also from the exponential rise in the number of public tertiary institutions.

Also identifying with earlier studies on funding of tertiary education in Nigeria, Oluremi (2013) contended that inadequate funding of tertiary education has given rise to issues such as the deterioration of facilities, shortage of current books and journals in the libraries, ill-equipped laboratories and insufficient fund to support research. The likely effect of this situation would be ineffective teaching and learning leading to the production of half-baked graduates. When funding is inadequate, available facilities will be deployed beyond their capacities thus leading to utility difficulties. This is more so in situations where the administrators of some institutions undertake programs which they do not have the capacity to handle. Another factor that puts pressure on available funds to tertiary institutions is the constantly increasing students' enrollment, in situation of limited resources needed to meet up with the funding requirements (Ajayi, 2018).

According to Famade and others (2015), the rush to acquire higher education in Nigeria is high because education is regarded not only as an investment in developing human resources but also a prerequisite for attaining higher economic status. Thus, higher education in Nigeria has witnessed growth in terms of population expansion through increase in enrollment and the establishment of additional institutions. The snag here is that consideration is hardly given to many indices that can guarantee qualitative education while establishing more tertiary institutions or expanding programmes being offered, in order to take in more students. Just as stated by Udoh (2018), Nigeria as a developing nation is witnessing expansion in enrollment of university students. This expansion in enrollment would naturally call for a corresponding increase in funding, but this is not the case. Reason being that governments (federal and states) that provide virtually all the funds needed for capital and recurrent expenditure in public tertiary institutions are faced with other competing needs (Imhabekhai and Tonwe, 2001). This is not the case in most developed countries where payment of tuition fees forms the most important source of funds for running tertiary institutions.

While it is being argued that increase in number of public higher institutions is the reason why governments (federal and state) in Nigeria are unable to fund tertiary institutions properly, the Federal government recently announced the establishment of four new specialist universities. The Federal government also announced the release

of N18 billion grant for the take off of the new universities. The new universities are made up of two universities of technology and two universities of health sciences. The Federal government supported the idea of establishing the four new specialist universities by claiming that "this shall lay a solid foundation for building national preparedness and resilience in anticipation of future challenges in the health sector while reducing medical tourism to other countries" (Oloja, 2021). According to Martins Oloja (2021), the universities of technology will receive N4 billion take-off grant each, while the universities of health sciences will receive N5 billion each. Oloja went ahead to ask the following rhetorical questions: Can a university's solid foundation be laid with N4 billion just earmarked for a new university this time? Should universities be so commonly established like hotels? Can the curricula of the existing 43 universities owned by the Federal government not be expanded to accommodate the new courses to be offered by the new universities? Are the existing universities enjoying adequate funding and manpower needs? What is the relevance of a new university of medical sciences when none of the existing colleges of medicine and teaching hospitals can be relied upon at the moment? In answer to the rhetorical questions, he reasoned that with 170 universities in Nigeria presently (43 owned by the federal government; 48 owned by the state governments and 79 privately-owned) what is needed is better universities not more universities.

Speaking from the functional point of view and adequacy of funding education, Romina Asiyai and Patience Okoro (2019) held that the measure of the functionality of any educational system lies in the ability of the graduates of such educational system to put in practice what is learnt. Continuing, they held that a learner's ability to utilize and apply what was learnt in solving problems depends on the richness and learning experiences the learner was exposed to. Furthermore, they also contended that the teacher's ability to impact students with relevant knowledge and skills depends not only on competence of the teacher but also on the resources provided for teaching and learning, which translates to adequate funding to make available the proper learning environment. This position is also supported by Eravwoke and Ukavwe (2019) who stated that with increasing students' enrollment, in a situation where the available resources are not sufficient to meet funding requirements, there is need for improvement in the funding of higher education in Nigeria for the attainment of the desired objectives. They, however contended that the funding task should not be left to the government alone but should be the combined responsibility of all stakeholders in

education, which includes parents, guardians the general public and the higher institutions too.

3.0   Methodology

The data used for this study were gathered from the audited accounts and first degree results statistics of the Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) from 2016 to 2019. The data were analyzed and tested using coefficient of correlation to determine whether any relationship existed between funding and students' performance. This study was limited to first degree (undergraduate) students. ESUT was chosen because it is the first state-owned university to be established in Nigeria. Since funding is the focus of the study, a state-owned university is chosen because state governments in Nigeria (as against the federal government) are faced with greater financial constraints. The period of study is from 2016 when recession set in, and 2019 before the advent of COVID-19 in Nigeria in 2020 with the associated disruption of economic and social activities. Including data for 2020 would have considerably distorted the trend and rendered analysis unrealistic. The sensitive nature of the needed data for the study (students' academic records) constrained the researcher to limit the study to ESUT where the researcher, who was a principal officer of ESUT, could be allowed access to the records.

3.1   Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 3.2.1: Students Performance Represented by the Percentage of Total Yearly Output that made Second Class Lower Division and Above, Including Unclassified Graduates of Clinical Medicine

Year	Total Output	No. that made 2^2 and Above	Percentage of Total
2016	2,290	1,488	65%
2017	1,976	1531	77.5%
2018	2,378	2,158	91%
2019`	1,054	963	91%

Table 3.2.2: External Funding and Students performance

Year	External Funding (₦ billion)	Performance (Percentage of Total Output)

2016	2.98	65
2017	2.34	77.5
2018	4.52	91
2019	4.4	91

In Table 3.2.1, the faculty by faculty output in the data on appendix is compressed to total university-wide output. The yearly total number of students who graduated with second class lower division and above (including graduates of Medicine whose grades are not classified) is compared with the total number of students that graduated, to arrive at a percentage of the total. This percentage represents level of performance per year. And in Table 3.2.2, the performances obtained in Table 3.2.1 are placed against the respective totals of capital receipts from the Enugu State Government (ESNG) and the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) from 2016 to 2019, to enable measurement of the effect of the capital receipts on students' performance.

A test will be applied to the data in the foregoing sections using a co-efficient of correlation (r) to find out whether there is any relationship between external funding in ESUT and the performance of students, where performance is measured by the percentage of those who passed with second class honours (lower division) and above, over the total number of graduate output. The formula for obtaining the coefficient of correlation (r) is:

$$r = \frac{n\Sigma xy - \Sigma x\Sigma y}{\sqrt{n\Sigma x^2-(\Sigma x)^2}\sqrt{n\Sigma y^2-(\Sigma y)^2}}$$

where, x represents external funding/independent variable

y represents the students' performance/dependent variables

n is the number of years under study = 4

x	x^2	y	y^2	xy
2.98	8.8804	0.65	0.4225	1.937
2.34	5.4756	0.775	0.600625	1.8135
4.52	20.4304	0.91	0.8281	4.1132
4.4	19.36	0.91	0.8281	4.004
Σx 14.24	Σx^2 54.1464	Σy 3.245	Σy^2 2.679325	Σxy 11.8677

Substituting:

$$r = \frac{4(11.8677) - 14.24(3.245)}{\sqrt{4(54.146)-(14.24)^2}\ \sqrt{4(2.679325)-(3.245)^2}}$$

$$r = \frac{47.4708 - 46.2088}{\sqrt{216.584 - 202.7776}\sqrt{10.7173 - 10.530025}}$$

$$r = 0.784836$$

Therefore, $r^2 = 0.6160$ or 61.6%, which is the coefficient of determination

A further test of significance of the correlation between the variables will be conducted using a t-test, thus:

$$t = \frac{r\sqrt{n-1}}{\sqrt{1-r^2}}$$

Substituting, using the data from the above

$$t = 0.784836\ \frac{\sqrt{4-1}}{\sqrt{1-0.6160}} \qquad = 0.784836\ \frac{\sqrt{3}}{\sqrt{0.215164}}$$

$$t = 0.784836\ \frac{1.7321}{0.4636}$$

$$t = 2.93$$

The value of *t* from statistical tables for 3 degrees of freedom at 95% confidence level is 2.353

4.0 Findings and Discussions

The calculated value of r^2 is 0.6160 or 61.60%. What this result shows is that a change in external funding accounts for 61.60% change in the students' performance. Or put in another way, 38.40% of what happens with students' performance is caused by other variables outside external funding. In the same vein, the calculated value of t (2.93) is greater than the statistical value of t (2.353) at 95% confidence level with 3 degrees of freedom. This also shows a significant relationship between the variables. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis (H_o) and accept the alternate hypothesis (H_I) which states that there is significant relationship between funding and students' performance in tertiary institutions.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

The above analyses show that there is significant relationship between funding of tertiary institutions and performance of students. It follows, as argued by Bolatito (2017) that adequate funding of higher education is imperative to providing quality education which would enable the production of competent manpower in Nigeria that can compete globally. It also supports the conclusion by Famade and others (2015), that the growth in students' enrolment should be matched by increase in funding so as to be able to create enabling environment for quality education to thrive. The outcome of this study also agrees with Olaleye (2013) to the effect that since students' performance is arguably a function of adequate funding, Nigerian public universities are gradually losing their erstwhile acceptability on account of poor students' output resulting from poor funding. All the foregoing observations point to one direction, namely, the need for adequate and sustained funding of education in order to ensure quality output of students.

The scope of this current study is narrow for reasons earlier stated. There is need for further study involving wider range of public higher institutions across various geographical zones of Nigeria, not only to confirm the conclusion reached in this study but also to identify other factors other than funding that generally affect students' performance

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Appendices

Table 1*: Capital and Recurrent Grants Received by ESUT from Enugu State Government and TETfund: 2016-2019.*

ENSG/TETFUND	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total

Enugu State Government	₦	₦	₦	₦	₦
Capital	__	250,000,000	276,000,000	__	526,000,000
Recurrent	1,352,179,465	1,573,016,498	3,269,122,063	2,448,000,000	9,168,318,026
Sub-Total (a)	1,352,179,465	1,823,016,498	3,545,122,063	2,448,000,000	9,694,318,026
TETFUND					
Capital	1,411,193,369	388,120,000	711,873,197	1,823,707,520	4,334,894,086
Recurrent	154,378,289	148,682,918	261,027,082	123,301,483	687,389,772
Sub-Total (b)	1,565,571,658	536,802,918	972,900,279	1,947,009,003	5,022,283,858
Grand Total (a+b)	**2,976,765,027**	**2,359,819,416**	**4,518,022,234**	**4,395,009,003**	**14,716,601,884**

Source: *Audited Accounts of ESUT from 2016 to 2019*

Table 2: *Statistics of Possible Graduands: 2016 to 2019*

Faculty	2016	2017	2018	2019
Agriculture and Natural Resources	120	140	122	122
Applied Natural Sciences	616	671	600	687
Basic Medicine	56	83	257	257
Clinical Medicine	107	111	101	96
Education	310	312	315	281
Engineering	612	653	539	454
Environmental Sciences	103	177	128	119
Law	125	119	109	138
Management Sciences	953	880	974	859
Pharmaceutical Sciences	__	__	__	148
Social Sciences	426	468	551	499
Total	**3,428**	**3,614**	**3,696**	**3,660**

Table 3: *Graduate Output 2015/2016*

Faculty	1st Class	2nd Class		Ungraded	Others	Total
		Upper	Lower			
Agriculture and Natural Resources	__	29	66	__	8	**103**
Applied Natural Sciences	2	146	242	__	51	**441**
Basic Medicine	__	3	6	__	__	**9**
Clinical Medicine	__	__	__	34	__	**34**

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Education	__	18	66	__	60	**144**
Engineering	__	81	236	__	227	**544**
Environmental Sciences	__	19	28	__	11	**58**
Law	1	27	62	__	20	**110**
Management Sciences	1	36	182	__	303	**522**
Pharmaceutical Sciences	__	__	__	__	__	__
Social Sciences	__	66	137	__	122	**325**
Total	**4**	**425**	**1,025**	**34**	**802**	**2,290**

Table 4: Graduate Output 2016/2017

Faculty	1st Class	2nd Class		Ungraded	Others	Total
		Upper	Lower			
Agriculture and Natural Resources	__	3	22	__	5	**30**
Applied Natural Sciences	__	35	82	__	40	**157**
Basic Medicine	__	17	14	__	__	**31**
Clinical Medicine	__	__	__	33	__	**33**
Education	__	37	57	__	10	**104**
Engineering	__	22	117	__	95	**234**
Environmental Sciences	__	12	38	__	12	**62**
Law	1	35	60	__	23	**119**
Management Sciences	__	118	654	__	249	**1,021**
Pharmaceutical Sciences	__	__	__	__	__	__
Social Sciences	__	44	130	__	11	**185**
Total	**1**	**323**	**1,174**	**33**	**445**	**1,976**

Table 5: Graduate Output 2017/2018

Faculty	1st Class	2nd Class		Ungraded	Others	Total
		Upper	Lower			
Agriculture and Natural Resources	__	62	81	__	8	**151**
Applied Natural Sciences	2	162	409	__	42	**615**

Basic Medicine	__	12	6	__	18	**36**
Clinical Medicine	__	__	__	55	__	**55**
Education	__	19	20	__	2	**41**
Engineering	2	68	200	__	33	**303**
Environmental Sciences	__	4	46	__	8	**58**
Law	__	34	53	__	22	**109**
Management Sciences	1	128	606	__	76	**811**
Pharmaceutical Sciences	__	__	__	__	__	__
Social Sciences	__	41	147	__	11	**199**
Total	**5**	**530**	**1,568**	**55**	**220**	**2,378**

Table 6: *Graduate Output 2018/2019*

Faculty	1st Class	2nd Class		Ungraded	Others	Total
		Upper	Lower			
Agriculture and Natural Resources	__	2	30	__	__	**32**
Applied Natural Sciences	__	16	26	__	5	**47**
Basic Medicine	__	11	10	__	__	**21**
Clinical Medicine	__	__	__	55	__	**55**
Education	__	12	46	__	__	**58**
Engineering	__	1	93	__	15	**109**
Environmental Sciences	__	13	36	__	__	**49**
Law	1	27	72	__	23	**123**
Management Sciences	__	57	326	__	47	**430**
Pharmaceutical Sciences	__	__	__	__	__	__
Social Sciences	__	32	97	__	1	**130**
Total	**1**	**171**	**736**	**55**	**91**	**1,054**

Sources: *Data in tables 2 to 6 are from the Directorate of Academic Planning of ESUT*