

Issues and Opportunities of Funding Public Tertiary Education in Third World Countries: The Nigerian Experience

Lawrence O. ODEH & Henry M. OBASOGIE

Abstract

Education has been described as a veritable instrument for achieving national and sustainable development in every countries of the world. The major developmental challenges in Nigeria at the moment is the poor teaching and research service delivery of the tertiary education in the country, a problem that has been attributed to inadequate funding of this sector. It is on this basis that this article examined the challenges and prospects of funding public tertiary education in Nigeria, using the secondary method of data collection which relies on the consultation of text books, academic journal articles, government documents and circulars, internet sources and so on. After examining various academic materials and documents as well as other reports on the issue, it was discovered that the tertiary education in Nigeria is grossly underfunded, and its management is characterized by lack of political will on the part of policy makers, and endemic corruption perpetuated by the administrators of the tertiary education sector; a trend that has adversely affected its effective performers. In the light of the above, several recommendations and policy options were proffered as way forward towards mitigating the ugly trend in the tertiary education sector of Nigeria. These are: the creation of autonomy for universities, drastic eradication of corruption, introduction of affordable school fees, allocation of funds based on institutional achievement, adherence to UNESCO 26 per cent budgetary appropriation to education, embarking on a public-private initiatives of funding tertiary education, and so on.

Keywords: *Funding, tertiary education, challenges, national development.*

Introduction

The Nigerian tertiary education is aimed at the achievement of having Nigerian citizens who are highly skilled and well prepared for the world of work, sustainable national development and who have the requisite expertise for global competitiveness. However, the daunting state of the tertiary institutions in Nigeria has become worrisome, especially, with respect to the achievement of the above mentioned developmental indices. The desire for popular education has become so high in Nigeria due to its two folds contributions to the development of human capital, and as a pre-requisite for economic growth and development (Adeyemo, 2000). The National Policy on Education (2004) states that education is the exclusive preserve of the government, in which the government at all levels is charged with the responsibility of provision of free education when practicable. This fact was further consolidated when the Nigerian government took over most of the schools in the country from primary to tertiary level in the mid – 70s. Education system in Nigeria has undergone several government reforms initiated by immediate past governments, and which at the present moment has not in any way contributed significantly to the standard of education in Nigeria (Nwosu, 2009, cited in Afolayan, 2015). Contrary to the above position, if the financing of higher education should be the left exclusively for the government, the access to both quality and quantity of such education service shall elude the citizenry, since education is in competition with other sectors of the society for scarce public funds appropriations. So, government will usually not allocate huge funds to one sector to the detriment of other sectors (Lawal, 2013).

The Nigerian universities education is bedeviled by underfunding which has put the management of the universities under stress and strains, and which has incapacitated the provision of quality higher education services to the citizenry (Imhabeckhai and Tonwe; Akinsanya, 2007, cited in Afolayan, 2015). In an attempt to achieve development, developing countries have realized that the development of higher education through increased funding is a pre-requisite for a positive change in the education sector; since the quality of education is dependent on teaching, learning, research and the availability of quality manpower which are desideratum to national development (UNESCO, 2002, cited in Afolayan, 2015).

Tertiary education or higher education refers to the various study and training on how to conduct research at post-secondary level of education, which is made available basically by universities, and in lesser proportion by several other higher educational institutions that have the requisite approval of the appropriate state agencies (UNESCO, 2003). In simple terms, it refers to all forms of post-secondary education, such as the universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, monotecnics and professional schools (Abdu, 2003). Similarly, tertiary education means the post-secondary level of education which comprises the universities, polytechnics, monotecnics, colleges of education, and other higher professional schools (Abdu, 2003, cited in Akinsanya, 2007). The major developmental challenges in Nigeria at

the moment is caused by the poor funding of the tertiary institutions, which are the engine of economic growth and development. The zeal of Nigerian politicians and other stakeholders for tertiary education is at variance with their commitment to the sector in terms of showing financial and developmental commitment to the sector. Presently, the APC-led government of President Muhammadu Buhari has just allocated a meagre 5-7 percent of the entire annual budget to the Nigerian education sector, contrary to the United Nations Education Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommendation of a minimum of 26 percent of annual budget to education in Third World countries (Azenabor, 2021). The need for adequate financing of tertiary education in Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized based on the fact that tertiary education is the bedrock of the development of every other sectors like the political, economic, technological, religious, bureaucratic and so on (Nnamdi and Nwite, 2014). Although, the private sectors organizations have begun establishment of private tertiary institutions in Nigeria due to the inability of public tertiary institutions to absorb the yearly massive applicants to tertiary institutions, the government still owe the citizens the right to affordable and accessible tertiary education due to its implications to national development, and capacity of bridging the gap between the wealthy social class and their poor counterpart. As a result of these significant position of tertiary education in Nigeria, there is therefore, the urgent need for both the Federal, state and the private sectors that have recently been complementing the efforts of the government in this regard to apportion more financial resources to tertiary education in order to effectively achieve its noble goals of teaching, research and community services in line with UNESCO recommendation of 26 percent of the annual budgetary appropriation for education.

There is high desire for tertiary education acquisition in Nigeria due to its implications of human capital development and propensity to engender economic development (Adeyemo, 2000). The National Policy on Education (2004), aptly stated that education is a public good that must be made available to citizens by the government (National Policy on Education (2004); Abdu, 2003, cited in Akinsanya, 2007). Education is a costly social infrastructure that requires adequate finance from all levels of government for effective implementation of its policies and programmes. In this respect, private sector actors are encouraged to also make meaningful impact in realization of this national objective that is of paramount importance to the nation's sustainable growth and development.

The Nigeria government after independence in 1st October, 1960, adopted the public education as a policy instrument to promote national identity in the midst of ethnic and religious diversity. Successive governments built on this approach of using public education to achieve the nation building and develop the manpower needed for the exportation and exploitation of the nation's natural resources for economic growth and development (Sunal, Sunal and Ose, 1994; George, Olayiwola, Adewale and Osabuohien, 2013). The current policy on education in Nigeria is dated back to the

Curriculum Conference of 1969, organized by the Federal Government through the Nigerian Educational Research Council (George, et al, 2013). The Conference gave rise to the 6-3-3-4 system of education which was enshrined in the National Policy of Education (NPE) of 1977 (Adepoju, 2007). A draft policy on education was deliberated by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1997, and the draft was subsequently approved for implementation in 1981, and revised in 1995 (Awoniyi, 2007). This 6-3-3-4 system implies 6 years of primary education, 3 years of junior secondary education, another 3 years for senior secondary education and 4 years of tertiary education system, such as the universities, polytechnics, monotechnics and colleges of education. The 6-3-3-4 system was oriented towards science and technology, which are the instruments needed for technological and economic growth and development as opposed to the defunct 6-5-4 system of education in Nigeria (Tsadu, 1998; Adepoju, 2007). This system entails 6 years in primary school, 5 years in secondary school and 4 years of tertiary education.

Theoretical Framework

The Resource-Based Theory

The study is based on the resource-based theory due to its strategic explanatory role of sustainable funding of tertiary education, a subject that has become necessary due to the weak budgetary capacity of Nigerian tertiary institutions and the inability to properly determine operational costs and revenue generation. There is the urgent need to device a logical framework to capture the significant activities of the corresponding flow of resources to support them. The theory creates the enablement for all units of the university to be strategically and financially structured and transparent. It assist the units of the institutions to achieve financial balance, while being conscious of the resource implications of their programmes and activities, and to be proactive towards associated challenges. The theory is based on objectivity since it can determine the amount of resources needed by a university within a given time frame and further assist the institution in sourcing for such funds in a sustainable manner so as to be able to overcome the vicissitudes of solely relying on the proprietor (such as the government) for funding and the uncertainty of its operating environment (Bamiro and Adedeji, 2010, cited in Ogbogbo, 2011). The relevance of the resource-based theory is based on its logical and dynamic alternative approach to funding tertiary education in Nigeria in order to ensure their effective service delivery and sustainable competitiveness.

External Influence on Educational Costs

Many socio-economic forces external to educational system has consistently affected the cost of education service delivery. These are: the requirements for manpower, increased desire for education, introduction of equity in tertiary educational opportunities, and trends in demographic characteristics. Inadequate manpower result to a crunch in economic and social development of a country

(Mbipon, 2000, cited in Lawal, 2013). Economic planning and manpower forecast must be given a serious thought in embarking on educational planning. There should be provisions for the appropriate quality and quantity of manpower in different areas of the economy. The provision of the adequate man power in quantity and quality is capital intensive. There has been an annual surge in the enrolment of students in schools, which eventually led to increase cost of managing educational infrastructures. The present emphasis placed on science and technology education led to the proliferation of several universities of science and technologies across the country, these trend has contributed immensely to the existing challenge of educational costs. The issue of affirmative action in education, that is, creating equity of educational opportunities has given rise to the admission of many students into tertiary institutions in the country. This situation has inadvertently caused the cost of funding education in Nigeria to blossom. In all of these, “more building to accommodate the students, more teachers, more equipment and more money is needed for the expenses” (Akpan, 1995, cited in Lawal, 2013, p. 10-11).

The cost of education has also been triggered by the high inflation rate in the country. However financial resources is a desideratum in the successful and effective implementation of educational policies. The members of staff should be paid their salaries and other entitlements as and when due in order to motivate them to a high job performance, instructional materials should be purchased and made available. In addition, there should be rehabilitation and maintenance of existing structures, and the construction of new ones, staff and student development programs should be embarked upon, fund should be set aside to attend to the needs of meetings and other related expenses. If education cost is influenced by several external variables, it therefore implies that relying on government alone to solely fund it will be an uphill task (Lawal, 2013).

Sources of Public Tertiary Education Funding in Nigeria

One major means of funding public tertiary education in Nigeria is funding from the public treasury of either the federal or state governments. This approach is peculiar to public tertiary institutions. Tuition fees is another useful method of funding tertiary institutions in Nigeria, which according to Nnamdi and Nwite (2014), is insignificant in comparison with the overall cost of funding these institutions, and is only based on the assumption that, “little drops of water make an ocean”. Internally generated funds are also veritable sources of funding for tertiary institutions.

The universities in Nigeria have responded to embarking on commercial undertaking to meet up with the government's mandate that each university must generate a minimum of 10 per cent of its total revenue. The commercial ventures varies from one type to the other depending on the nature of the university and where they are located within the country. Some of these ventures include: consultancies, petrol or gas stations, bookshops, publishing houses, schools, hotels, bakeries, sachet water

factories and so on (Ogbogbo, 2013).

Several tertiary institutions in Nigeria derive their funding from private sector contributions to universities, such as endowments of prizes and professorial chairs, gifts and voluntary donations (Ajayi & Alani, 1996, cited in Ogbogbo, 2011). Others include donations from philanthropic individuals and organizations. This approach of funding is irregular and so cannot be solely relied upon in executing programmes that are routine in nature. Tertiary institutions depend on endowment funds as sources of funding. This can be a kind of money or property apportioned to a tertiary institution to further generate income. Other sources of funding for tertiary institutions include local community aids, and consultancy services, where experts in tertiary institutions are consulted by outside agencies to help them establish modern forms of organizations and creative innovations, usually, this is followed by payment of certain agreed fees.

The major funding for Nigeria's public tertiary education system is through taxation and other revenue sources accrued to the government, such as the petroleum revenue, and so on. The proportion of allocation of these revenue to the various levels of education are 30%, 30% and 40% for primary, secondary and tertiary education levels respectively (Balami, 2003). Other indirect methods of funding public education are subsidies to households in the form of tax reduction, scholarships, students' bursary payment, loans and grants. In a nutshell, the specific ways through which public tertiary education are funded in Nigeria are the federal taxes and duties on petroleum profits, imports and exports, and the value added tax introduced in 1996 (Hinchliffe, 2002, cited in Abiogwu, n.d.).

There has been a public-private partnership initiative to funding tertiary education in Nigeria. A case in view is the Education Trust Fund (ETF) project, which was established in 1993 to assist in project execution in educational institutions so as to enhance the quality of education in the country (Bamiro & Adedeji, 2010, cited in Ogbogbo, 2011). In a bid to ensure it effective performance and sustenance, the enabling Act which set up the agency charged 2 per cent Education Tax on the profits of all registered companies in Nigeria. At the moment, ETF is a formidable source of funding for the various public educational institutions in Nigeria. The emphasis of the agency is basically on the tertiary institutions, where it has assisted the institutions to embark on capital projects. It also assist the institutions in the provision, and upgrading of teaching, learning, research, and the development of the requisite human capital for efficient and effective operation of tertiary institutions in the country (Bamiro and Adedeji, 2010, cited in Ogbogbo, 2011). The Government of Nigeria has also engaged in education public-private partnership project to rescue the dilapidated structures in tertiary education, and to fund training and researches through another agency called Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND).

In addition, other sources of funding higher education in Nigeria are: funds contributed by government as proprietor of public educational institutions, private contributions by commercial organizations in the form of occasional grants for specific

purposes, tuition and fees, gifts, investment income, auxiliaries (enterprises, licenses, parents and alumni association), consultancies and research activities, community participation, and so on (Akinsanya, 2007, cited in Afolayan, 2015, p.67). The tertiary education in Nigeria was also, beneficiaries of international aids from various international organizations, such as the World Bank, which has contributed 120 million US dollars to projects titled: Federal Universities Development Sector Operation (Odebiyi & Aina, 1999; Babalola, Sikwibele & Suleiman, 2000, cited in Afolayan, 2015).

Problems of Funding Tertiary Education in Nigeria

One major problem of funding tertiary education in Nigeria is the dwindling oil revenue due to militancy, social agitation for fair representation in the sharing of the national cake by host communities, oil theft and bunkering activities in the creeks of Niger Delta, as well as other criminal activities hindering effective oil production in the oil producing areas. Other challenges include the vicissitudes experienced by crude oil prices in the international market which has adversely affected the revenue allocation to various sectors in the national economy including education. The crisis of dutch disease of the Nigerian state occasioned by the inability of the federal and state governments to diversify their revenue sources, thereby causing undue financial pressure on the mono-economy due to several pressing demands from various vital sectors of the economy has been responsible for the drastic reduction in allocation of financial resources to various sectors, including the tertiary education. The incessant security challenges in the country has led to an astronomical budgetary appropriation for the defence and security sectors to the detriment of other vital sectors like the tertiary education. A case worth mentioning is the twelve Super Tucano bombarding jets recently procured by the Nigerian government from the United States despite the extremely high exchange rate of Nigeria's currency to the United States Dollars.

The fight against Covid 19 has also adversely affected the disbursement of funds for tertiary education development in Nigeria. For example, the Federal Government sometime in the year 2020 proposed N500 billion naira for the purchase of Covid 19 vaccine to vaccinate 70 percent of Nigerians from Covid 19 infections (Olisah, 2020; News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), 2021).

Systemic corruption in Nigeria has also negatively affected funding of tertiary institutions as most of the funds that would have been available for the development of various tertiary institutions have been embezzled and misappropriated by several top officials of the government and the universities' administrators. A case still fresh in our memory is that of the former Minister of Education Professor Osuji, who was arraigned for attempt to unduly inflate the budget of the Ministry of Education (Sahara Reporters, 2010). Such tendency of primitive accumulation of public wealth meant for development has been described by political scientists as rent seeking.

The lack of political will on the part of the policy makers in funding and

developing the tertiary education sector has been identified as a major issue affecting this sector. The evidence of this trend is obvious in the series of unimplemented memorandum of understanding between the Federal Government of Nigeria and the Academic Staff Union of Universities, which has culminated in several unwarranted strike actions that have nearly paralyzed tertiary education system in Nigeria.

The inability of the Nigerian state to effectively collect the taxes due to her has led to a chronic short fall of the nation's revenue. This general paucity of funds due to inefficient and corrupt tax officials has also contributed in no small measure to shrinking of the funds available for funding tertiary education.

Another major challenge of tertiary education in Nigeria is brought about by the affirmative policy of educationally disadvantaged areas, a process that has led to huge funds being allocated to institutions with less students' enrollment in the guise of the above mentioned policy, and to the detriment of the highly populated and competitive institutions in the so-called educationally advantaged areas. This idea of not allocating educational resources according to the needs of individual institutions, but according to some constructivist contraption is a disservice to the growth and development of tertiary education in Nigeria (Abdu, 2003; Akintayo, 2004; Nnamdi and Nwite, 2014).

The rising social demand for education has put political pressure on the government to establish more tertiary education even though they lack the capacity for their continuous funding and maintenance. Apart from the newly established tertiary institutions, the existing ones have become dilapidated without any meaningful state of the art facilities (Nnamdi and Nwite, 2014). This political response to the aforementioned social pressure on demand for higher education has been a major issue confronting the effective funding of tertiary education in Nigeria. The response to such interest articulation has made the government's response to be akin to biting more than it can chew. The pegging of tertiary institutions' admission quota by the government has drastically reduced the numbers of students' intake even by institutions that have the capacity to absorb more students, such trend has also reduced the huge revenue that would have been accrued to the various affected institutions by way of payment of tuition and other fees and levies by students (Akinsanya, 2007).

Several other challenges of inadequate funding of tertiary education in Nigeria have been identified. These are: the curtailment of laboratory/practical classes; limited number of field trips; curtailment in the attendance of academic conferences; curtailment of the purchase of library books, chemicals and basic laboratory equipment; freezing of new appointments; virtual embargo on study fellowships; reduction in research grants, amongst others; too narrow strategic profiles and core areas; loss of variety in research and teaching; dangerous close down of studies not in demand at present or expensive (unprofitable) studies; loss of autonomy through increased dependence from external principals (third party funding); internal centralization and expansion of administration; increased administrative burdens at the expenses of research and teaching; reduced coordination (harmonization) between

universities because of increased competition (Akintoye, 2008, cited in Afolayan, 2015, p. 67).

The World Bank in 2010, cited in Famurewa (2014) stated that the African continent has the worst case of poor funding of tertiary education, especially, the universities (Gambo, 2019). The Nigeria's current incapacity to fund tertiary education apart from the recently experienced global economic recession which has adversely affected most economies of the world can be traced to huge foreign and domestic debts of the nation, poor revenue generation from the non-oil sector which the government exclusively depended upon, mismanagement and misappropriation of scarce economic resources, high level of corruption in all facets of the economy, and so on (Gambo, 2019). Most recent crises rocking the Nigeria universities are rooted in problems of poor funding of the institutions. These crises ranges from non-payment of salaries and allowances of workers, poor welfare services of students, the challenges of inadequate buildings for use as classrooms, offices, laboratories, hostels, under-equipped laboratories, tertiary education staff residential accommodation, and other facilities in general. In most cases, these issues usually degenerate into student riots in the universities and other tertiary institutions, strike actions by both academic staff and non-academic staff unions (Gambo, 2019). Some of the strike actions could be as long as 9 months Nigeria.

As at the time of writing this article, all the academic staff of public universities in Nigeria have embarked on a three months warning strike over poor funding of the public universities by both the Federal and state Governments. Just about one month in the three months warning strike by the academic staff union, the non-academic staff union of all universities in Nigeria has also joined their academic counterpart in the strike action. So, as at the time of writing this article, the entire public universities in Nigeria, a country with a population of over 200 million, and where majority of the university students are in the public universities, have currently embarked on total strike action due to the paucity of public funds to meet the demands of both the academic and non-academic staff unions. The university workers' unions stated that at the expiration of the three months' notice, if the government refuses to meet their demands, they would embark on an indefinite strike action, which implies further closure of public universities activities in Nigeria after the expiration of the three months warning strike. Recall that an academic semester in the Nigerian universities academic calendar is exactly three months. So, the universities in Nigeria will have to lose a semester of no academic work due to the ongoing three months warning strike.

“It is however worrisome that the available funds in universities are not judiciously used for the purpose for which it is meant. Corruption which has become the order of the day in the Nigerian polity is also becoming prominent in universities” (Gambo, 2009, p. 83-84). “In essence, universities are facing the problem of funding not only because of the hard times the economy of the nation is undergoing but because the available funds are actually not judiciously utilized by the administrators of

Nigerian universities” (Gambo, 2019, p. 84).

Recommendations

1. The government at all levels should appropriate 26 percent of their annual budgetary allocation to education in line with the UNESCO recommendation of 26 percent budgetary allocation to education by all Third World countries.
2. The Federal Government should as a matter of urgency abolish the Integrated *Payroll and Personnel information system (IPPIS)* payment platform for tertiary education sector, especially, the universities, as it has proved dysfunctional and demoralizing in the payment of salaries. This would further compound the remuneration challenges rocking the public university system. Rather, the University Transparency and Accountability Solution (UTAS) which the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASSU) had earlier recommended to the Federal Government for their salary payment should be adopted in place of IPPIS. This would ensure the adequate and effective utilization of the limited funding for the payment of the salary of staff of tertiary education.
3. The federal and state governments should prioritize the funding of tertiary education in the country through the drastic cut down on the cost of state administration. This becomes necessary since education, especially, tertiary education is the catalyst to every nations' growth and development. No nation has ever achieved a meaningful socio-economic and technological growth and development without an adequate investment in its tertiary education system. This can better be achieved through the restructuring of all legislative institutions in the country to operate on part-time bases, such that they would only be entitled to monthly stipends, sitting allowances, the payment of their cost of logistics, such as legislative paper works, payment of flight tickets, and provision of temporary official accommodation to enhance legislative sittings, and so on. All such payments should be duly accounted for. In addition, the government should abolish payments, such as dressing allowances, estacodes for all members of legislature, constituency funds, unnecessary international seminars and conferences, and other entitlements that were hitherto institutionalized by them.

The same approach should be extended to the executive arm of government, such as the drastic cut down on personal aides and advisers of chief executives, from the local government chairmen, the state governors and the president as well as their various appointees. The downsizing and right sizing of the nation's bureaucracy including the scrapping of unproductive public agencies, such as the offices of first ladies, the various religious organizations' Pilgrimage Boards,

removal of security votes of all the chief executives in the country. The justification of this view is hinged on the fact that the worsened insecurity in the country has been attributed to the long time neglect and inadequate funding of education in the country.

The funds recovered from the above stated political restructuring should be invested in the public education system, with special emphasis on the tertiary education. This, if adopted would create an enabling environment for the tertiary institutions, especially, the universities to achieve the noble goal of effective teaching, research and development.

4. The universities should reach out to industries in the country in order to ascertain areas of collaboration between them so as to facilitate and create relevance for their consultancy services.
5. The Federal Government of Nigeria through its appropriate ministries should encourage the various multinational companies (MNCs) operating in the country to as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) donate library, scientific and technological laboratory, as well as other critical infrastructures, to various universities and other tertiary institutions in the country. The selection of a university for such entitlements should be based on the NUC ranking of universities. This is to encourage universities to embark on employment of their academic staff strictly on merit basis, and to shun recruitment based on prebendal and patronage consideration, as well as encouraging them to generally strive for moral and academic excellence.
6. The clamour for increase in tuition fees and privatization of public universities in some quarters should be jettisoned. This is sequel to the fact that the services rendered by public universities are purely public goods, and also, in Nigeria, there are more people living in poverty than those living above it. For example, the National Bureau of Statistics in 2022, put the figure of those Nigerians living in poverty at 63 percent. So, this implies that any policy aimed at the privatization of public universities in Nigeria or fund them through strict reliance on tuition fees is not feasible. In addition, the World Bank recently classified Nigeria as the poverty capital of the world. Moreover, UNICEF has consistently classified Nigeria as having one of the highest rate of out of school children in the world. These issues indicate that the path of public education in the country should be towards robust public funding, affordability and accessibility to the entire citizenry.
7. Finally, construction and building of universities infrastructures, such as students' hostel accommodation, staff accommodation, and other similar critical

infrastructures should be concessioned to private entrepreneurs on public-private partnership arrangement of build operate and transfer model. That is, after the private entrepreneurs have recovered their cost of building such facilities, and return on investment on the facilities over an agreed period of time, they would eventually hand over the facilities to the universities who would then be the legitimate owner.

8. The tax rate of 2 percent that has been used as source of funding Tertiary Education Fund (TETFUND) should be increased to a minimum of 8 percent at the first instance. This is to enable the agency achieve more in terms of funding infrastructural and research development across Nigerian tertiary institutions, and to enable the nations' public universities compete favourably with their foreign counterparts.

Conclusion

Education is the bedrock of any civilization. No country has been observed to have achieved a meaningful development without first making a huge investment in her education sector. Today, the backward trend in Nigeria's socio-economic and technological advancement has been traced to her poor investment in the education sector since she gained her independence on 1st October, 1960. This non-chalant approach adopted in managing and developing the education sector has culminated into several crises in the sector, such as prolonged and incessant strike actions embarked upon by the nation's leading academic union, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) alongside other unions of the various tertiary institutions. It has become obvious that despite lacking the political will, the Nigerian Government alone cannot shoulder the full responsibility of funding tertiary education, and so, it should be assisted by all major stake holders, such as parents/guardian, the private sectors, alumni associations and the society in general (Akinsanya,2007). Therefore, adequate investment in tertiary education is one formidable strategy of achieving national development by the less developed countries (UNESCO, 2002, cited in Akinsanya, 2007).

In the light of the foregoing, the article examined the challenges and prospects of funding public tertiary education in Nigeria. The resource-based theory was adopted as the theoretical framework of the article. The theory, according to Bamiro and Adedeji (2010, cited in Ogbogbo, 2011) is centered on objectivity because it has the capacity of determining the level of resources required by a tertiary institution with a specific time scope and also enable the institution to achieve the requisite level of funding in a manner that is sustainable, and to discourage the total reliance on the institutions' proprietor for funding.

Education service delivery in Nigeria has been affected by several socio-economic forces that are external to the educational system of the country. These

include: the requirements of manpower, increased desire for education, introduction of equity in tertiary educational opportunities, and trends in demographic characteristics (Mbipon, 2000, cited in Lawal, 2013). In the light of the above factors which have tremendous influence on the cost of provision of education, the funding of public tertiary education should not be the exclusive preserve of the government (Lawal, 2013). Several sources of funding tertiary education in Nigeria were identified in the article. These include: the public treasury of the federal and state governments, tuition fees collection from all category of students, internally generated funds, diversity of commercial ventures, which depends on the tertiary institutions and their various location. Several of these ventures may include: consultancies, petrol or gas stations, bookshops, publishing houses, schools, hotels, bakeries, sachet water factories, and so on (Nnamdi & Nwite, 2014; Ogbogbo, 2013).

Other sources of funding public tertiary institutions in Nigeria are the private sector funding, such as endowments of prizes and professorial chairs, gifts and voluntary donations, as well as donations from philanthropic individuals and organizations (Ajayi & Alani, 1996, cited in Ogbogbo, 2011). The major source of funding for Nigeria's public tertiary education system is basically through taxation and duties on petroleum profits, imports and exports, and the value added tax. Other indirect methods of funding public education are subsidies to households in the form of tax reduction, scholarships, students' bursary payment, loans and grants (Hinchliffe, 2002, cited in Abiogwu, n.d.).

The Federal Government of Nigeria has embarked on a public-private partnership arrangement in funding tertiary education in recent times, such as the Education Trust Fund (ETF) Project, which amongst other functions is saddled with the responsibility of assisting in infrastructural project execution in educational institutions (Bamiro & Adedeji, 2010, cited in Ogbogbo, 2011). The Nigerian tertiary education had also benefitted from various international agencies, such as the World Bank (Odebiyi & Aina, 1999; Babalola, Sikwibele & Suleiman, 2000, cited in Afolayan, 2015).

Several problems of funding tertiary education in Nigeria were identified in this research work. They include: the drastic short fall in oil revenue caused by the militancy, social agitations and criminal activities in the Niger Delta Region, and the unstable crude oil prices in the international market; the challenges of dutch disease prevalent among the resourceful Third World countries, including Nigeria; the challenges of insecurity in Nigeria that has become intractable and thus leading to an astronomical budgetary appropriations for the defence sector, and to the detriment of the education sector; the fight against the dreaded Covid 19 virus has also posed a serious threat to funding of tertiary education in Nigeria, and other Third World countries. Others are the systemic corruption in the country; the lack of political will in funding tertiary education amongst others.

In the light of the above, several recommendations were made as panacea to the challenges of funding tertiary education in Nigeria. These include: the appropriation of 26 percent of annual budgets of government at all levels to education sector; the abolishment of IPPIS and the adoption of UTAS as a medium of payment of the salaries of staff of federal universities and other tertiary institutions; the drastic reduction in the cost of governance in order to make adequate funds available for funding tertiary education; the universities and industries collaboration through consultancy services; encouragement of MNCs to embark on CSR in universities; making public tertiary education affordable and accessible to the masses, and public-private partnership in infrastructural development in tertiary institutions..

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