

**FUNDING PUBLIC TERTIARY EDUCATION: ROLES OF
TERTIARY EDUCATION TRUST FUND (TETFund) AND ITS
FUTURE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

A paper presented by the

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INTRODUCTION

The Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria, Alumni Association first started in the 1960's in Lagos by some of the pioneer graduates of the University. This was in the form of undergraduate meetings with few members in attendance, thereafter a Working Committee was created for the Association in 1975 and branches were opened in different parts of the country. Over the years, the Alumni Association continue to grow and expand not just in member and branches, but in terms of its operations and functions. It further continues where a Board of Trustees, with formal registration of members, hosting reunion dinners nights etc. generally, Alumni Association provide forum and opportunities of networking among people and sometime serve as platforms for giving back to the one's alma mater. The dinner night's meetings of Alumni Association serve as a platform for unification of members, interaction amongst graduates, to remind themselves of old school days and basically to provide various supports to their members.

Significantly, the purpose of the ABU alumni association is to uplift and project the image of the university. The alumni members help to mediate and resolve dispute involving the university, members and other external bodies. It is a forum whereby members network for the common good of all. It brings together friends, relatives and course mates from far and wide, people that were once either in the same class, hall or campus and people that one has not seen for several years. At gatherings such as the reunion dinner, one is compelled to remember his days in the university with so much nostalgia and such memories remind one of his obligations to the institution from which he has taken a lot, the one that has nurtured him to be all that he has become. As such the importance of Alumni Associations cannot be underestimated.

Funding of education comes from different sources in Nigeria. These include government budgetary allocation, Education Tax, external funding and Private Sector Investment. The Tertiary Education Trust Fund is an Intervention Agency of government that supports the public tertiary institutions, defined in its acts as public Universities, Polytechnic, Colleges of Education and other tertiary institutions in Nigeria are Monotechnics, specialized institutes (public and private). These institutions contribute to the nation's social and economic development through four major missions:

- i. The formation of human capital;
- ii. The building of knowledge bases (primarily through research and knowledge development);

- iii. The dissemination and use of knowledge (primarily through interactions with knowledge users); and
- iv. The maintenance of knowledge (inter-generational storage and transmission of knowledge).

The Nigerian government is making necessary efforts to meet the goal of universal basic education and is now seeking to widen access to and improve the quality of secondary and tertiary educational programmes. However, the Country like many nations faces constraints in generating funds due to the global economic meltdown as well as increased societal needs and demands.

PUBLIC TERTIARY EDUCATION AND ITS CHALLENGES

Tertiary Education benefits not just the individual, but the society as a whole. Graduates of tertiary education are more environmentally conscious, have healthier habits and have a higher level of civic participation. In short, tertiary education institutions prepare individuals not only by providing them with adequate and relevant job skills, but also by preparing them to be active members of their communities and societies.

The economic returns for tertiary education graduates are the highest in the entire educational system with an estimated 17% increase in earnings as compared to 10 % for primary and 7% for secondary education. These high returns are even greater in Sub-Saharan Africa, at an estimated 21% increase in earning for tertiary education graduates. According to World Bank Report, Nigeria has a teeming population of over 200 million people, still expanding and so will require some growth in post-secondary education to accommodate the increasing number of students seeking for higher education qualification. However, the potential of Nigerian tertiary education systems to fulfil this responsibility is frequently interrupted by problems of efficiency, equity and quality.

Nigeria's tertiary institutions continue to encounter problems of inadequate facilities and basic infrastructure. Facilities such as laboratories, lecture halls and classrooms are either lacking or absent in many of our institutions across the Country. In recent times ICT has come to occupy an important place in teaching and learning. However, ICT facilities are lacking in most of the tertiary institutions in the country. For the nation's tertiary institutions to meet up with global practices, ICT facilities must be made available to all institutions. The nation's tertiary institution must have functional laboratories and equipment to carry out research. There is the need to build the capacity of academic staff of all tertiary institutions in the country in different fields required to produce the needed human capital the country needs. Achieving this has been a huge

challenge for Nigeria as a country. So many reasons have been advanced to provide an explanation to the predicaments of Nigeria tertiary institutions, so far these challenges have not been resolved. Insufficient funding has remained the most critical challenge that has threatened the enhancement of qualitative higher education in Nigeria. It has been a threat to tertiary educational progression in the country. Nigeria’s Institutions of higher learning continue to face the problems identified above despite the huge investment of government over the years in education sector.

These and so many reasons gave rise to the establishment of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund which was expected to compliment government’s budgetary allocation for the education tertiary sub-sector, with a view to repositioning the sub-sector for better function and performance. The agency is expected to intervene in critical areas of the nation for public tertiary Institutions: Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education. The Fund currently provides intervention to Two Hundred and Forty Four (244) public tertiary institutions in Nigeria which are 96 Universities, 72 Polytechnics and 76 Colleges of Education. The break-down of these institutions is as follows:

Universities	• Federal	49
	• State	47
Polytechnics	• Federal	34
	• State	38
Colleges of Education	• Federal	28
	• State	48

ESTABLISHMENT OF TERTIARY EDUCATION TRUST FUND (TETFund)

The Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) is an interventionist agency of the federal government established by act of parliament known as the TETFund Act No. 2011. The agency is charged with the responsibility to deliver effective and transformative interventions to all public tertiary education institutions defined in the act as Public Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education in Nigeria through funding and effective project management. The Fund since its establishment has strategically positioned the nation’s higher institutions by providing deliverable essential physical infrastructure and content based programmes for effective teaching, learning, research and innovation for global competitiveness. TETFund administers, manages, disburses and monitors the

judicious utilization of the initially 2% now 2.5% Education Tax paid by all registered companies operating in Nigeria. This tax is allocated on annual basis to Public Universities, Public Polytechnics and Public Colleges of Education in the ratio of 2:1:1.

Prior to the establishment of Education Trust Fund (ETF) now Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), the state of infrastructural decay in the higher education institutions in the country became so poor to the level of near collapse and teaching and non-teaching as well as students morale became very low. Again, the incessant strike against the federal government by Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP) and Colleges of Education Academic Staff Union (COEASU) in Nigeria became very unbearable and unhealthy for the education system.

However, in the bid to overcome these challenges and to create conducive academic environment in the higher education, a commission was set up by the then military head of state of Nigeria, Gen. Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida in December 1990 to carry out a review of higher education in the country. The commission was named after its chairman, the Gray Longe Commission and charged with the responsibility to review the post-independence higher education reforms including that of the Lord Ashby's commission of 1959. The commission after its review recommended among others the funding of higher education through earmarked tax borne by all registered companies operating in Nigeria. Through the recommendations of the commission, the implementation committee headed by Prof. Olu O. Akinkugbe, reached and signed an agreement between the Federal Government and Academic Staff Union of University (ASUU) on 3rd September, 1993 for the funding of public higher education institutions in Nigeria. Significantly, the signed agreement led to the establishment of the Education Tax Fund (ETF) Act No.7 of 1993 as amended by Act No.40 of 1998 to Education Trust Fund which then catered for all sectors of the education namely; primary, secondary, and higher education institutions. The act imposed a 2% now 2.5% tax on the assessable profits of all registered companies in Nigeria. The act equally empowered the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) to assess and collect the Education Tax (EDT) on behalf of the Fund and remit to the Fund through the Central Bank of Nigeria.

The TETFund Act No. 2011 exited the primary and secondary education sector and was focused only to public tertiary institutions namely public Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education.

TETFUND AND TRANSFORMATION OF TERTIARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

There is absolutely no doubt that TETFund has recorded laudable achievements under its various intervention lines. These include various infrastructural projects across Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education that range from classrooms, theatres, halls and laboratories. The Fund has equally provided sponsorship to thousands of scholars across institutions in Nigeria. It has further equipped and sponsored the publication of books and manuscripts in various institutions. It has provided grants to scholars and lecturers under both the National Research Fund (NRF) and Institution Based Research (IBR) grants of the research and development department.

All these efforts are aimed at enhancing the material and manpower capacity of beneficiary institutions for nation building and development. A break-down of these activities is provided below under the various intervention lines. The Fund has invested a lot of funds along these intervention lines in its beneficiary institutions since the amendment of its Act in 2011. The table below provides the figures of the allocations to these institutions over time.

BREAKDOWN OF ALLOCATIONS BY INSTITUTIONS 2011 - 2022	
INSTITUTIONS	AMOUNT
Universities	651,615,706,719.48
Polytechnics	327,501,307,369.06
Colleges of Education	325,394,060,254.70
TOTAL	1,304,511,074,343.24

The Fund through its mandate delivers various intervention projects in the Beneficiary Institutions under the two broad categories of intervention line:

- i. The Annual Direct Intervention
- ii. The Special Intervention
 - **Physical Infrastructure and Programme Upgrade**

Infrastructure has been given special attention because of its decay and collapse across public tertiary institution in Nigeria. A careful observation will reveal that the Fund has between January – December 2020 alone carried out 16,982 various infrastructural projects across beneficiary institutions, considering the projects carried out since inception, based on annual allocation to institutions over the years (2011-2021), it is estimated that a total of over 152,838 various infrastructural projects have been carried out across various public tertiary institutions. These projects include construction of senate building, lecture theatres, classrooms, hostels, offices, library building, laboratories, road network, power and fencing of institutions in different parts of the country.

Tertiary institutions across the country are dotted with TETFund projects which bear the insignia of the Fund for the public to see.

➤ **Academic Staff Training and Development**

TETFund has sponsored over 10,632 lecturers in the local Ph.D. program, as well as over 9,072 lecturers in the local Master's degree programme across the country between 2011 and year 2020. The Fund has also sponsored well over 4,485 lecturers to overseas institutions for Ph.D. programs and over 3,192 Master's degree candidates also overseas across tertiary institutions within the same period. The Fund has further supported 71,263 Lecturers in Federal and State Colleges of Education under its teacher supervision program, bringing it to a total number of 98,644 academic staff across public tertiary institutions that have benefited from the academic staff training and development program of the Fund. The Fund has sponsored an estimated 17,121 academic staff across tertiary institutions in the country to foreign conferences, 4,459 non-academic staff of public tertiary institutions have also benefitted from the same sponsorship. In addition, 17,410 academic staff were sponsored to attend local conferences within the country, while about 28,660 non-academic staff were sponsored by the Fund to attend local conferences workshops across beneficiary institutions in the country, all in the effort to build the nations capacity, skills, and manpower. In all, the Fund has sponsored a total of 67,650 academic and non-academic staff of public tertiary institutions to local and overseas conferences between 2011 and year 2021.

➤ **Library Development**

The Fund's Library intervention programs also recorded tremendous impact, including the academic manuscript development to books. Between year 2011 and 2021, the Fund succeeded in procuring 2,080,041 books for use in libraries of public tertiary institutions across the nation, to equip students and lecturers of institutions with resources required to impart the necessary knowledge required in the 21st century. TETFund also between 2011 and 2020 procured 152,844 e-Resources and 380,778 equipment and furniture distributed to various public tertiary institutions across the country. In the area of academic manuscripts to books, the Fund supported and approved a total of 1,362 manuscripts to books across 149 public tertiary institutions in the country, all intended to build the capacity of academic staff and students, as well as to stimulate research and publication across public tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

➤ **Research and Development**

Research has remained a special intervention line of the Fund since it was introduced in 2009. There is no doubt that research remains the most important aspect and instrument of advanced learning and innovation if society and

humanity are to make any meaningful progress. In 2014, upon recommendation and the approval of the Board of Trustees the Department of Research and Development/Centres of Excellence in TETFund was established. It was thought that research without development will not provide the needed growth that Nigeria as a nation direly needs. The National Research Fund was set up with ₦3 Billion as its take off grant in 2011, in 2015 another ₦1 Billion was added. And in 2019 upon the recommendation of the BOT and the Honourable Minister of Education, the president approved a 50% increase in allocation to the NRF, being ₦7.5 Billion for that year and ₦8.5 Billion in 2021. Between year 2012 and 2019, a total of about ₦9 Billion was committed to the NRF with about 457 research projects approved across the country. This is in addition to the Institution Based Research grants and support for Academic Research Journals across public tertiary institutions by TETFund. About 2,175 projects were approved for the Institution Based Research between 2011 to 2021, while about 342 Academic Research Journal projects were undertaken within the period.

Under the Special Intervention, the Fund provides supports to Institutions for targeted needs, and also as directed by the government. Some of its Special Intervention in the support over the years includes support for NUGA games, the ₦3billion Special High Impact to 6 selected Universities for each geo-political zone. Other Special Intervention is the COVID-19 response Intervention on the research effort for producing a vaccine, the 6 Academic Publishing Centers to mention a few.

CONCLUSION

With sustained education tax collection, diligent appropriation and prudent management by the Fund and its beneficiaries and support from the federal government, TETFund will continuously strive to attain the status of a world-class education interventionist agency and become a financial backbone for educational research efforts in Nigeria. It will try to make educational content development a strong complement to the infrastructural development that has been witnessed in the past decade. It will further make more efforts to enlighten stakeholders and keep them abreast of its intervention activities. The Fund will endeavor to accommodate national researches from both private and public tertiary institutions to achieve national economic growth and development. It will also enhance the administrative efficiency and effectiveness of its activities and provide additional Information and Communications Technology (ICT) facilities to further improve teaching and learning in the Beneficiary Institutions (BIs).

Let me say that it is the consensus of stakeholders that TETFund is making veritable impact in the tertiary education landscape of the country. Due to the impact of the intervention programme, other African nations have borrowed the concept and successfully used the model in their countries. These achievements have endeared TETFund to its stakeholders and created the required impetus for their continuous support. The Board, Management and staff of the Fund are grateful to Mr. President who has been very supportive of the Fund in all its activities. The Fund continues to enjoy the support of the FIRS and by extension, the taxpayers in our efforts to achieve the sustained improvements in public tertiary education. The Fund is committed to improving the quality of tertiary education in Nigeria and the global competitiveness of our beneficiary institutions.

Thank you and God bless Nigeria

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