

**EXPLORATION OF ALTERNATIVE FUNDING MODELS FOR PROJECTS AND
SERVICES FOR EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES**

BY

**ARC. SONNY S. T. ECHONO FNIA
THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
TERTIARY EDUCATION TRUST FUND (TETFund)**

**BEING A PAPER PRESENTED AT THE MEETING OF THE HONOURABLE
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Protocol

It is with great delight that I express my profound appreciation to the Honourable Minister of Education, Dr. Morufu Olatunji Alausa for the great honour and special privilege extended to me to deliver a paper on ***“Exploration of Alternative Funding Models for Projects and Services for Effective Service Delivery in Federal Universities”*** at this crucial meeting of the Honourable Minister and Pro-Chancellors/Chairmen of the Governing Councils of Federal Universities.

University Education is referred to as higher education because it reflects the advancement of both the content and educational experience and the expected contributions of the scholars to society upon graduation. It heralds the transition from basic education to a more progressive, specialized, and intellectually demanding aspect of learning and personal development thus referred to as the peak of formal education.

Notably, some defining attributes of university education are that it offers specialized instruction in a wide range of academic, professional, and technical fields, spanning various disciplines. Universities emphasize research and scholarship, providing opportunities for students and faculty to engage in original research, contribute to academic discourse, and advance knowledge in various realms. This depth of instruction provides students with the expertise and skills necessary for careers in their chosen fields. University education plays a transformative role in shaping an individual’s knowledge, reasoning, skills, and mindset needed to navigate the world's complexities.

2.0 Purpose and Significance of University Education

The United Nations Declaration provided the right of an individual to education, Article No. 26. *“Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary*

Education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available, and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit: education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality”.

Section 8 (59) of the Nigerian National Policy on Education (Federal Ministry of Education, 2004) outlined the following as the aims of Nigeria's higher education:

- (a) Contribution to national development through high-level manpower training;
- (b) Development of the intellectual capabilities of the individual to understand and appreciate their local and external environment;
- (c) Acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which enables the individual to be self-reliant and a useful member of the society;
- (d) Promotion and encouragement of scholarship and community service; and
- (e) Promotion of national understanding and interaction

Section 8 (60) of the document also stated that higher education in Nigeria should vigorously pursue these goals through:

- (a) Teaching and Learning
- (b) Research and development, as well as knowledge generation and dissemination, and international cooperation.
- (c) Dedicated service to the communities through extra-mural and consultancy services.

At its core, education is the most powerful societal transformation instrument, catalyzing individual, family, and national growth. Further aspects of the inexhaustible purposes of education include:

a) Personal Development

Education helps individuals develop essential skills, critical thinking abilities, and emotional intelligence. It empowers them to make informed decisions, fosters self-awareness, and promotes personal growth.

b) Social Development

Education plays a pivotal role in shaping individuals into responsible and well-informed citizens who can actively contribute to the betterment of society. It promotes empathy, tolerance, and understanding of diverse perspectives.

c) Economic Empowerment

By providing knowledge and skills, education equips individuals to pursue various career paths and enhances their potential for economic success. This, in turn, contributes to a nation's overall economic growth and prosperity.

d) Cultivation of Knowledge

Education is crucial for the preservation, advancement, and dissemination of knowledge. It helps individuals comprehend the world around them, participate in ongoing societal discourse, and innovate in various fields.

e) Personal Fulfillment

Education can lead to greater personal fulfillment, offering opportunities to explore one's passions, pursue intellectual curiosity, and engage in lifelong learning.

f) Contributing to a Functioning Democracy

A well-informed citizenry is essential for the functioning of a democracy. Education enables individuals to understand societal issues, participate meaningfully in civic life, and hold their leaders accountable.

g) Cultural Preservation and Evolution

Education plays a role in transmitting cultural heritage, traditions, and values while also fostering cultural evolution and adaptation in response to changing global dynamics.

h) Global Citizenship

In an increasingly interconnected world, education nurtures global awareness, intercultural competence, and a sense of global citizenship, thus contributing to international cooperation and mutual understanding.

i) Personal and Societal Well-being

Education can also have a positive impact on mental health, overall well-being, and the reduction of societal inequities through promoting equal access to learning opportunities and upward mobility on the social ladder.

University education reflects the advancement of both the content and educational experience as well as the expected contributions of the scholars to society upon graduation. It plays a transformative role in shaping an individual's knowledge, reasoning, skills and mindset which are needed to navigate the complexities of the world and most certainly, the dynamism of our country, Nigeria.

It is safe to say that University education serves a crucial purpose of complementing the broader aims of education in general. Some of these purposes include:

(a) Specialized Knowledge and Skills

Chan (2016) opined that higher education institutions teach students a wide range of discipline-specific competencies and general skills to live responsible, productive, and creative lives in a dramatically changing world. Accordingly, universities offer in-depth education in specific disciplines, providing students with specialized knowledge and skills necessary for various careers across the sciences, humanities, arts, or fields like medicine, architecture, law, engineering and business. Universities equip students with expertise vital for their chosen paths.

(b) Critical Thinking and Research Abilities

University education encourages critical thinking, problem-solving, and research skills. Through independent inquiry, analysis of complex issues, and exposure to diverse perspectives, students develop the capacity to think critically and approach problems systematically.

(c) Advanced Personal Development and Growth

University life fosters personal growth and self-discovery. It offers a rich environment for exploring interests, developing new passions, and understanding one's strengths and weaknesses. This stage often shapes individuals' identities and values, preparing them for a fulfilling and purposeful life.

(d) Exposure to Diverse Ideas and People

Universities serve as hubs of intellectual diversity, where students encounter a wide range of ideas, cultures, and backgrounds. This exposure contributes to the development of open-mindedness, empathy, and a broader understanding of the world.

(e) Professional Preparation

University education prepares students for their future careers by offering internships, co-op programs, and practical experiences. It also provides networking opportunities and connections to industry professionals, thus enhancing students' employability and career prospects.

(f) Contribution to Knowledge and Innovation

Universities are centres of research and innovation where faculty and students engage in cutting-edge research and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in their respective fields. Through academic research, universities drive progress and innovation in various domains.

(g) Social and Civic Engagement

University education often encourages students to engage in community service, activism, and civic participation, fostering a sense of social responsibility and a commitment to making a positive impact on society.

(h) Lifelong Learning

Universities instill a love for learning and the importance of lifelong education. While the specific knowledge gained during university studies is valuable, the ability to continue learning and adapting to new challenges throughout life is equally important.

(i) Global Citizenship and Intercultural Competence

Many universities emphasize global perspectives, international studies, and language learning, preparing students to thrive in a globalized world and contribute to cross-cultural understanding and cooperation.

(j) Holistic Development

Education does not refer solely to intellectual growth, it also encompasses the development of emotional intelligence, social skills and ethical values to ensure that a graduate imbibes empathy, resilience and a sense of civic responsibility.

The role of universities remains a dynamic one and continues to be influenced by changes in science and technology. In recent times, universities have become innovation hubs for the discovery and development of science and technology, exploration and exploitation of computer and digital resources as well as artificial intelligence. Today universities are seen as centers where these changes and skills are acquired, developed, and shared.

Education has a direct relationship with economic growth and sustainable development. The World Bank has maintained that the development of

nations in the 21st Century largely depends on the quality and quantity of the level of education in different countries. It has also been established that there is an inverse relationship between the amount of university education level graduates in an economy and the extent of reliance on the state. University education is believed to generate a higher level of social cohesion and complement the process of crime reduction.

Besides, the World Bank (2002) asserted that university education, through its role in empowering domestic constituencies, building institutions, and nurturing favourable regulatory frameworks and governance structures, is critical to a country's efforts to increase social capital and promote social cohesion, which is proving to be an important determinant of economic growth and development. Although a university education alone will not make development happen, it is instructive that development in this knowledge era cannot happen without a university education.

Thus, a sustainable university education system is critical for a country and its citizens to participate in and benefit from the global knowledge economy, yet a thriving economy is required to generate the wealth necessary to fund university education sustainably. No doubt, university education occupies a unique position among the sectors of any economy being the catalyst for sustainable transformation. Thus, to achieve sustainable development, sustainable funding of university education cannot be ignored.

3.0 Current State and Challenges of University Education in Nigeria

“The smooth running of any educational institution depends largely on the availability of resources, be it human, material or financial” (Gambo, O. O., & Fasanmi, S. A. 2019).

The main challenges of university education in Nigeria today may be captured in three (3) words, **access, quality and relevance**. Aluede et al, (2012) explains

access to education in its full and broad sense, to mean “*the provision/availability of unlimited/unhindered/unfettered opportunities to obtain knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to optimally participate and contribute to development in the society*”.

Nigerian universities have witnessed phenomenal growth in a relatively short time without a commensurate level of investments to sustain them. Thus, a combination of inadequate infrastructure and a limited number of academic staff, in both private and public universities, translate to limited spaces for admission. The impact of the rapidly expanding private universities has been quite negligible as they collectively account for only 7% of the student population and rely heavily on public universities for part-time and adjunct lecturers. The situation is further compounded by a mismatch between effective demand and the available spaces for admission. Records from JAMB show that 60% of admission slots are reserved for the sciences and technological fields which accounts for only 40% of applications while 60% of applicants who subscribe for courses in the humanities and social sciences scramble for only 40% of the available spaces.

Public universities suffer from over-dependence on the Government for their funding. They are therefore susceptible to revenue shortfalls, budgetary constraints, and other competing needs of the government. A regime of declining revenue and rising corruption manifests in deteriorating infrastructure and poor remuneration for lecturers. Early symptoms of this decay include over-crowding in classrooms, a high student-lecturers ratio, a high ratio of non-teaching to academic staff, low morale of staff, and a pervasive culture of anomie in our ivory towers. These, coupled with outdated curricula and ineffective delivery systems, produce poor-quality graduates and deplorable learning outcomes.

Perhaps, the challenge of relevance is even more acute and urgent. Employers complain that the graduates are either non-employable or not fit for purpose. University administrators complain of over-regulation by Government entities including the National Universities Commission (NUC), the Federal Ministry of Education, Professional Bodies, and the National Assembly. They point to the fact that a university Vice Chancellor requires the approval of the Head of Service to engage a Graduate Assistant or fill a vacant professorial chair as evidence of choking interference. Collaboration with industry is still in its infancy, while contribution to the community is often limited to employment and admission of “sons and daughters of the soil”.

Some of the other constraints include pressure of demand from a rapidly growing youth population, brain drain exacerbated by the “Japa” syndrome, poor governance and mismanagement of resources, low technology adoption and absence of cutting-edge facilities, inadequate research capacity and lack of motivation for research as well as stunted growth and deficits in global competitiveness. To these, we must add frequent disruptions to the academic calendar and poor preparation of intakes from our secondary schools.

Ogunbodede (2018) posit that “it is disheartening that universities in Nigeria have not been able to effectively leverage on the enormous human and natural resources available to them for the attainment of the enviable height envisaged by the generality of stakeholders”. For Nigeria to achieve the fundamental objectives of education as envisioned in the National Education policy, this must be tackled with a sense of urgency and sincerity.

4.0 Governance System in Nigerian Universities

Governing structures for higher education are highly differentiated throughout the world. The concept of governance for university education

refers to the internal structure, organisation, and management of the institutions. Edem (2012) stated that “governance is a multilevel concept, including several different bodies and processes with different decision-making functions”. Saint et.al (2013) stress further that in Nigeria, capacities for managing the university system and individual institutions have struggled to keep pace with the increasingly large and complex federal university system.

The governance structure varies, depending on ownership, viz federal, state, or privately owned. Typically, the universities are administered by a Council and the university Senate which is headed by an appointed Vice Chancellor. The Council is charged with the overall policy and direction of the university and the Senate is charged with academic responsibilities of the university. For Federal Universities it is the Council that selects and appoints a Vice Chancellor for the university, while State Governors play a greater role concerning their institutions. There is no discernable pattern or process with private universities; rather the vision or will of the founder is paramount.

The Vice-Chancellor is the Chief Accounting Officer of the university and is responsible for providing visionary leadership and is in charge of the day-to-day affairs of the university. He/she is expected to ensure full and effective implementation of the university academic programs and policies promoting academic excellence and research in the university, developing and implementing strategies for the sustainable growth and development of the university, managing the university’s financial resources, ensuring financial sustainability, and promoting a culture of transparency, accountability, and good governance in the university.

The Vice-Chancellor is assisted by Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Academic, Administration, Research & Innovation, Special Duties, etc) and other

Principal Officers notably the Registrar, Bursar, and University Librarian. Decision-making is through the Committee System as enshrined in the enabling laws of each university. There are also specific roles for the Chancellor (largely ceremonial) and the Pro-Chancellor who is the Chair of the Governing Council. The latter is responsible for the appointment, promotion, and discipline of other academic and non-academic staff of the university.

The governance system in Nigerian universities has so far continued to face several challenges despite the clear division in the responsibilities of all the different bodies in the running of the university system. Several factors were identified as hindering the effective administration of universities in the country. Lack of cooperation and understanding between university councils and the vice-chancellors or principal officers of universities has always resulted in a power tussle that stifles progress. The university councils sometimes become too assertive and, in the process, usurp the powers of the university senate or the vice-chancellor. External political influences and the overbearing posture of some proprietors have been the bane of many federal and state/private universities respectively.

It has been suggested that for any improvement in the administration of universities, adequate funds must be provided, corruption in all forms must be eliminated, and administrative acumen, in addition to academic excellence, must be the basis for appointing Vice Chancellors to head universities. Adequate motivation of staff must also be accorded desired priority.

5.0 Cost Structure and Funding of University Education

The cost structure of a university system can vary depending on the type of institution and the country. In general, the cost structure of a university system includes various expenses such as salaries and wages, provision and

maintenance of academic facilities and students' accommodation, instructional materials, transportation, operating and overhead costs, utility bills, subscriptions, etc. In Nigeria, the fee structure of universities varies depending on the type of institution and the course of study. Federal universities are funded by the federal government and are generally less expensive than state and private universities. In the United States, the fee structure of universities can be very high. Current estimates range between \$35,000 to over \$75,000[UC]. This estimate includes tuition and fees, housing and meals, transportation, books and supplies, and personal expenses.

Ogunyinka (2013) argued that the unit costs of higher education vary from one subsector to the other. For instance, the unit costs for other levels of education were found to be much lower when compared to the universities. The unit cost of education in Colleges of Education and Polytechnics are not also the same across various States. In his submission, Okebukola (2015) remarked that the unit cost of university education also varies from one discipline to another. He maintained that the total average unit cost per student per discipline in all science-based disciplines was higher than that of Art-based disciplines. He then concluded that the average unit cost per student per discipline, in 2002, ranged from a minimum of ₦141,532 for business administration/management science to a maximum of ₦302, 096 in human medicine. A recent exercise undertaken by the National Universities Commission (NUC) revealed a significant increase. The rates for private universities are outside the scope of this paper.

Federal universities rely heavily on the Federal Government for funding which has led to the progressive decay of infrastructure and a lack of human resource development in our institutions, which is attributed to scarcity of funds. Indeed, it has been widely accepted that university education is capital intensive and thus should not be left to the government alone to fund.

Even with the huge milestones that are being recorded by TETFund in the areas of infrastructure, staff training and development and more recently research, innovation and entrepreneurship, we can all agree that TETFund intervention is limited to its mandate. Therefore, there remains a funding gap that needs to be filled if Nigeria is to realize its full potential.

Further examination of the funding scenario revealed that public universities take less than 10% of the federal budget and even less at state levels. The budget is based mostly on staff strength and the number of students and often directed at payment of staff salaries. The public universities typically do not charge tuition fees, (although many state institutions have been forced to do so) and charge only a fraction of the full economic cost for services such as power, water supply, cleaning, and waste disposal, etc. Relying heavily on limited government funding, these universities struggle to meet their costs or diversify their revenue streams hence the recurring calls for their repositioning and revitalization to enable them compete on the global stage for venture capital, research grants, international faculty and students.

Some have advocated an increase in tuition fees to help alleviate the burden on the government amongst other solutions being considered. Lack of effective collaboration between the academia, government and private sector have further reduced the potential to drive significant improvements in the sector, especially in areas of infrastructure/facility provision.

6.0 Recommended Strategies for Exploring Alternative Funding Models for Federal Universities in Nigeria

The Honourable Minister, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, although there has been significant improvement in recent years in federal government expenditure on university education in Nigeria, it is obvious that

the government alone cannot meet the present and projected needs of the universities in attaining global competitiveness. The incessant industrial actions over the last few decades by various staff unions in our universities bordering on challenges of funding have further heightened the need to explore alternative and sustainable funding regimes for federal universities in the country. This implies rethinking stakeholders' involvement in university financing to secure a qualitative and functional university system, which is an essential tool for sustainable development (Afolayan, 2015).

It is generally acknowledged that university education is the most expensive level of education in any given country, and providing a full range of learning options and opportunities can be very costly. This is particularly so in developing economies, where unit costs are likely to be higher due to greater difficulties in achieving economies of scale. Besides, for society, the rate of return on education is higher at the basic level, whereas the rate of return is higher for the individual recipient of education at the university level.

Notably, increased social demand for university education in Nigeria and the desire of the country to participate in the knowledge economy have created the need for greater investment in university education through sustainable funding. But the question is, where will the funds for the needed investments in the institutions come from?

Sustainable financing of university education requires predictable and guaranteed funding. Hence, the future lies in sustainable funding, which is rooted in sharing costs, diversifying income sources, creating new sources of income, building partnerships at home and abroad, and creating wealth beyond teaching and research.

The funding challenges for the university education system inevitably impact on the individual institutions. The inability of the Government to solely and fully finance university education necessitates that the institutions be given the leverage to explore alternative sources of funding to become more efficient and effective in line with new vistas.

To address the aforementioned question on funding sources, some pertinent policy issues with obvious implications for funding options readily come to mind. These include: -

- i. Where does university education fit, in terms of national strategy for development?
- ii. What are the specific policy goals and targets for our university education?
- iii. What is the role of the government in a diversified university education system?
- iv. What is the desirable limit of government expenditure on university education?
- v. How much infrastructure is the government able to fund?
- vi. What is the role of government in research and innovation, and what is the funding strategy?
- vii. How can a student financing system be developed with due consideration for equity?
- viii. Will the private sector be willing to invest in public institutions? and under what conditions?

Arising from the issues highlighted above, the options for sustainable funding of the university education system in Nigeria should be able to address three key financing issues: the sustainable financing of expanding publicly funded university education; the need for better mechanisms for student support in a context of growing demand and social stratification of the student, and the

need to expand and upgrade infrastructure to support a more diversified offerings with more emphasis on costly areas, such as in medicine, science, and technology.

It is worth repeating that considering the circumstances surrounding the funding of university education in Nigeria today, the government alone cannot be the sole source of financing for education. Accordingly, the following thought-provoking funding models may be explored as workable options for sustainable funding:

(a) Government Role in University Education

- i. The government should re-define its role by allowing full implementation of the 2004 Universities Miscellaneous (Autonomy) Act which empowers University Councils to take full charge of their operations and development.
- ii. Government should limit its role to the overall policy framework, regulation, and the creation/strengthening of institutions such as NUC, TETFund, NELFUND, and Federal Scholarship Board to address the multifaceted challenges of education.
- iii. Where the Government chooses to implement policies, such as the free tuition policy, it should make full financial provisions for the same as a grant per student based on the costs of training for individual courses, established by University Governing Councils.
- iv. The provision of scholarships and bursaries for exceptionally gifted scholars and some exceptionally underprivileged students by the government and relevant stakeholders should be sustained in order to provide access to university education for those who otherwise would not be privileged to further their education. Targeted scholarships and fellowships for specialized/identified

areas of national needs should also be promoted, and selection should be strictly based on merit.

- v. The government should also provide dedicated funds for research and innovation to be accessed on a strictly competitive basis.

(b) Enhanced Role for University Governing Councils

- i. The composition of University Governing Councils should largely be in favour of academic, business and policy expertise and disposition.
- ii. The Governing Councils should determine the structure of fees based on revenue streams, including government grants and their cost structure. This will enable them to pay the competitive wages to attract and retain the best brains as well as provide a conducive teaching and learning environment for national and global competitiveness.
- iii. The Governing Councils should ensure that the nation's federal Universities operate on the strength of their balance sheets by demanding accountability and efficient harnessing and deployment of internally generated revenue.

(c) Cost Sharing by Stakeholders

- i. It is expedient for students, who are primary beneficiaries, to contribute to the funding of the system through payment of tuition to complement Government subventions/interventions. In fact, it is common knowledge that many State Government-owned Institutions have already adopted this model.
- ii. The rest of society, including university alumni, faith-based and other philanthropic organizations, the organized private sector, professional associations and other stakeholders, should be encouraged to support university education through

endowments, partnerships and linkages, and execution of designated projects on the campuses.

(d) Student Loans Scheme

- i. In 1974, the Gowon regime established the Nigerian Student Loans Board to grant loans to indigent students to pursue their education, repayable in 20 years after graduation. The Board became moribund in the heady days of the oil boom era. The model is highly effective and is being used successfully in the USA and many Western countries.
- ii. The Student Loan Initiative being administered by NELFUND is a commendable effort by the Federal Government of Nigeria under the leadership of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR to break financial barriers in higher education through the provision of interest-free loans to empower Nigerians to pursue their academic aspirations. The initiative is targeted at providing equal access to higher education for all eligible candidates and reducing financial stress on students and families.
- iii. The model aims to ensure that upfront costs do not deter potential students. Government provide loans to universities for students' tuition. They also offer accommodation and maintenance stipends for students. Once students graduate and are earning above a certain threshold, they begin to pay back the loans. Applying this model to the Nigerian University System raises two scenarios:
 - The wide availability of opportunities for formal employment in Western countries is at the heart of the success of this funding model. Does the Nigerian economy have such graduate opportunities for formal employment?

- Conversely, can the introduction of this model motivate and re-energise the Nigerian graduate to take on the role of job creator to pay off student debt?
- iv. This scheme would obviously require an effective loan repayment system from identifiable, even if not entirely predictable sources.

(e) Partnerships, Endowments, Research Grants and Ventures

- i. The NUC, TETFund, and other Agencies of Government should intensify efforts and investments to prepare and capacitate Nigerian universities to effectively compete in the global research and innovation ecosystem. This will enable them to attract grants across the globe to enhance their relevance and upgrade their financial/infrastructure base.
- ii. The universities should be supported to explore partnerships and collaboration with funding agencies and development partners, both at home and abroad, to attract support and complementary resources.
- iii. The universities should make conscious efforts to strengthen their R&D activities and ensure effective linkage and collaboration with industry towards the commercialization of their research output to generate revenue and sustain the system. They should design specialized programmes tailored to deepen their relevance/impact on their immediate communities to attract patronage and support.
- iv. The universities should establish functional Business Development Offices to support fund-raising and pursue knowledge-intensive business opportunities as well as opportunities for research grant funding.

- v. The universities should be encouraged and supported to seek alternative and additional revenue sources by developing a range of pathways and mechanisms, including ventures related to their core business of education delivery, research and services such as clinical medical facilities, ICT, vocational and enterprise centres/innovations hubs, modern mechanised farms and similar initiatives that would be self-financing to generate surplus to the institution.
- vi. The universities should devise innovative ways of engaging in entrepreneurship initiatives and explore commercial opportunities and community investment to generate revenues and guarantee self-sufficiency.
- vii. Mechanisms should be put in place to mobilize and attract private sector investments beyond corporate social responsibility, award of honorary degrees, and endowment of professional chairs. A good example is the TETFund-promoted partnership between beneficiary institutions and private sector developers in the provision of student hostels in public tertiary institutions.

7.0 Conclusion

I would like to conclude by submitting that functional education is directly related to human capital development, global competitiveness, and sustainable national development. University education plays a central role in human transformation and the rapid development of societies. To realize these lofty goals, our university system should have a sustainable funding mechanism that is truly dynamic, resourceful, and responsive to our national aspirations. As we confront the future with renewed hope and optimism, there must be deliberate efforts to ensure effective synergy between

academia, industry, and government to achieve the fundamental objectives of university education for speedy socio-economic development.

I thank you most sincerely for your attention.

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