

THE CHALLENGES OF RISING COST OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Chibuokwu R. Azubuike and Florence I. Nwosu

Abstract

Higher education is a monumental tool for both Economic, social and political development of any given country. However, the cost of higher Education in Nigeria is now a growing concern. Scholars have been warning about the potent dangers of denying our youths the opportunities to acquire higher Education due to rising cost of higher Education. The paper examines the nature of the cost, such as basic costs of instruction, equipments, libraries, administrative and basic academic computing, research needs, and student's hostels. Also, this paper x-rayed the following challenges of rising cost of higher Education in Nigeria; they are production of dynasty of illiterates, high school drop-out of undergraduates, increase in crime rates, increase in violent crimes, increase in IT crimes, prostitution, lack of skilled labor etc. The paper recommended that a holistic and pragmatic approach be adopted which would involve the government, philanthropists, parents and multi-nationals firms, special education levy.

Key Words: Rising Cost, Nature, Higher Education and Challenges

Higher education is considered throughout the world to be key to both individual and societal aspirations. Education beyond the secondary level is assumed to be the way to social esteem, better paying jobs, expand life options, intellectual stimulation etc. For societies, higher education is assumed to be the key to technology, productivity, and the ingredients of international competitiveness and economic growth. It is believed to be a major engine of social justice, equal opportunity and democracy. In spite of the importance of education, higher education in Nigeria is increasingly troubled by cost that are high and rapidly rising and that seem to be out running available state revenues. Many scholars have been warning about the potent dangers of denying our youths the opportunities to acquire higher education in Nigeria. Even our erudite professor of Economics, and former Governor of central Bank of Nigeria, Professor Charles Chukwuma Soludo, while addressing progressive Governors Forum in Kaduna August (2016), said that Nigeria is fast building dynasty of illiterates because of the high cost of Education in the country. He advocated that for Nigeria to join the committee of developed nations education must be cheap, available accessible and qualitative.

Although, the Federal universities still maintain a "no tuition fees policy, the state and private Universities charge tuition fees which have increased tremendously in recent times. Due to limited available capacity and resources at the disposal of the institutions and government, the federal Universities have not been able to admit all qualified students. A substantial percentage of these students are admitted into the state and private Universities which charge tuition fees/ and other charges now risen far above household income (Akinyemi Samuel Ofem B, Adebisi Olorunfemi 2012). The rising cost of Higher education in Nigeria has affected the societal values and ethics. Since societal values are better reemphasized and understood at the higher level of education in Nigeria. The

consequences of the higher cost had affected the number of enrolment and quality expected for social transition of Nigeria social values. Whereas, governments are cutting outlays to Universities and other institutions with consequent loss of staff, deterioration of plant and equipments, erosion of salaries, and loss of capacity to expand to meet students demands especially the demands in public higher institutions in Nigeria. Where costs are passed on to students and parents debt levels are increasing and access being threatened, if not outright curtailed. Exacerbating the political tensions of the cost revenue squeeze charges of higher education is inefficiency and lack of cost benefit accountability. Indeed there is a financial crisis in the higher education in Nigeria. This crisis is much deeper than macro statistics reveal, and it is not going to disappear soon, especially in Nigeria, if new solution and remedy are not found. This paper examines the nature and the dynamics of higher educational cost, review literature, statement of problem of the study, the challenges of higher education in Nigeria, recommendations and conclusion.

Conceptualization

Education is regarded as a generic and organic process involving a series of activities aimed at enabling an individual to assimilate and develop knowledge and skill competencies and values that are not simply related to narrow field of activity. (Banuu, 2005). Higher Education is education pursued after primary and secondary education.

Davis, (2012), noted that the rising cost of higher Education has serious implications for educational enterprises across the globe, especially in developing countries at the turn of the 21st century. At independence in Nigeria the federal and state governments controlled educational expenditure making the cost of funding in Nigeria minimal.

As rightly observed by Akinyemi, (2012), in recent times, the pressure on parent's finances with regards to the tuition fee and school charges especially for higher education amongst others. The distributive effects and unintended consequences of such reforms on student's enrollments have not received sufficient attention. Governments of federal and states cannot only be left to bear the burden of rising cost of higher education in Nigeria.

The Federal government scholarship policy is to make education more accessible to qualified Nigerian students and assist indigent as well as handicapped students to gain access to higher education (FME, 2013). However, the ongoing Federal government scholarship and award for postgraduates, undergraduates and handicapped students in all federal and state Universities, polytechnics and colleges of Education are more on merit-based with little consideration for that it has led to decrease in enrolment by low income households. And gender disparity in the enrolment of more male than female students in some disciplines (Akinyemi, etal 2012).

Okoli (2013) in Okoli, (2015), noted that in the early 1970s, during the oil boom in Nigeria, the Federal and state government began to give grants, subsidies and scholarships to as many as gained admission into any higher institutions. Any person that gained admission to read BE.D programme then had automatic grant of scholarship, many candidates who were indigent and who never dreamt of seeing the four walls of a University had opportunities to go to school. By 1978 the aids were withdrawn which culminated into the "Ali must go" Saga in which both students and civilians were killed by the military. Parents began to pay full fees for their children and wards and that closed the doors to indigent candidates who could not pay school fees. Since then there has been steady increase in fees at the higher education level. Contributory to that was the federal government mandatory order for universities, polytechnics, colleges of education to source for fund internally to

The Challenges of Rising Cost of Higher Education in Nigeria

augment their subsidy to universities. In the same vein Davis (2012:3), leading an academic institution is always demanding during periods of economic down turn it is particularly demanding. The success of student/ students is the quality of learning outcome exhibited by a student at the end of the learning session. And so, institution of higher learning tries to measure the cost of instruction there by making for fees or tuition increase.

Findings revealed that the reduction of government participation has invariably affected the cost of higher education in Nigeria and the attendant effects are decrease in enrolment, increase in drop-out rate students exposure to off-campus residence and attendant non conducive environment for effective and serious academic activities that could have launched Nigeria into the 21st century National knowledge economy.

As stated in the National policy on education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) education is an expensive social service that requires adequate financial provision from all tiers of government for successful implementation of the educational programmes. The Nigeria educational funding policy has governments' ultimate goal to make education free at all levels with joint financial responsibility of the Federal, State and local governments and the private sectors (local communities, individuals and organizations). Charging of and increasing tuition fees are widely recognized as most sharing reduction strategy for solving educational funding problems arising from increased educational and faculty costs, Akinyemi (2007), Sanyal and Martains (2006), cost sharing in education they advocate that cost of education be shared among government, tax payers, parents, students and institutional donors organizations.

In addition, Davis in his work, "educational foundation", opined, believe that cost control is defining moral and business issue for principled academic leaders if college presidents don't take steps to address cost we will fail our students by graduating them into an uncertain economy with huge debt burdens and endanger both our institution and the higher education sector's long term viability''. The challenge of addressing cost containment in higher education needs to be pursued aggressively, delicately, and intentionally. As with institutional and community level approaches, the goal at the policy level should keep a consistent question in mind; how can we adapt our educational system to ensure more students are academically and financially capable of pursuing and completing a post- secondary degree?

The nature of the rising cost

Basic costs of instruction: these are the costs of faculty and staff salaries, equipment, libraries, administrative, and basic academic computing, and certain capital or location costs such as rent in effect, this is what costs the institution to do its mission of teaching and whatever basic research or scholarship faculty are expected to do in the absents of special grants or contracts. Costs associated with sponsored research or special activities covered by their funds or appropriations and that would presumably not be incurred without such specially designated revenues. Despite the fact that the cost incurred at a particular university by the conduct of sponsored research and other special activities may be high costs to the institutions basic missions of teaching and scholarship ought in principle be below or zero because of non transferability of the revenues. Cost of students living room (hostels), entertainments and laundry, and other expenses that would be incurred as student of institutions of higher learning trying to equip the modern day hostel, leads to the institution. Spending so much money and in turn these expenses are borne by the students.

Increase in the number seeking for enrolment: Oyetakin and Oshun (2009), asserted that the monumental increase in students enrolment at the primary and secondary levels of education has consequently put a lot of economic, political and social pressure on tertiary education/ institutions with the resultant financial consequences for students, governments and the economy generally.

The cost of higher education present three mega issues in virtually all nations (Johnstone, 2007). First, how much of a nations total resources ought to be, or can be devoted to higher education? The unit costs of higher education are elusive because of the multiple and hard to measure outputs. At the most simplistic level, per students costs are a function of faculty workloads (class size, course loads, etc). Average faculty and staff salaries, richness of the libraries, laboratories, and other resources of plant and equipment.

Again, the issue of efficiency or productivity, there is whether the inputs or products of higher education can be produced with proper inputs or whether a given monetary value of inputs can have a greater volume of outputs. The research for greater efficiency leads to considerations of better management, more effective incentive, consolidations and economics of scale and more implications of technology.

The third mega issue is how the costs of higher education ought to be shared among the citizens (tax payers, parents, students, philanthropists and donors). Whatever the costs, and in whatever country, they must be borne by some combination of the following: all citizens through taxes, parents –through payment of tuition, students, through payment of tuition by working and schooling, (salaries/ wages) and loan scheme. Philanthropists- through current gifts or the investments return on past gifts. In order for higher institutions in Nigeria to meet up with the capacity building and needed for contemporary materials as discussed above certainly the most of receiving education at the higher level must rise to balance cost- benefit.

Statements of Problem

The challenge of rising cost of higher Education in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. Countries all over the world have realized the importance of Higher Education for all, to the extent that UNESCO has declared a day in a year as the United Nations Education for all day in her calendar. In addition UNESCO had advised member nations to set aside 26% of their annual budgets for the education sector including higher education. Although many nations Nigeria inclusive are yet to abide by this UNESCO guideline. The result is that Nigerian higher institutions are grossly underfunded. Therefore, most of them cannot engage in meaningful research and development, in an attempt to meet international standards, they have resorted to charging exorbitant tuition and other related fees.

The result is that many qualified but indigent students can no longer afford to go to higher institutions in Nigeria. Some have abandoned their first Degrees, HND and post graduate courses due to their inability to pay the exorbitant fees now being charged in Nigerian Higher institution. The private higher institutions are the biggest culprits. Information has it that some of them charge as high as N1.5 million per session for undergraduates studies. In the final analysis if nothing is drastically done by both the Federal and state governments in Nigeria to nip this problem in the bud, the economic gap between the rich and the poor will continue to widen. Access to affordable higher education is the only tool that can be used to bridge the economic gap between the rich and the poor in Nigeria. To close this gap needs emergency policy responses by the government and others

interested in the educational venture, else semi illustrates would not only dominate affairs in the Nigerian public sector but also in the private sector, families, communities etc.

Challenges/ Effects of Rising Cost of Higher Education in Nigeria

Rising cost of higher education is not only in Nigeria but beyond effects the fabrics of the society. This is so because, it is believed that higher education provides the high level man-power capital needed in industries, civil, public, and international services. Okoli N.J., (2015) added, increase in fees has a damaging impact on both students and their programs. Challenges of rising cost of higher education are enormous, because it could lead to the production of a dynasty of illiterates. This is as a result of universities, polytechnics; colleges of education in the 21st century not giving the needed quality instructions to the future rulers. And if nothing is done about it now, in the nearest future Nigerian higher institutions would be producing illiterates in the name of graduates. As a result of high school fees students cut corners to meet up with the demands of fees by being irregular to lectures and sometimes absent, only to report during exams to copy or enter exam halls with textbooks, written materials etc.

High school drop out of undergraduates resulting from fees increase has damaging impact on both students and their programmes. For instance U.K introduced fees increase in 2013 in her universities, the increase led to a drop in enrolment up to as many as 18,000 students. In Australia, eight top universities used fees increase to downsize their student's enrolment. Thus fees increase leads to increased dropout of students. Those who could not afford the fees dropped out of their programmes. Another instance between 2011-2013 in the department of educational foundation, over 15 students dropped out of the programme (Okoli, 2015).

Increase in crime rates; rising cost of higher education has made some students (both males and females) vulnerable to crimes such as kidnapping, armed robbery, 419 (advanced fee fraud) etc so as to meet up with the cost of education. This could also be attributed to the present policy of Nigeria on much quest for paper certificate without the accompanying skill needed.

Frequent killings as a result of high school drop-out :The rising level of killings as seen in Nigeria today are done mainly by youths in most cases, within the high school ages bracket. This is so because of parent's inability to send or sponsor their wards in higher institutions. These youths are lured to ritual killings to make money. The effect of this sager to the society cannot be over emphasized here.

Increase in IT (internet crimes). Cybercrimes are offences that are committed against individuals or groups of individuals with a criminal motive to intentionally harm the reputation of the victim or cause physical or mental harm or loss to the victim directly or indirectly, using modern telecommunication networks such as the internet. Such crimes may threaten a nation's security. This crime is committed mostly by youths in Nigeria because of frustration resulting from school dropout. Increase in moral decadence like prostitution, stealing and rape. Some of the girls in higher institutions in the contemporary Nigerians engaged in prostitution. This is to enable them fulfill their heart desire acquire higher education. This issue has also increased the population of HIV/AIDS patients in the country. Stealing and raping have also increased as a result of prostitution arising from the school dropout syndrome.

Reduction in the production of skilled labour for the industries, civil, public and international organization services in Nigeria: many students are unable to buy textbooks because of fees increase.

They do not have easy access to internet to browse for research and the facilities needed for proper instruction are lacking.

Lecture halls meant for 50 students are now utilized by 150 students. These conditions cannot give good result for proper teaching/ learning which in the long run produces half baked graduates which in turn affects the labour market. The worst situation or scenario is when a student fails three courses and is asked to pay school fees to retake them. These challenges and others require urgent response from the government, international organizations, and philanthropists etc to rescue the higher education sector from total collapse.

Conclusion

Higher education is indispensable in the political and socio-economic life of Nigeria. Therefore, stake holders and their likes need to adopt measures as to reduce the cost of higher education. In order to avoid total collapse of the educational sector especially at the higher level and to avoid producing dynasty of illiterates in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Priority should be given to education in the Nigerian budget, thereby allocating more funds to higher institutions in the country, especially public higher institutions.

The costs sharing / costs reduction strategy for solving educational funding problems arising from increased educational and facility costs that will involve the entire stakeholder in educational sector should be adopted.

Nigerian government should adopt the recommendations of UNESCO, of 26% of the national budget for funding education against the current 8.4%. Besides, the government of the day should stop paying lip service to the educational support project.

Employers of labour in Nigeria should deemphasize paper qualification rather on the abilities to perform the job. Educational support bodies like the UNESCO and other voluntary foundation like the Ford Foundation, Clinton Foundation etc. should be encouraged to assist in funding higher education in developing countries.

Community scholarship support to indigent student should be encouraged. Finally, Nigerian government should adopt free education at all levels.

References

- Akinyemi Samuel, Ofem B., Adebisi Olorunfemi, (2012). *Educational Financial Reforms in Nigeria. A Survey Based Cost Implication Analysis for University Education International Journal of Humanitarians and Social Science Vol, 2.*
- Babuu, John, (2005). *Problem Solving In Mathematics.* New Delhi, APH.
- Cybercrime <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cybercrime>, the Free Encyclopedia.
- Davis, (2012). *An Inquiry Into The Rising Cost Of Higher Education*, Davis Foundation, 30 Forest Falls Drive Suite 5, Yarmouth ME 04096 www.Davisfoundation.org.

The Challenges of Rising Cost of Higher Education in Nigeria

Johnstone, D.B. (2007). *Financial austerity, cost sharing and Culture; Perspective on education*. New York: Buffalo.

Okoli J. (2015). *Impact of Fees Increase on University Students Education in Nigeria* Merit Research Journals of Education Review (ISSN: 2350-2282).

Sanyal, BC & Martains M. (2006). *Financial Education in Third World*. Global Universities Net Work for Innovations New York : Palmgrave Macmillian Pp 3-19.