

Global Challenges and Sustainable Development Implementation of Higher Education in Selected Universities in Rivers State

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Abstract: The study investigated global challenges and sustainable implementation of higher education in selected universities in Rivers state. The study employed research questions and hypotheses. Sample size consisted of 1211 respondents representing 98% of the population of 1,236. The participants were selected using simple random sampling technique. Instrument for data collection was Global Challenges and Sustainable Implementation of Higher Education Questionnaire (GCSIHEQ). Validation of instruments was carried out by two experts in the Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education in University of Port Harcourt for scrutiny. Reliability coefficient index of 0.90 was obtained using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. The mean (\bar{x}) and rank order level of significance for the Z-statistics at 0.05 level of significance for the hypothesis were used. The study revealed that higher institutions have been buffeted with long-standing problems of inadequate funding and others. The study recommended that, the Nigerian government should implement the 26% funding formula for education, recommended by UNESCO to revive and sustain higher education.

Keywords: Global Challenges and Sustainable implementation of higher education

I. INTRODUCTION

Higher education referred to as post-secondary or tertiary education; this is the education given after secondary education in monotechnics, polytechnics and universities and these institutions offered correspondence courses (Federal Ministry of Education 2014:30). Higher institutions have three functions in totality. These functions include teaching, research and contributing to society (community development) (UNESCO, World Bank and UNDP, 2004). Higher institutions offer a number of qualifications ranging from Higher National Diplomas and Foundation Degrees to Honorary Degrees and Doctorates. These are recognized throughout the world as representing specialist expertise supported wide range of skills that is very useful (Mirfa, Walayat, Aftab and Mohammad, 2012).

However, the sustainability of higher education may be said to depend on how the system performs in terms of leadership in the implementation of higher education policy through proper control, organization, budgeting and upholding the basic social beliefs, values of the system to achieve its set

down goals and objectives for sustainable development (Udida, Bassey, Udofia and Eghona, 2009). The higher institutions are faced with a lot of challenges ranging from inadequate funding, brain drain, political interference, inadequate infrastructure, inadequate teaching staff, producing quality graduate for employment, certificate disease syndrome and more.

To sustain higher education in Nigeria and Rivers state in particular, the university administrators and stakeholders must address to arrest these challenges. Nigeria has good policy formulation for higher education but poor implementation has resulted to higher education failure to meet up to international standard. Among the first five hundred universities in world ranking no Nigerian universities was found. According to Premium Time Magazine (28th May, 2018), the premier Nigerian University was ranked 991st worldwide, and 14th in Africa; according to 2018/201 edition of the global rankings released by the Center for-World University Rankings (CWUR), only Covenant University was ranked 636 in the world, the faith-based university was rated based on Teachings, Research, Citations, Industry Income and International Outlook (Pulse.ng, September 26th ' 2018). Based on above, the goals of higher education have been thwarted by some factors that is why no Nigerian Universities are among the first six hundred top universities in the World ranking. The challenges racing higher education is traceable to inadequate funding that gave birth to brain drain, political interference, inadequate infrastructure, inadequate teaching staff, producing quality graduate for employment, certificate disease syndrome and more. Fund is the life-wire of every organization that must achieve its stated goals and objectives irrespective of good formulated policy. In the same vein higher education inclusive will continue to experience underachievement goal and objectives if inadequate funding continue According to Udida, Bassey, Udofia and Eghona (2009) one of the most serious problems threatening the standard of the educational systems is that of dwindling level of public funding in the face of rising demands and hence rising cost of higher education. This inadequacy of funding does not only affect job performance but, other areas such as inadequate infrastructure, increasing brain drain, quality of research by academician, quality of graduate produce for

higher education institutions and more. According to Timi-Johnson

Abam (2017) fund allocated to tertiary education has not significantly increased to meet the growing demand of infrastructure for conducive learning, research and development and increase in student's enrolment. The inability of federal government to objectively accept and implement the 26% funding formula for education recommended by the UNESCO has impacted negatively on the sustainability of higher education in Nigeria. Federal government has not been able to fund tertiary education adequately to achieve the best result

The consequences of inadequate funding is the cause of brain drain in the higher education institutions. Where quality academicians are leaving the higher education institutions in the country for greener pasture abroad. What becomes of our higher institutions of learning in the future? Because the standard and rankings of any higher institution of learning is increase in quality research for institutional and national development. Know this, when the experienced academicians are leaving the university system, the main aim of producing quality graduate that are employable for nation; national development will be underachieved. This will result to low productivity and increased unemployment which is dangerous to national security. In a statement made by former CBN Governor Professor Charles Soludo that eighty percent of Nigerian graduates cannot be employed due to low quality. Francis (2015) agreed with the above statement after a review of relevant literature, that study concluded that the quality of Nigerian University graduates has declined and cannot be matched or meet the expectation in the labour market in the present 21st century. The reason being that, they are below the expectation to be employed by organization. This is not healthy for our tertiary institutions and also not safe for the society and the nation at large.

Statement of the problem

Undoubtedly, higher education in Nigeria can achieve the 7 goals of tertiary education by Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) and core objectives of tertiary education. On the contrary, higher education is frequently thwarted by long-standing problems of inadequate funding which has given birth to other sub-challenges considered in the research. These challenges have lingered for long and there is no proper suggestion to remedy it. The consequence of these stated problems are the result of brain drain, examination malpractice, unqualified graduates from higher institutions of learning to be employed by competitive firms, certificate disease syndrome and lot more. The study tends to investigate global challenges and sustainable implementation of higher education in Rivers state using the quantitative technique approach.

Objectives of the Study

This study sought to investigate global challenges

and sustainable implementation of higher education in Rivers state using the quantitative technique approach. Specifically, the study tried to:

1. Identify the challenges facing higher education
2. Examine the sustainability implementation of higher education

Research Questions

Based on the objectives of the study, the research questions were designed to guide this study:

1. What are the challenges identified in higher education in Rivers state?
2. What are the sustainability implementation for higher education?

Research Hypotheses

Based on the above stated research questions, the following hypotheses were formulated to guide the investigation and tested at .05 level of confidence.

H₁: There is no significant difference between academic staff of University of Port Harcourt and Rivers State University on the challenges in higher education in Rivers State

II. METHODOLOGY

H₂: There is no significant difference between academic staff of University of Port Harcourt and Rivers State University on the sustainability implementation to higher education in Rivers state.

This paper describes the procedures used in carrying out the study. It explains the research design, population, sample and sampling techniques, instrument for data collection, validation and reliability of instruments, method of data collection and data analysis

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The descriptive research involves collecting data from the existing situation without manipulating the study subject in order to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses concerning the current status of the subject of study or for the purpose of describing existing conclusion.

The population consisted of all the academic staff in two higher institutions in Rivers state. The population of this study consisted of one thousand two hundred and thirty six (1,236) respondents obtained in two higher institutions in Rivers State. There were seven hundred and twenty-three (723) academic staff in University of Port Harcourt (UNIPORT); while in Rivers State University (RSU), there were five hundred and thirteen teaching staff (513),

Source: Pay roll unit of the Bursary Department of the Federal and State University

The sample size of 1211 respondents represents 98% of the population of 1,236 employed stratified sampling technique for the selection of the respondents. Respondents were also

selected using random sampling method of balloting without replacement. This gave all respondents equal chance of being selected for the study. The strata comprised academic staff from

Uniport and RSU respectively. The academic staff, from Uniport selected was 708 while the academic staff from RSU was 503 for the study.

The instrument was a well-structured questionnaire titled Global Challenges and Sustainable Implementation of Higher Education Questionnaire (GCSIHEQ). The questionnaire which contained 12 items was divided into sections A and B. Section A, elicited information on the demographic background while section B dealt with issues on global challenges and sustainable implementation of higher education. This section is structured on a modified likert four-point rating scale; that is:

Strongly Agree (SA) - 4 points

Agree (A) - 3 points

Disagree (D) - 2 points

Strongly Disagree (SD) -1 point

To get the criterion mean for scoring the questionnaire, all the points of the alternative responses was added up and divided by 4, that is $(4+3+2+1)/4 = 10/4 = 2.50$. Thus, any mean value that is 2.50 and above was accepted and anyone below it (2.50) was rejected

To validate the research instrument, the researcher presented the questionnaire items to two experts in the Department of Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation, Faculty of Education in University of Port Harcourt for scrutiny. The observations, views, opinions and comments were used to modify the instrument before administering to the respondents.

All these processes were geared towards proper determination of validation. To ascertain if the instrument actually set out to meet what it was expected to test. The study used construct validity.

To ensure the reliability, the instrument was administered to 10 respondents outside the study area. After two weeks, the same instrument was administered to the same respondents. The scores obtained were collated and computed using the statistical method known as Pearson product moment

correlation coefficient. The reliability coefficient index for the study was determined at .90.

Within two weeks the researcher went round the two higher institutions in Rivers State. The researcher observed, administered and retrieved the instruments from the participants. The researcher administered one thousand two hundred and eleven (1211) questionnaires for the participants and was able to retrieve 1200 instruments. This showed 99 percent return of instrument from the field

The data collected for the study was coded according to the response sets on the questionnaire schedule. The research questions were answered with mean (x), standard deviation (SD) and rank order statistics, while the hypotheses of no significant difference were tested with z-test statistics at .05 level Of significance

Research questions 1: What are the challenges identified in higher education in Rivers state?

Table 1: Mean (x), SD and rank order of respondents' scores on the challenges identified in higher education in Rivers State

S/N	Items	Uniport (700)	RSU (500)	Weighted Mean	Rank Order	Remark
1.	Inadequate funding	3.18	2.63	2.91	3 rd	Agreed
2.	Brain drain	2.72	2.64	2.68	7 th	Agreed
3	Political interference	2.84	2.80	2.82	5 th	Agreed
4	Inadequate infrastructure	2.98	3.13	3.06	1 st	Agreed
5	Examination malpractice	2.71	3.02	2.87	4 th	Agreed
6	Conducive learning environment	3.15	2.94	3.05	2 nd	Agreed
7	Grant for quality research	2.78	2.64	2.71	6 th	Agreed
8	Adequate funding to savage higher institutions of learning	3.03	2.78	2.91	2 nd	Agreed
9	Good grant for research development	2.65	2.47	2.58	5 th	Agreed
10	Good condition of service and remuneration retain quality academician in the system	2.93	2.85	2.89	3 rd	Agreed
11	Introduction of ICT is a good innovation by NUC to enhance learning in Higher institution of learning.	2.71	3.17	2.94	1 st	Agreed
12	Reduce political interference in higher institutions of learning	2.72	2.94	2.83	4 th	Agreed

From table 1, the weighted mean scores ranging from 3.06 to 2.68 indicated that all the items identified were accepted as the challenges facing higher education in Rivers state. Hence, the mean scores were above the criterion mean. It is evident that, all the items identified are influence and byproduct of inadequate funding except political interference which is an external factor. In summary, the challenges in higher education institutions are by-product of inadequate funding.

Research questions 2: What are the sustainability implementation for higher education?

From table 2, the weighted mean scores ranging from 2.94 to 2.58 indicated that all the items identified were accepted as the sustainability implementation for higher education in Rivers state. Hence, the mean scores were above the criterion mean. It is evident that, all the items identified are influence and by-product of adequate funding which is capable of bringing sustainability for higher education. In summary, the sustainability implementation of higher education institutions can be achieved through adequate funding.

Hypotheses

H1: There is no significant difference between academic staff of Uniport and RSU on the challenges identified in higher education in Rivers state.

Table 3: Mean (x), standard deviation, and Z-statistic on the challenges identified in higher education in Rivers state.

	N	X	SD	DF	Z-Cal	Z-Critical	Decision
Uniport (Academic staff)	700	2.90	0.72	1198	1.95	+1.96	Hoi was accepted
RSU (Academic staff)	500	2.82	0.68				

Note: Level of significance = 0.05;

The data in table 3, showed that the z-calculated value of 1.95 is less than z-critical value of +1.96 at 0.05 level of significance with 1198 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis (Hoi) was accepted. This means that there is no significant difference between academic staff of Uniport and RSU on the challenges identified in higher education in Rivers state.

H02: There is no significant difference between academic staff of Uniport and RSU on the sustainability implementation to higher education in Rivers state.

Table 4: Mean (x), standard deviation, and Z-statistic on the sustainability implementation of higher education in Rivers state.

	N	X	SD	DF	Z-Cal.	Z-Critical	Decision
Uniport (Academic staff)	700	2.81	0.69	1198	0.81	+1.96	Ho?was accepted
RSU (Academic staff)	500	2.84	0.60				

Note: Level of significance - 0.05;

The data in table 4, showed that the z-calculated value of 1.95 is less than z-critical value of +] .96 at

0.05 level of significance with 1198 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis (**Hoi**) was accepted. This means that there is no significant difference between academic staff of Uniport and RSU on the sustainability implementation of higher education in Rivers state.

III. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study revealed that the challenges identified are by-product of inadequate funding in higher education in Rivers state. Funding of higher education is highly imperative due to the costs involved in operating and maintaining an institution in Nigeria and everywhere in the world. The level of funding of higher education institutions over the years has resulted to inadequate infrastructure, increasing brain drain (low staff morale), quality of research by academician, quality of graduate produced from higher education institutions and more. These challenges identified are the reasons for numerous strike actions by academic staff union of university (ASUIJ). The root of these challenges is inadequate funding which had brought fight or face-off between government and

ASUU in higher education institutions. It is governments' (Federal and state) statutory responsibility to bear the cost of higher education in the country. According to Halidu (2015), the decline in the funding of higher education has adversely affected the quality of teaching and research as well as workers' condition of service. The situation creates in the universities, a state of overcrowding, deteriorating physical facilities and lack of resources for non-salary expenditures such as library, teaching and research materials, laboratory equipment, consumable and maintenance. The Nigerian university education is declining to the extent that the quality of teaching, training and research which is the cardinal doctrines of any academic institution in the world is falling abysmally due to gross under funding. In support of the above, Udida, Bassey, Udofia and Egbona (2009) asserted that one of the most serious problems threatening the standard of the educational systems is that of dwindling level of public funding in the face of rising demands and hence rising cost of higher education.

This inadequacy of funding does not only affect job performance but other areas such as inadequate infrastructure, increasing brain drain, quality of research by academician, quality of graduate produced from higher education institutions and more. This study has hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference between academic staff of Uniport and RSU on the challenges identified in higher education in Rivers state. However, the neglect of the challenges identified in the higher education institutions in Rivers state will affect the core mandate of teaching, research and community service respectively. Sustainability implementation for higher education institutions can be achieved through adequate funding. Higher education sustainable implementation is an emerging imperative.

It is arresting and addressing the identified challenges buffeting higher education institutions in Rivers state. Thus, deliberate and adequate funding of higher education institutions is a key to sustainable and enhancement of higher education. This will lead to increase in quality research and development (R&D) by academician, reduced brain drain and retain experienced academician in the system, standard and adequate infrastructure, and reduce political interference in higher education institutions by politician and many more. Even good and quality research require grant which is derived from the fund provided by government to higher institutions of learning. An institution is rated by quality of research and innovation produced over time. This is one of the core mandate of higher education of learning. Again, good condition of service and remuneration retain quality academician in the system. The reason for brain drain is poor condition of service of worker leading to exodus of academician seeking for greener pasture abroad. Akusoba (2014) revealed a national census conducted by the United State in 2004 that 3.24 million Nigerians live in America alone; about 202,000 are medical professionals, 174,000 are experts in information and technology and 250,000 are experts in different areas, including university lecturers. This agreed

with Ige (2014) estimate of presidential committee on the issue by the Ministry government revealed that between 1986 and 1990, 30,694 professionals from tertiary institutions left the country. He also reported that between 1988 and 1990, over 1,000 lecturers left the federal universities in Nigeria while as at 2007, over 10,000 Nigerian academics were working in the United State of America. The head count of academic staff in tertiary institutions in United Kingdom revealed 153 Nigerians and 268 South African in the sub-Saharan Africa. This study have hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference between academic staff of Uniport and RSU on the sustainability implementation to higher education in Rivers state.

In order to salvage the situation, government through the National Universities Commission (NUC) made it mandatory for all Federal universities to generate 10% of their annual funds internally. Okojie (2010) reports that all federal universities receive bulk fund from federal government through the National Universities Commission (NUC) differentiated into capital and recurrent grants with the recurrent grant to be disbursed based on NUC funding criteria of 60% on personal cost and 40% on overhead cost, out of which library cost, research cost and capacity building cost are allocated 10%, 5% and 1% respectively. In spite of NUC effort for higher education institutions to generate internally revenue through tuition fees, increasing commercial activities on the various campuses, seeking for funds from international development partners, carrying out researches, rendering consultancy services, offering long distance and part time programmes through the internet and others. Yet, it still does not enough to meet the pressing demands in higher education institutions in Nigeria.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that higher education institutions are buffeted with challenges such as inadequate funding, brain drain, political interferences, inadequate infrastructural facilities and more. These challenges have limited and hindered higher education institutions in Nigeria from being ranked among world class universities in the world; even the best in Africa continent in spite of the numerous universities (both public and private universities). In addition, if sustainability implementation is made by government and stakeholders, the higher education in Nigeria and Rivers state in particular will be salvage from decadent, thereby recognized among top class universities in the world. ^

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Nigerian government should accept and implement the 26% funding formula for education recommended by the UNESCO to revive and sustain higher education from decadent. This will go a long way to meet the demand of infrastructural facilities, reduce brain drain, and enhance research and innovation and more in the system.
2. Government should be able to provide about 80% of

total funds required by higher education institutions while the rest to be made-up by the individual institutions through internally generated revenue.

3. Government and non-governmental organizations should support higher education institutions by motivating academia for quality research and innovation by providing infrastructural facilities for research especially those in the science field. This will reduce brain drain and enhance the quality of graduates that are chunked out from higher education institutions. The resultant effect will manifest in achieving higher education core mandate and above all national development (Timi-Johnson and Abam, 2017)