

# Proprietorship: A Major Determinant of Control, Funding and Management at All Levels of Education in Nigeria

V. F. Peretomode\* and A. N. Obed-Chukwuka

Department of Educational Management & Foundation Delta State University,

Abraka, Nigeria

\*Corresponding Author

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## ABSTRACT

The Nigerian education system has grown at all levels since its independence on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1960. This significant expansion of access to education, however, has not been met with corresponding needed resources, especially funding. Using the eclectic approach based on observations, administrative and teaching experiences, exchange of ideas with colleagues in conferences, and extensive review, analysis and synthesis of contents of relevant literature and government documents, the authors disentangled the complex interplay of ownership, control, management, and funding perspectives at the different levels of education in Nigeria. The governments – federal, state and other proprietors of schools have been requested to take bold steps to provide adequate funds to the education sector in Nigeria. The point has been made that without quality and functional education system, the other sectors of the economy which are dependent on education cannot make progress, so also the nation.

**Keywords:** Control; Funding Perspectives; Levels of Education; Management; Proprietorship

## INTRODUCTION

On February 6, 1962, President John F. Kennedy of the United States in his special message to congress on Education stated that our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education. The “human mind,” he added, “*is our fundamental resource*” and the demand of world leadership and hope for economic growth, require the maximum development of every young American capacity. Similarly, President Nelson Mandela, the first black President of South Africa postulated that “education is the most powerful weapon which we can use to change the world”. These quotes point to the value of education in all nations. In Nigeria, it has been long recognized that education is the bedrock of any society and it understands the critical role that education can play in the development of nations. But what importance has the Nigerian government and other proprietors of schools sincerely attached to quality education? In this article, efforts will be made to provide a brief on the growth of Nigerian education system, disentangle and focus on the complex interplay of ownership, control and financing practices at all levels of education in Nigeria.

This theoretical and positional paper is based on an eclectic approach which is a combination of observations, administrative and teaching experiences of the authors in University setting coupled with discussions with colleagues at conferences and the faculty. Ideas from these interactions and cross fertilization of ideas combined with the extensive review of the relevant literature, and analysis and

synthesize of contents of government documents were used to make a new and creative meaning to address the objectives highlighted in this article.

## **A BRIEF ON THE GROWTH OF NIGERIA EDUCATION SYSTEM**

The state of the Nigerian education is multifaceted, characterized by elements that are successful and elements in need of significant transformation. Since independence on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1960, Nigeria has made significant progress in expanding access to education at all levels in quantitative but not in qualitative terms. Enrollment rates have increased in recent years at all levels of education but resources such as qualified teachers, classrooms, laboratories, libraries, workshops and studios, infrastructure and other educational facilities, had not grown correspondingly and qualitatively, so also is funding. Today, there are more children attending schools than ever before. This is evident in the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) data showing that the primary school net enrolment rate (NER) was 73.1% in 2019, compared to 65.8% in 2010 (NBS 2021). In 2022, forty seven million pupils enrolled in basic education. Similarly, the secondary school NER increased from 44.3% in 2010 to 53.78% in 2019. In the academic year 2018/2019, Nigerian Universities counted 1.8 million undergraduates and 242,000 postgraduate students, with enrollment in Federal Universities being 1,206,825; State Universities, 544,936 and private universities, 102,500. In 2019, 22.7 million children were enrolled in public elementary schools. Another 5.4 million went to private schools. In 2018/2019, 7.4% students were enrolled in Junior Secondary Education, and over 500,000 enrolled in polytechnic across the Federation (Statista, 2023). Several tens of thousands students also enrolled in mono-technics, colleges of education, school of nursing, and Colleges of Health Technologies. In 2020/2021, the total national enrollment in Federal State and Private Colleges of Education was 331,406 and 2,138,188 enrolled in adult literally centers (Nigeria Digest, 2021).

Despite these positive developments, Nigerian education system still faces a plethora of challenges, the most significant being low quality of education. The 2019 Global Competitiveness index, for example, ranked Nigeria 116<sup>th</sup> out of 141 countries in terms of the quality of primary education and 119<sup>th</sup> out of 141 countries in terms of the quality of its educational system overall. In June 12, 2023, The World Statistics, ranked Nigeria as the first in countries with highest unemployment rate in the world at 33.3%. This poverty rate has been attributed to the non-functional and low quality of education at all levels of its education. These challenges of low quality education can be attributed to a complex interplay of factors, including insufficient funding, poor management practices and inadequate infrastructure.

The 2016 World Bank Report showed that Shanghai's #1 Global ranking performance on international tests in reading, math and science rested on strong education system with adequate quality teachers and efficient public financing with educational facilities, and accountability in educational management. Thus, the interaction between effective management, control and adequate funding is critical to the delivery of quality education in any country, including Nigeria.

## **THE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

Although the structure of education systems may vary between nations and sometimes within different states/regions/provinces such as in Germany, all education systems fall within the framework of the International Standards Classification of Education (ISCED) 2011. Under this classification, levels of education are an ordered set of categories intended to group educational programs in relation to graduations of learning experiences and the knowledge, skills and competences which each program is designed to impart in the individual. The higher the level of education, the more advanced and complex the educational content" (P.13). While there are nine (9) levels in the 1SCED, the Nigerian Education System is structured into four levels and these four Correspond to the ISCED 9 (Fig. 1).

Table 1: Comparison of levels of Education between ISCED 2011 and Nigerian Levels of Education

Level	ISCED 2011	Level	Nigeria's Levels of Education
0	Early childhood Education	0	Early Childcare Development and Education (EC-DE) (0 – 4 Years)
1	Primary Education	1	10 years Basic Education which is free, compulsory, and Universal. It comprises: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· 1 year pre-primary education</li> <li>· 6 years primary Education</li> <li>· 3 years Junior Secondary School (Jss1 – JSS III)</li> </ul>
2.	Lower Secondary Education	2.	3 Years Post-Basic Education(age 15 – 17 years) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Senior Secondary Schools</li> <li>· Technical and vocational Education</li> </ul>
3	Upper Secondary Education	3	Tertiary Education made up of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Monotechnics – 2 years</li> <li>· Colleges of Education – 3 years</li> <li>· Polytechnics – OND/HND (2/2 Years)</li> <li>· School of Nursing – 3 years</li> <li>· School of Health technology (2 + 2) years)</li> <li>· Universities – Bachelors 4 to 6 years, Masters, 2 years, Doctorate 3 to 5 years.</li> </ul>
4	Post Secondary non-Tertiary Education		
5	Short – Cycle tertiary Education		
6	Bachelor's or Equivalent Level		
7	Master's of Equivalent Level		
8	Doctoral or Equivalent Level		

## OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT AT ALL LEVELS OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

The Management of the different levels of education in Nigeria has evolved through different stages and authorities – prior to independence and from independence to date. The ownership of an Institution plays a significant role in driving and shaping the quality of education and the outcomes it produces. In Nigeria, ownership and proprietorship of schools is diverse with both public and private entities involved in the provision of education. The fact that the 1999 Constitution (as amended) placed education under concurrent legislative list has led to the decentralization of the ownership, control and management of education in Nigeria. Today, the Federal Government and the component states and units and the private sector now have significant place in the management of education at the different levels. Basically, the ownership of schools at any level determines the management, control and funding.

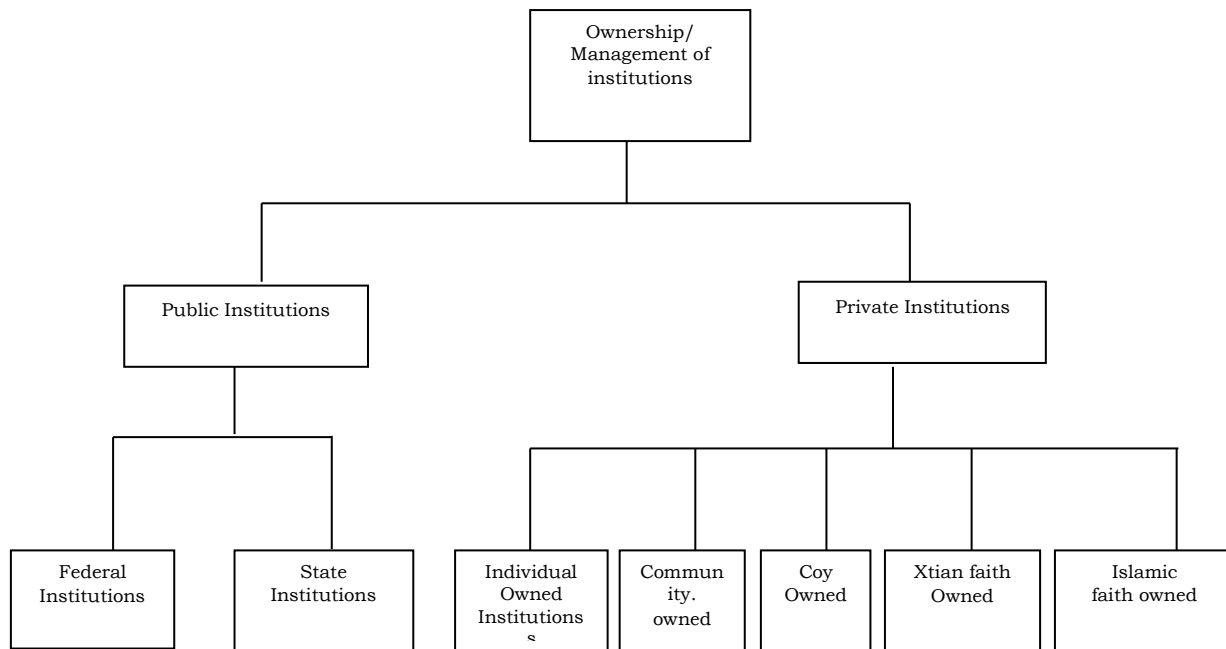


Figure 1: Classification of Educational Institutions by Ownership in Nigeria

The Nigerian Government operates a significant number of primary, secondary and tertiary institutions, while private schools are owned and operated by individuals, religious organizations, and other non-state actors. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, private schools make up the majority of educational institutions in Nigeria, with 59.2% of Primary Schools and 50.5% of Secondary Schools being privately owned in 2011. Private Universities also account for a significant proportion of Tertiary Education in Nigeria. In this 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge driven economies, the world seems to be begging governments to provide feasible and proper direction and funding for education. This is because high quality education is directly linked to economic growth, poverty reduction, instrument for improving world health, peace and stability (Patrinós, 2023; Sennuga, 2023; USAID, 2017; World Bank, 2017).

The Federal Government first introduced the concept of Unity Schools in 1966 as a way of fostering unity and national integration. Today, Nigeria has at least two Federal Government Colleges called Unity Schools in each State. In fact there are 100 Unity Schools which include special schools for the gifted spread across the Federation and the Federal capital territory, Abuja. These Schools are funded and managed directly by the Government through the Federal Ministry of Education (FME). The FME employs the teachers and staff and deploys them, including the principals. Because they are owned, funded, controlled and managed by the FME, the school fees is very low. These schools bring together children from different geographic, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds as one way of fostering unity among the children and build Nigeria's future (FME, 2024).

Tertiary Education refers to education given after post-basic education institutions as mono-technics, polytechnics and other specialized institutions such as Colleges of Education, Colleges of Agriculture, and Schools of Health Technology, Schools of Nursing Science, and the National Teachers Institutes (NTI). Others are inter-university centers (IUCS) such as the Nigeria French Language Village, Nigeria Arabic Language, Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs) and Universities that award Bachelor's, Master's and Doctorate Degrees. The goals of Tertiary Education include high level manpower training and contributing to national development through teaching, research and extension services, and production of skilled manpower relevant to the needs of the labour market.

Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria can be classified by ownership into private and public. Public Institutions are

those owned, controlled, funded and managed through Boards or Councils by the Federal or State Governments. Private Tertiary Institutions can be further categorized into individual, community and company owned and faith based such as Christian or Islam. They are approved and granted license to operate once they meet the laid down guidelines from the supervising body. For the Universities, it is the National Universities Commission (NUC). For Mono-technics and Polytechnics, it is the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), for the Colleges of Education (COEs) it is the National Commission for the Colleges of Education (NCCE), for the Schools of Nursing it is the Nursing & Midwifery Council of Nigeria (NMCN), and Schools of Health Technology by NBTE. The college of health technology trains manpower for the primary health care system while the schools of Nursing are tailored toward the secondary and tertiary healthcare system. Colleges of health technology do not offer nursing programmes. They offer courses that take care of the sick. Such courses include health technicians, junior community health extension workers and dental surgery technicians (Weccoht, 2023).

There are thirty-six (36) states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja and Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. At the Capital, Abuja is the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) headed by the Minister of Education supported by his colleague, the Minister of State for Education. In each of the States are a Ministry of Higher Education and/or Education (SME) with the Commissioner of Education as the head. The functions of the FME include formulating a National Policy on Education, collecting and collating data for the purposes of educational planning and financing, maintaining uniform standards and controlling the quality of education throughout the country, and harmonizing procedures of tackling illiteracy levels. It is also expected to grant scholarships to the less privileged, throughout the country (FME, 2023).

The statutory responsibilities of the State Ministry of Education include implementing FG Education policies at the State Level and LGAs. The State liaises with the Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to develop education at the Local level and to ensure the education policy direction of the State is followed.

The Early Childcare and Development Education (ECCDE)(0-4years) offered in daycare / crèches, are fully in the hands of the private sector and development services; they must adhere to the FG guidelines for establishment and operation. The age five which is pre-basic has been incorporated within the formal basic education hence basic education is now ten years. It incorporates one year pre-basic (1 year), six years Primary (6-11) and three years Junior Secondary Education (12 – 14 years), the education received immediately after Primary Education. It should be noted that Basic Education (5-14years) is the responsibilities of the Federal Government and it is compulsory, free, and universal. Every parent is to ensure that their child or ward attends and completes: (a) primary school education, and (b) junior secondary education (UBEC, 2023).

For the purpose of policy implementation, coordination and monitoring, the Federal Government established the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) in 2004 to eradicate illiteracy, ignorance and poverty by ensuring that every Nigerian child of school age benefited from quality education program, acquiring the appropriate level skills and competence, and to reduce the drop-out rate from formal school system. There is shared responsibility for the funding and management of basic education as provided for in the Constitution. Local Governments have responsibility for the Management of Primary Education through their Local Education Authorities (LEAs). School based Management Committees are also involved at the appropriate lower levels. It needs to be pointed out that though Primary Education Administration is being controlled by State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEB) in various States; the funding is the responsibility of the Federal (50%), State (30%) and Local Governments (20%) in that sharing ratio.

At the Post-Basic Education level are Senior Secondary Schools and Technical and Vocational Education (TVET) Schools. In addition to the Federal Unity Schools are those established by the State Government, voluntary agencies and individuals. Each of these categories is funded and managed by the proprietor,

provided they meet the set standards by the Ministry of Education at the State level.

The College of Health Technology is a Tertiary Institution in Nigeria. They offer Certificate, National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) programs and are accredited by NBTE. These institutions offer professional medical courses for the middle-level workforce in the Health Sector. The duration of their program is like those of the polytechnics- two to four years. Department of Nursing in universities degree programme is five (5) years, school of nursing science is three years, and Colleges of Nursing Science is two years for the National diploma (ND) and two years addition to obtain HND.

Whether public or private, tertiary Institutions such as the Colleges of Education, Mono-technics and Polytechnics and Universities are ran through the committee system which is subject to senate or the council. All Universities are controlled and monitored by the NUC as an external government body to maintain standards and improve on quality and coordinate Universities in Nigeria. In addition, private Universities may be burdened by some of their owners or proprietors who can, sometimes, be overbearing. The Federal Universities and other Tertiary Institutions are under the Federal Ministry of Education, and the president is the visitor to all, though not usually involved in the management process of the Institutions. The State Governors are the visitors to their respective state higher education institutions (HEIs).

Private Tertiary Institutions are solely owned, financed, controlled and managed by their proprietors – individuals, denominational or secular boards. Private Institutions, especially universities, continue to grow faster than Federal or State Universities they were approved to operate since 1999. As at April, 2024, they were 148 approved private Universities out of the 263 in the country (Table 1, Figure 2).

Table 1 Number of Approved Higher Education Institutions by Ownership as at April, 2024

Ownership	Universities	Colleges of Educ.	Poly	Mon-technics
Federal Government	52 (20%)	31 (16%)	37(24%)	23 (66 %)
State Government	63 (24%)	66 (34%)	51 (34%)	03 (8 %)
Private Ownership	148 (56%)	96 (50%)	64 (42%)	09 (26%)
Total	263	193	152	35

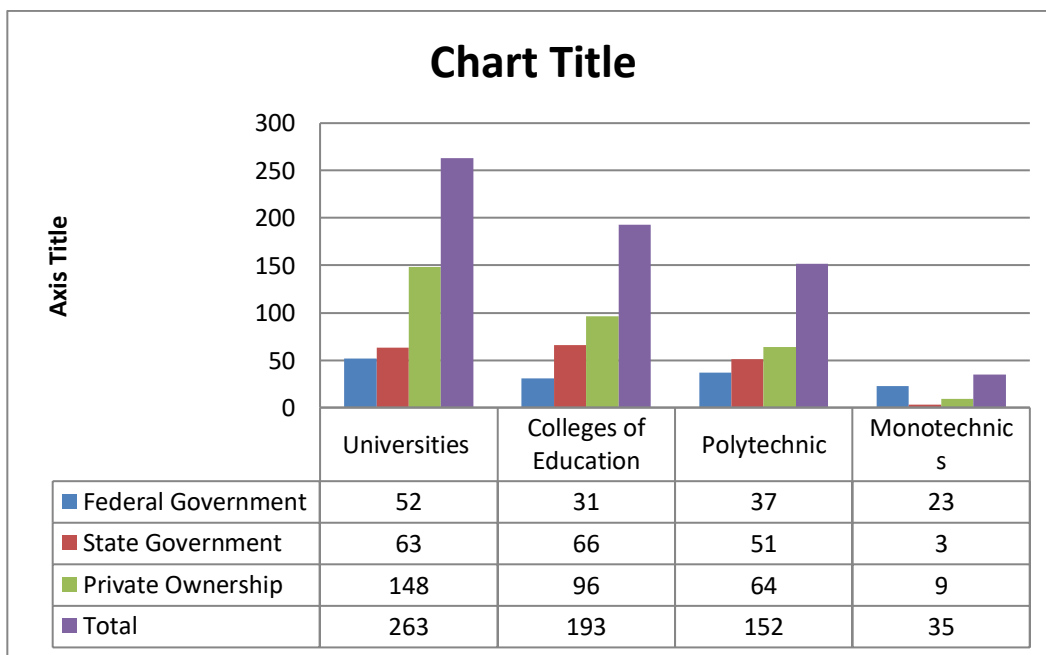


Figure 2: Number and types of HEIs by Ownership as at April, 2024

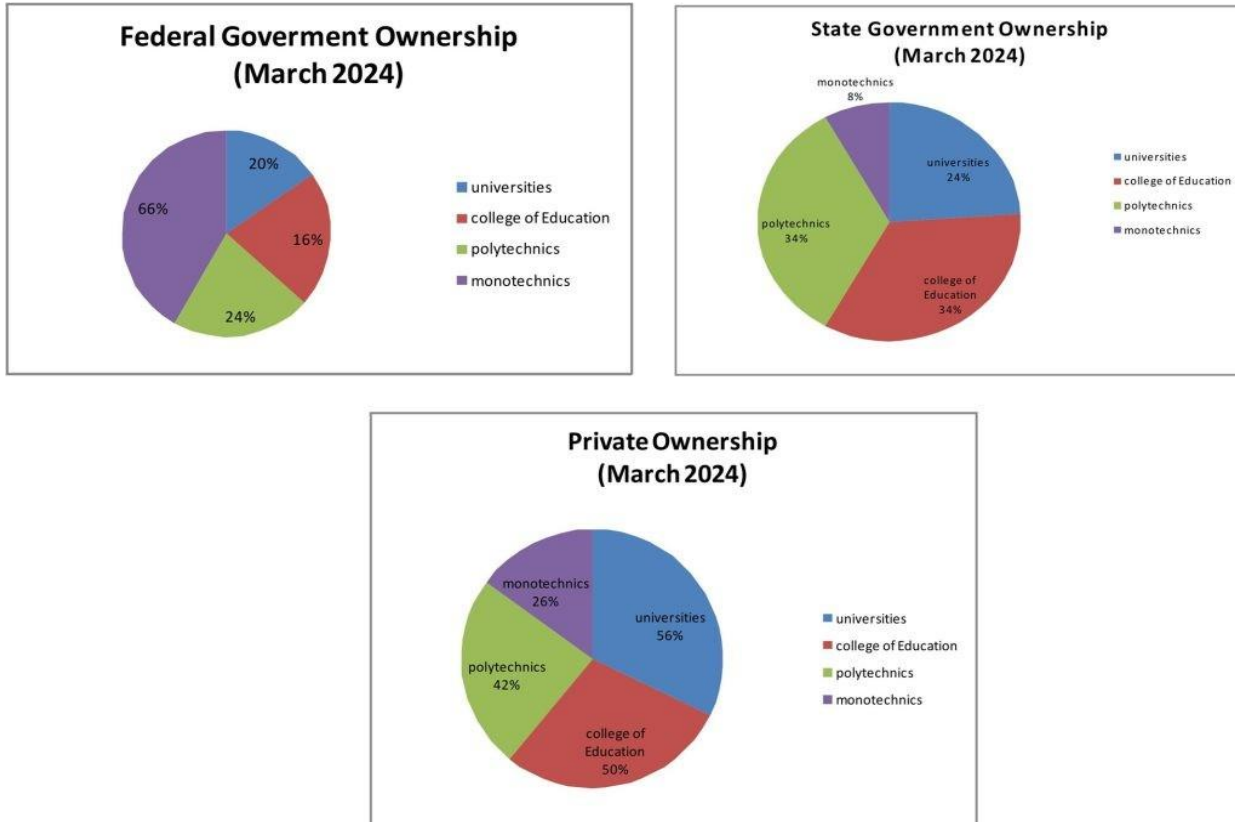


Figure 3: Types of Tertiary Institution by Federal, State and Private Ownership

Schools of Nursing and Schools of Health Technology are also Tertiary Institutions. There are 400 approved nursing training institutions in Nigeria as at April 2024. The duration of School of Nursing is three years. They are academic institutions that offer Basic Nursing and Basic/Post Basic Midwifery Programs. They are both run by Government and private ownership. Funding is dependent on the ownership of Institution. The better funded being the ones owned by the Federal Government and State governments, and the third best funded are large faith based Universities such as Covenant and Landmark Universities owned by Private Pentecostal Christian Mission – Living Faith Church Worldwide, founded in 2002 in Ota Nigeria.

Table 3 List of Approved Nursing training Institutions in Nigeria by the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria (NMCN)

S/N	Type of Nursing & Health training Institutions	No
1	School of Nursing (Basic)	117
2	School of Midwifery (Basic & Postgraduate)	111
3	Community Midwifery Program	27
4	Community Nursing program	30
5	School of Post-Basic Nursing (Specialties)	72
6	Department of Nursing Sciences	443
	<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>
7	College of health technology	119

It should be noted that most Schools of Nursing have transited to Colleges under NBTE. In such instances, the regulatory body becomes a joint effort by both the NMCN and NBTE and now to award HND in

Nursing, Midwifery and Public Health Nursing. Before now, in most State Schools of Nursing, fees were not been paid and Government paid each student N5,000 every month for upkeep but it looks like all that is no more.

## THE NIGERIAN LAW SCHOOL -OWNERSHIP AND FUNDING

The Nigerian Law School was established by the Federal Government of Nigeria by virtue of the Legal Education Act of 1962 for the training of members of the Legal Profession in Nigeria. This training was been undertaken over the years mainly in the United Kingdom. The School formally began operations in 1963 in Lagos before relocating to Abuja in 1997 and in the same year, the FG approved the proposal of the Council of Legal Education to establish three campuses of Law School in Lagos, Kano and Enugu. There are 14 approved campuses of Nigerian Law School which include: Jos, Kabba, Yola, Maiduguri, Kano, Argungu, Enugu, Okija, Yenagoa, Port Harcourt, Orogun, Ilawe, Lagos, and Abuja. As at April 2024, out of the 14 approved Campuses of the Nigerian School, only seven (7) were operational with students fully on session. They include the Abuja, Lagos, Enugu, Kano, Yola, Yenagoa and Port Harcourt Campuses.

The Nigerian Law School is one single Institution with multiple campuses sited across the six (6) geopolitical zones but owned by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The Institution is managed through the Council of Legal Education and funded by the same Federal Government through subventions as well as internally generated revenue (IGR) as each admitted student pays approximately N300, 000 as schools fees for one year program. Other sources of fund include donations and sponsorships from individuals and/or corporate bodies.

## FUNDING PRACTICES IN NIGERIAN EDUCATION

Education is an important social service as all other sectors builds open this sector. Also considered as financing education, it is more than paying salaries and allowances to teachers and other staff in the school system and purchasing few materials. The total level of funding allocated to educational activities also affects its quality and it impacts on the socio-economic, cultural and political development of the country. In Nigeria, the total level of financing education comes from many different sources. The Government average budgetary allocation to education has been extremely appalling, never up to 9% in the past decade. For example, the percentage of the national budgetary allocation to education in the past eight years has been as follows; in 2016 (7.9%), 2017 (6.13%), 2018 (7.14%), 2019 (7.12%), 2020 (6.7%), 2021 (5.6%), 2022 (7.2%), and 2023 (8.8%). These allocations to the education sector are grossly inadequate when considered against the UNESCO recommended standard that developing nations should give up to 15 – 20 per cent of their annual budgets to funding public education.

Despite the UNESCO recommended standard, Nigeria's national budget to the education sector has consistently fallen short of the lower level of this target (Table 4 and Figure 4).

Table 4: National Budget to Education, 2016 – 2023

Year	Allocation (Naira)	Percentage of National Budget
2016	369.6 billion	7.9 %
2017	550.5 billion	7.4 %
2018	605.8 billion	7.04 %
2019	620.5 billion	7.05 %
2020	671 .07 billion	6.7 %
2021	742.5 billion	5.68 %



2022	1.18 trillion	7.2 %
2023	1.79 trillion	8.2 %

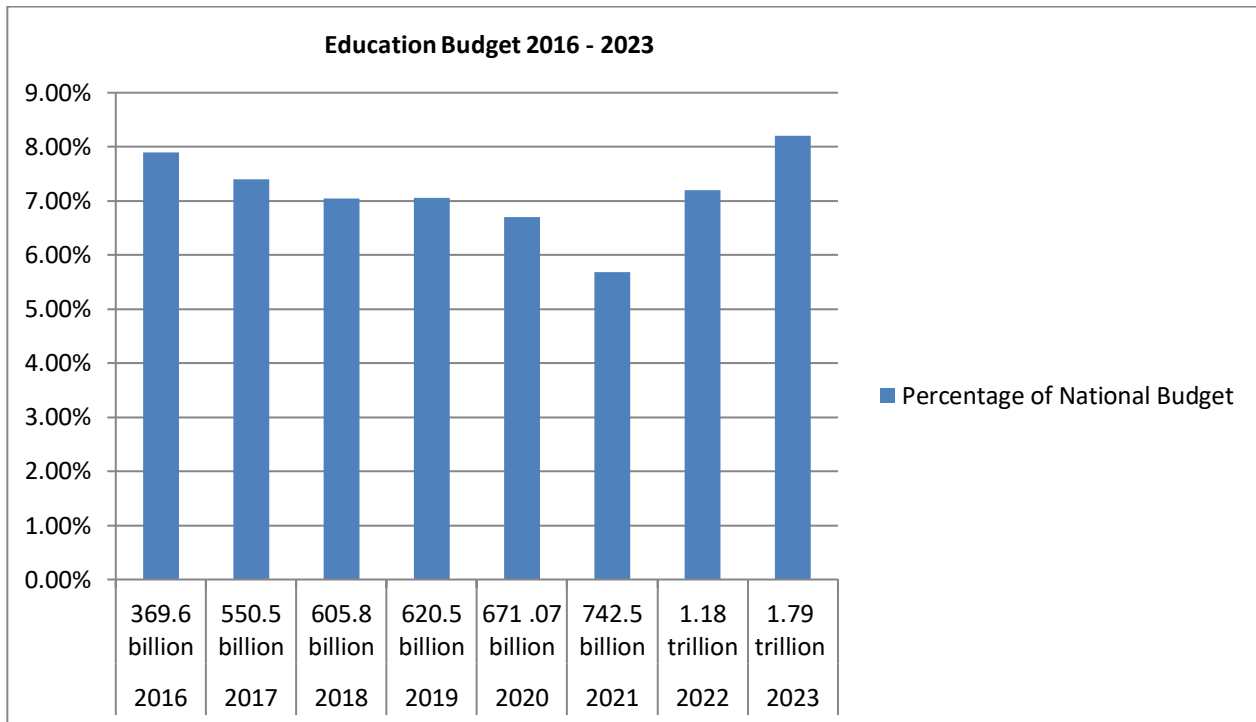


Figure 4: Annual Budgeting Allocation to Education, 2016 – 2023

Besides Government grants, there are other sources of revenue for financing education in Nigeria. These include the following:

1. Private organizations such as non-Government organizations and societies which offer scholarships and sometimes forgivable loans
2. Foreign aids – foreign funding or financing resources such as World Bank, USAID, UNICEF, UNDP, DFID, JICA etc.
3. Foreign loans: refer to a loan from foreign lenders such as a government or organization or commercial banks in another country or international financial institutions such as International Monetary Funds (IMF) loans.
4. School fees / charges /parents and royalties, payment of tuition in higher education has been a bone of contention in Nigeria. The recent signing into law of the Students Loans Board will go a long way to douse the contention.
5. Both public and private tertiary institutions establish entrepreneurial units to serve universities commercial ventures such as gift shops, bookshops, petrol stations, consultancy services, printing and publishing houses, hotels, hostels, bakery, water factories, paint making factories etc.
6. Loan – is taken from financial institutions by mostly private institutions to fund their activities. This is a type of debt, a sum of money borrowed that is expected to be paid back with interest by the borrower to the lender on later time, at regular installments
7. Grants – a grant is considered a gift aid – money which does not need to be repaid. There could be Federal or State grants to students. There are foreign grants from a number of foundations e.g. John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur, Ford Foundation, Carnegie Foundation, World Health Organization (WHO), to both public and private Universities.
8. Alumni/Philanthropist donations and fund raising and endorsement are also sources of generating funds for financing education activities in Nigeria. However, this is not very developed in Nigeria.

9. Finally, research grants and research collaborations with industries and sponsored research by multi-national organizations and commercialization of results attract meager revenue to few tertiary institutions principally due to inability of most institutions to write grant award winning research proposals at the global level.

## CONCLUSION

There has been growth without actual development at all levels of education in Nigeria. This is attributable to the gross under allocation of funds to the education sector of the economy by the federal and state governments, and proprietors in Nigeria. Schools owned by faith-based, corporations, communities and private individuals, are not in any way better off. This underfunding of the education sector has affected the socio-economic development of the nation as other sectors of the economy – health, scientific and technological progress – are dependent on quality and functional education. Tertiary institutions must work assiduously in exploring alternative sources of generating revenue for funding the much needed requirements in achieving excellence in education. Individuals, philanthropist, proprietors, non-governmental organizations, national intervention agencies, and multinational corporations need to contribute more to the education sector as currently is the case in Nigeria. It is clear to all that education as a social service is an expensive venture and government alone cannot sustain its continuous improvement, quality and overall development.

There is also the urgent need for government of Nigeria to prioritize education and provide it with the much needed adequate funding and develop the political will to ensure that no less than 20 per cent of its annual national budget is allocated for funding public education in the next four years, and thereafter, gradually increased to 25 per cent by the year 2030 as recommended by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for emerging economies.

Providing sufficient funds is critical for the payment of fair salaries to teachers and other staff at all levels, provide for continuous staff development, provide twenty first century digital instructional and research and development (R&D) facilities, and provide feeding programmes in schools at the primary education level and infrastructure and incentives to all deserving staff. It is when the school environment is more conducive than most homes that students would be attracted to and remain in schools and continue till graduation. This is one way to reduce the high dropout rate and the over ten million school age children who are out of school in Nigeria. From the foregoing analysis, it could be stated that there is a close interconnectedness between adequate funding of education and prudent management of education by the application of funds to areas of chronic deficiencies, and a combination of both to reach goal excellence. Also in Nigeria, ownership of school plays a major role in its control, funding, and management at all levels of education.

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