A CURSORY EVALUATION OF THE SITUATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING IN SELECTED AFRICAN COUNTRIES

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Abstract

This paper is a cursory evaluation of the situation of higher education funding in selected African countries. It is a library research paper that discussed the funding situation in selected African countries. It considered the roles of higher education in national development. It was discovered that most of the African nations use a cost-sharing or partial support model which demands the participation of beneficiaries (household. government, community). The discussion shows that no single funding model should cushion the challenge of higher education rather it calls for a combination of models. The following suggestions among others were made: policies should be properly studied before implementation, services of education managers should be properly and adequately engaged and utilized, obsolete and irrelevant course of studies should be struck off, and synergy between school and investors encouraged.

Key words: Funding; Higher Education; Evaluation; Situation.

Introduction

Education is a road-map to societal development. The right type of education produces citizens who discover their potentials, are eager to develop themselves, realize their dreams and actively engage in the societal development. Several studies such as Fonkeng and Ntembe (2009); Ganegodage and Rambaldi (2011), and Oketch, McCowan and Schendel (2014) provide evidence and reviews on the positive impact of education on productivity and economic growth. Eravwoke and Ukavwe (2019) describe education as an important tool in human society that stretches across all sectors of the society going beyond the economy to areas such as the political, medical, and agricultural areas. Higher education is aimed at the development of intellectual capacity of the individuals, advancement in research, science and technology and provision of services to the community. After the independence of most African countries in the 1960s, most of the states invested in higher education with the rationale that such investments will contribute to growth and economic development as well as the personal economic and non-economic benefits (Amin & Ntembe, 2021). According to the World Bank, the accumulation and application of knowledge are major factors in developing a state's economy and giving it a competitive advantage globally (Teferra, 2013). However, funding is a major prerequisite for the attainment of institutional goals and aspirations.

Higher education funding is the provision of resources that are necessary for aiding an institution to perform its functions. It has however become apparent that the resources provided by the government can no longer keep up with the demand of tertiary education as the rate of enrollment has increased exponentially.

One major weakness in some African nations is their reliance on the government despite its inability to provide adequate funds. This paper is aimed at discussing the background of higher education in Africa, the importance of higher education in national development; higher education funding models including the funding models in some African countries.

Background of Funding of Higher Education in Africa

The purpose of higher education as noted in Uche (2020.5) can be summarized as follows: the acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value orientation for the survival of the individual and the society; the development of the intellectual capacities of individuals to understand and appreciate their environment; the acquisition of physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to develop into useful member of the community; to advance knowledge, wisdom and understanding through research; to disseminate or impact existing and new knowledge and information; and to provide service to the community. Higher education is the level of education that substantially prepares students to be sustainable as members of society. It is described by Sum and Bob in Acquah (2021) as one of the “three powerful economic narratives” while Twene (2014) see it as one of the main pivots directing the affairs of an economy, the knowledge base of the state.

Nigeria’s investment in higher education began after independence like in most African states as a means of investing in the long-run development of the state economy. The first generation of universities in Nigeria (University of Ibadan, University of Nigeria Nsukka, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, University of Lagos and University of Benin) were fully and adequately funded by the government but at the establishment of the second generation universities (Universities of Calabar, Ilorin, Jos, Sokoto, Maiduguri, Port Harcourt and Ado Bayero University Kano) and the subsequent generations, funding became an issue (Ogbogu 2011). Also in Ghana, Higher education in Ghana was free until the late 1980s/early 1990s, when the government could no longer solely fund it (Acquah, 2021). Kenya’s education sector started facing financial challenges as far back as the 1970s when the International monetary fund (IMF) pushed for the implementation of structural adjustment programs which led to seeking for financial assistance to implement some of their developmental policies. It was noted that the recommendation of IMF was informed by factors such as corruption, ethnic motivated inefficiency and inequity among others. The reduction in government expenditure in social sectors however resulted to Cost-sharing formula of educational funding where the direct beneficiary (student) bear part of the cost through tuition fees. This trend continued as the budgetary allocation for educational sectors decreases as the years go by. This seems to be the practice of most of the African countries as presented in Table 1.1.

According to UNESCO (n.d), education funding is a “political and social decision making process through which public revenues are collected and allocated to finance education and lifelong learning opportunities”. It is translating the goals and aspirations of education into financial reality. In order words, education funding is a means of distribution of funds to education institutions for the purpose of advancing educational services. As at 2017, the world bank reported an increase in enrolled students from 89 million in 1998 to 200 million in 2017 (World Bank, 2017 cited in Acquah, 2021). It is obvious that public funding is not sufficient to respond to the growing need of higher education. Many authors are of the opinion that the government is unable and will continue to be unable to duly fund universities as the resources provided by the government cannot produce the level of quality and skill needed for graduates to be effective in the society and thrive in the labor market (Johnstone, 2003; Undie,2007; Etuk, 2015; Uche, 2020).

The government or public funding nonetheless remains the major mode of funding higher education in Africa, especially public higher education. In this model the government allocates funds to the institutions according to the state’s budget. These funds can either be unspecified or designated for a specific purpose (Omoria, 2012). Several reasons are accountable for the lack of funding from the government. The demand for universities continues to rise but the amount of money the government has and is able to allocate to education does not increase in same progression. In some cases, it reduces as represented in Table 1.1. In addition, the amount of money given for education is spent more on primary education and ensuring that the masses attain a basic level of education as the IMF had advised African states to focus their funding on primary and secondary education due to the need to ensure universal primary completion (Randriamahenintsoa, 2013).

Table 1: Budgetary allocation to education in selected African countries

Year	Kenya	Uganda	Ethiopia	Mali	Egypt	Mauritania	S/Africa	Gambia	Ghana	Nigeria
2010	20.56	10.1	26.3	16.5	11.30	n.r	18.04	17.61	20.7	6.17
2011	19.25	13.61	29.61	18.26	10.95	13.68	18.7	15.12	30.63	7.88
2012	19.92	11..45	30.54	22.4	10.92	10.02	19.68	13.8	37.52	8.55

2013	19.14	11.74	27.02	16.62	11.01	11.41	18.7	10.59	21.22	8.68
2014	17.08	11.70	25.92	18.22	11.92	11.91	19.99	11.75	20.99	9.04
2015	16.66	13.22	27.1	18.16	11.92	12.84	18.7	11.03	23.81	10.7
2016	17.35	12.47	23.01	13.9	11.45	9.33	18.05	10.45	22.09	7.9
2017	17.71	12.20	26.51	11.53	n.r	n.r	18.72	15.44	20.1	6.13
2018	19.04	11.25	24.0	14.64	n.r	n.r	18.9	11.36	18.6	7.14
2019	18.52	11.47	20.92	14.47	11.64	10.23	19.6	14.1	n.r	7.12
2020	n.r	11.25	n.r	n.r	12.26	9.73	19.53	13.77	n.r	5.13
2021	n.r	8.21	n.r	15.96	n.r	10.49	18.42	13.99	n.r	5.14
Total	**185.23**	**130.47**	**260.93**	**180.66**	**103.37**	**99.63**	**227.03**	**159.01**	**215.66**	**89.58**

Source: **macrotrends.net; Sasu, 2022**

Note: 'n.r' means no record

The data on Table 1 is a representation of budgetary allocation on education of selected countries in East Africa (Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia), North Africa (Mali, Egypt and Mauritania), South Africa and West Africa (Gambia, Ghana and Nigeria) from 2010 to 2020. The percentage is based on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the various countries. One common thing that is notable is the fluctuation in the allocation of funds. However, judging from the UNESCO's recommendation on the budgetary allocation to education among member nations within the range of 4%-6% of the GDP or 15% - 20% of the total public expenditure, the performance is commendable.

Role and Importance of Higher Education in National Development

National development is the "provision and creation of the conditions by which the citizens of a nation attends fulfillment of their basic human needs" (NYSC, 1986). In addition it considers national development as a development affecting every aspect of human life with particular reference to human capital, knowledge, and skill. This overall influence involves all areas; economic, political, social etc. National development is a sum total of the changes that take place in a nation resulting to an advancement of economic, social, political and cultural life of a people. It is a positive transformation of values and attitudes in the way people think and act.

Education primarily is a tool to national development. It awakens and stirs up potentials which empower the individual beneficiaries in particular in the area of knowledge, values, attitudes, and skills to function maximally in the society. Pouris and Inglesi-Lotz (2014) asserts that education gives direct economic value, indirect value, and induced economic value. This means that in addition to the contribution of individuals, education contributes to the economy directly by considering that the students' fees and spending circulates in the economy. Education also contributes indirectly through the long term benefits of research and teaching. According to Uche (2020), "higher education in Nigeria has created great awareness and initiated actions since its inception to the point that its influence in the overall development of individual is great".

By building employment capacity through human capital formality, higher education helps to grow the economy by broadening and deepening the labor market and creating jobs (Amin and Ntembe, 2021). Higher education is one of the greatest employer of labor. It attracts both the skilled, semiskilled and unskilled laborers for those who are directly involved in the business of teaching and learning. Higher educational attracts the site of other institutions like banks, schools, health centers and numerous small scale businesses.

Higher education produce the teachers of tomorrow. In line with the sustainability theory, if the right and needed skills must be upheld and promoted, to meet the need of the next generations, what goes on in the higher education is a concern. Higher education plays a major role in the training of the individuals with skills and expertise needed in implementing innovative measures and driving development. Studies show that 0.39 percent raise by one year of higher education can generate about a 12 percent rise in GDP (Valero and Reenen, (2018) as cited in Amin and Ntembe, 2021). Investing in higher education enables individuals to build the skills and knowledge needed to sustain economic transformation (Amin & Ntembe, 2021).

Although works like Siphambe (2000), Becker (1964), and Psacharopoulos (1985) show that the returns of higher education are accrued to the individual than the society, while authors like Okunamiri (2002), Ebong, (2006) and Uche, (2020) argue that higher education plays a role in economic growth and the social benefit is more than the private gains. Looking at the two schools of thought, it is quite obvious that higher education accrues much development to the society. This is because, whatever the individuals enjoy will directly or indirectly go back to the society. For instance, through the knowledge acquired, solutions are created, new and better ways of doing things are imbibed, and taxes are paid.

Higher Education Funding Models

Funding models are theories or framework adopted for the distribution of funds to higher education institutions. Newman (2013) describes funding models as the procedures used to allocate funds to higher education institutions. These models are not really new, while some have been in use at one time or the other; some have been practiced partially or not at all. The essence of this presentation is to carefully consider these models in line the present realities. The following models shall be discussed: Full support model, partial support model, privatization model, resource-based model, and innovative funding model.

The full support model considers education as the responsibility of the state because it is regarded as a social good. This model was firstly initiated by Harbinson in 1973. To strengthen this assertion, it is argued that since state collects taxes from the individual adults, properties, businesses, companies and other establishments, it is therefore expected that monies collected should be used to fund education. In addition, it is assumed that educated citizens are human resources that state at the long run engages for its development, hence funding of the education should be considered as an investment (input) which its output will be enjoyed by the state. However, the proponents of this model forgot that education is only one out of the many sectors of the nation's economy that demands attention. Then the question, can higher education be fully funded by the government or 100% free?

The partial support model was proposed by Cubberly in 1905. It stressed on the need to share the burden of funding between the government and the educational stakeholders such as parents, communities, philanthropist, and non-governmental agencies. It points out that government should play a supportive role and not assuming a full responsibility of funding of education. To achieve this, a system that would motivate communities to pay taxes willingly was set up, that the communities which pay more taxes should be given more allocation to encourage them to pay more. Additionally, Strayer in 1923 came up with equality access model arguing that state facilities/ fund should be distributed evenly to every community irrespective of the amount paid; and secondly, that financially advantaged communities should make more contribution in terms of tax payment. This will make room for the less financially advantaged communities to enjoy equal access to education. This model is workable since the burden of schooling is not resting much on the government, the less financially advantaged and even the financially advantaged. Everyone has a part to play.

The privatization model proposes that government should hands off from funding education. Privatization is diminishing the role of the states in the economy and promotion of methods and policies with the aim to strengthen free market economy. Belfield and Levin (2002) in Uche (2020) refers to privatization as a transfer of activities, assets and responsibilities from government or public institutions to private individuals and agencies. It is engaging the private sector to provide services that are usually regarded as public sector responsibilities. The model considers education as a good just like every other commodity in the market and so termed it not compulsory. It suggests that there should be no public schools from the primary level to the tertiary level; hence every individual who needs education should simply go for it. Privatization model is practicable but will be very effective if the standard of living is fairly favorable, to give a considerable number of the population access to education.

The resource-based model: Resource-based theory emerged in the early 1990s. The emphasis is on the resources as an essential ingredient to the product and ultimately to the quality performance of urban education. According to Wenerfelt (1984) “resource is anything that can be considered as the organization’s strength or weakness; they are tangible and intangible assets, semi-permanently tied to an organization such as brand name, service, in-house knowledge, and technology (including skilled labor), trade contracts, machinery and efficient procedures”. The model emphasizes that for the organization to survive, resources allocated should be targeted to the innovative activities and services that are needed by the customers and investors. This is a business model that keeps an organization alive and relevant. Apparently, the common reason for business is profit maximization, and for this to happen, business owners should discover what their customers need and provide same without compromise. Ogbogu (2011) comments that the "continuity of funding sources and cooperation of the manufacturers of the organization will depend on how the managers compete and win external resources and how they deploy such resources to productive engagement" The model if applied encourages the elimination of certain courses or disciplines that are obsolete and no longer relevant to the present day. In fact, one of the bane of our higher education in Nigeria precisely is that some courses offered in schools are obsolete. There is a wide gap between the school and the society, this is the reason why some of the graduates are considered unemployable (Egwuanu & Mfon, 2009; Oko-Jaja, 2020). In order words, the quality of training is not sync with the situation of the society.

Innovative funding model was propounded by Lamptey in 1994. It says that all organizations including education are involved in marketing as long as they engage in exchange. He recommends marketing model which have worked for business organization to be used in funding education, not just in Nigerian but Africa as a whole. His concern especially is on the higher education due to its dynamic nature and impact of its products. This model has gained a wider approval of scholars who believed that if marketing tools are carefully engaged in funding higher education, it will help to overcome the perennial problem of underfunding (Etuk, 2015, Uche, 2020). In applying this model Lamptey suggested two marketing principles. The first is marketing through diversification of admission and outsourcing. In the business world for example, it is expected that managers should make a feasibility study on what their customers might need in terms of variety, styles, shapes, designs, and quantity. By so doing, the customers or consumers are carried along this at the same time gives them the opportunity to stay on business.

Higher education in the same way should be able to make enquiries as to what the employers of its services might need, the current and relevant skills, such that will be beneficial to the economy. This enables institution to produce graduates that would be employable in the workforce and contribute meaningfully to the development of the nation. Secondly, Lamptey suggested charging of discriminatory price inform of fees such as registration, caution, examination fees, etc. This is due to huge price of education in Africa generally. He therefore argued that until the unit cost of education is determined by the educational institutions in Africa, the bargaining power with their market especially the government will remain very weak such that much positive results will not be achieved.

Funding Models in Some African Nations

Generally speaking, there is a similarity that exists in the funding of higher education in Africa, which takes the mode of cost sharing (Twene, 2014, Amin & Ntembe, 2021). According to United States Agency for International Development, the **South African** government invests 18.4% of its GDP to education as at 2022 from the available. Although there is some loop holes in its funding system, it has one of the best funding system and has been relatively well implemented in its national policy characterized by "public involvement, the level of awareness, and the stakeholders' involvement" (Twene, 2014). The primary sources of funding in South Africa are the government through the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and student fees. It would be more accurate to say it uses a cost sharing model. The Universities of South Africa (USAF) is of the opinion that if higher education produces both collective (public) goods and private goods that is, value to the nation and the individual respectively, it is only reasonable to expect higher education to be funded collectively by both public and private investment in whatever agreed form. This opinion embodies the ideology of the cost sharing model.

The **Ghanaian** government investment in education though seems high compared to most of the Africa nations but fluctuates year after year. For instance, 2011 was 30.63%, 2012, 37.52%, 2013 21.22%, 2017 20.1% and 2018 18.6% of its GDP. The major sources of funding for higher education institutions are the government grants, local authority support, the institution's internally generated funds, tuition fees, foreign students and international organizations (Twene, 2014). Government grants or aid are administered through the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GET Fund) and the Student Loan Trust Fund (SLTF) (Acquah, 2021). Twene went further to say that the private higher education providers in Ghana received approximately 95% of their revenue from tuition fees and only 5% is obtained from other external sources. It can be deduced that funding in Ghana is not solely on the government, it is cost sharing. Researchers at various times have are of the opinion that a mixed funding source should be strengthened as this would enable higher education institutions to engage in long term projects and offer the best quality of education to the students. Ishengoma (2019) posits that "alternative, sustainable and realistic financing modalities of public universities are urgently needed to empower public universities to effectively contribute to Africa's development agenda through the production of new knowledge generated from scientific research". This is necessary as funds from the government are continuously declining.

Prior to 2022, the funding of Higher education in **Kenya** was majorly from government's recurrent expenditure and development grants. Recently, a new funding model for public Universities and Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions was initiated in Kenya in December 2022. The model grouped the students into three financial categories of Vulnerable, Less vulnerable, and Able. The Vulnerable shall receive full scholarship from the government; the Less vulnerable receives 53% government scholarship, 40% loan from the Higher Education Loan Board (HELB) and 7% from the household; the Able category receives 38% for government scholarship, 55% from HELB and 7% from household. This new model takes effect from the 2022/2023 academic session, while the old funding model will still be applicable to the old students. The model can be summed up as government-loan-household model (cost of sharing model).

For **Uganda** the higher education fund model in place is private-public model. Makerere University receives concession out of the five public universities in Uganda, probably because it is a foremost University. Government financing is restricted to a limited number of students and a private entry scheme which was introduced in 1992 takes care of the rest. However, Government takes responsibility of few students, that is one out of four, whereas public fund for each higher education institution are provided in three block categories, that is baseline salaries, development costs, and operating expenditures.

Africa is lacking in expertise in alternative forces of funding like institutional advancement which is practiced in the US and European states which is characterized by development, public relations and alumni activities (Bogila, 2003). Realistically speaking, the government cannot sponsor all the universities taking account of the state of the economy and the African sites have realized this. A study conducted by Banya and Elu (2001 cited in Twene, 2014) show that most Sub-Saharan African countries are now moving towards exploring alternative and multiple sources of funding for higher education. The cost of higher education is higher than the amount of resources available especially when it comes to government or public funding (World Bank, 2019 as cited in Amin and Ntembe, 2021). Okebukola (2016) notes that enrolment rates have exceeded financing capabilities of government and institutions, therefore the possibility of depending on the government for funding would be considered a mirage.

Funding Models for Higher Education in Nigeria: Way Forward

For higher education to contribute substantially to national development, a model or a combination of models must be considered. Realistically speaking, the government cannot sponsor all the Universities taking into account the state of the economy. The cost of higher education is higher than the amount of resources available especially when it comes to government or public funding (World

Bank, 2019 as cited in Amin & Ntembe, 2021). So what model of funding are practicable in Nigeria? According to Ishengoma (2019) what is worse than not financing public higher education is applying an "unsustainable and unrealistic financing modality". So is the government model (Full support model) practical? The first limitation of the government model is that due to the government's support, the universities seemed to have build a dependency from such funds so much that they are unable to have a diversified revenue. Also because of this dependency, the Universities lose their autonomy (Ishengoma, 2019). There are lots of evidence of violation of academic freedom and university autonomy. The present framework structure and powers of the Joints Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), the promulgation of the infamous Decree 16 of 1985, which among others has empowered the National university commission (NUC) to close down any department in any university that does not have the minimum number of staff to run a viable program under the disguise of accreditation and maintenance of standards (Uche, 2020). Also the said decree empowered the federal ministry of education to oversee the curriculum, staffing, and standards and overall development of education (ASUU, 1994) including appointment of Vice chancellor, and other members of the Council. The super alternate position of the national university commission which according to Uche (2020) "have pushed universities to unenviable positions of begging institutions". How about a situation where University is subjected to the rule that is applicable to civil service? Not to mention the fact that the universities build a dependency on a system that is not stable, the government clearly is unable to adequately fund the higher institutions.

The African government lacks funds to comfortably increase the percentage given to education without compromising other sectors. And even if it did, even developed countries like the US are not heavily reliant on the government because as we said, dependency leads to loss in autonomy.

Going further, Okebukola (2016, in Uche, 2020) made an elaborate study on higher education funding in Africa, he proposed three models that are likely work for not just Nigeria but Africa in general. These are: Access-Equity model which emphasizes on reducing financial barriers to higher education while effort should be made towards sharing educational costs to stakeholders such that the rich pay higher; the contextualized formula funding model, a model based on the nature and strength of the human resources in the universities, and the type of programs run and the level of efficiency; and the host-proprietor university user funding model, which ensures that all beneficiaries (student, government, community, university) contribute to the funding.

The major challenge on the use of access-equity model is, the instrument to identify the rich and the poor. In the developed nations like United States of America, it is very practicable due to the operational tax system. Income tax is compulsory and tax on goods of any kind, such that the more goods at ones disposal the higher the tax.

Conclusion

Education occupies a strategic position in the scheme of every nation of the world. It is considered as a driver for economic emancipation, and societal development. It centers on the transmission of the needed values, attitudes and skills to the recipients who in turn utilizes such for their development in particular and society at large. Education in Africa has been viewed as a right of the citizens such that no one should be denied of it. The continual increase in the enrolment rate attests to this. Sadly, funding has been a great challenge, this is evident in the yearly budgetary allocation to education which is still very much below the world benchmark. However, out of the ten countries in Africa under review, Nigeria's investment in education is the lowest and this raises a great concern. Several funding models were presented in this paper, however no one model will bring the needed result, hence the need to combine two or more models for efficiency and effectiveness.

Suggestions

Based on the discussion, the following suggestions were made:

1. Funding should be contextualized. African nations should know and understand what works for them, that a model works at the United Kingdom is not a guarantee that it will work in another country.
2. Government should not be in a hurry to approve policies, enough time should be given for study and the trained personnel engaged from the outset.
3. Learning environment should be challenging, provoking and interesting. There should be a synergy between the school and the society. Obsolete and irrelevant course of study should be struck out.
4. A realistic funding model should be implored. Educational managers should put away sentiment and work out a practicable and sustainable model for all levels of education.

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