



**INEQUALITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: AN ANALYSIS OF
PUBLIC AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN ADAMAWA STATE**

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Abstract

In Nigeria the goals of the Ministry of Education are access and quality at all levels of education in the country. This is to say that quality education must be provided to all Nigerian citizens at all levels irrespective of economic social cultural and political differences. For this reason the Federal Government declared free education for all its citizens at all levels of the educational system. Unfortunately however beyond this it has not done anything tangible to ensure these goals are achieved. In other words, the public higher education institutions are neglected. The aim of this study therefore is to examine the extent of this neglect and its implications on imbedded socio-economic inequalities in Nigerian social order. The major methodology used is secondary data collection and analysis focusing on two universities in Adamawa state; one, public (Modibbo Adama University of Technology, MAUTECH) and the other, private (American University of Nigeria, AUN). The findings show that there is serious neglect in the funding of MAUTECH, which is a public university, as opposed to the funding of AUN, which is a private university. This neglect translate into inequalities between the two universities in terms of availability of human and material resources necessary to provide quality teaching and learning. The study also show that AUN fees are so high that only the children of the rich can afford admission into the institution. Consequently, in Nigeria, the rich are getting better quality education while the children of the poor are left with less quality education in the public schools and therefore better

prepared to compete in job market. Inequalities in Nigeria social order are then perpetuated.

Keywords: Education, Inequality, Private, Public, Quality

INTRODUCTION

Educational inequality is the unequal distribution of academic resources, including but not limited to school funding, qualified and experienced teachers, books, and technologies, etcetera. Education on the other hand is the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at a school and/or university. Thus, Article 17(1) of the African (Banjul) Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights recognised and enshrined mandatory equal right of citizens to education as follows: "Every individual shall have the right to education." The Nigerian government also recognizes this and thus set two major goals for the Federal Ministry of education (i.e., access and quality) to pursue and achieve; meaning that quality education must be provided to all Nigerian citizens at all levels irrespective of economic social, cultural and political differences. For this reason the Federal Government declared free education for all its citizens at all levels of the educational system. Unfortunately however beyond this it has not done anything tangible to ensure these goals are achieved. Consequently, inequality in access to quality education seem to be increasing rather than decreasing. Several factors are responsible for this, but in our paper we are concern with two broad factors as the major reasons. These two are inequalities in funding and provisions of human and material resources to tertiary institutions on the one hand and inequalities in economic status of Nigerians.

OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of this paper are to: examine the extent of neglect of public higher education institutions; assess the effects of the neglect on the quality of higher education in the public educational institutions, and; analysis the implications of the neglect of public higher education institutions on imbedded socio-economic inequalities in Nigerian social order.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used is basically secondary data collection and analysis focusing on two universities in Adamawa state; one, public (Modibbo Adama University of Technology, MAUTECH) and the other, private (American University of Nigeria, AUN). Direct (non-participant) observations, our experiences as workers in public higher education institutions and interactions with some key stakeholders complements secondary data collection and analysis methods.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this section of the study, findings relating to three major areas have been itemised and discussed vis-à-vis existing literature in the area of the study. These three major areas include funding, availability of educational resources, and effects of inequalities between public and private educational institutions on larger societal inequalities. In other words, literature review, analysis of relevant data and discussions of findings are integrated. The literature review in particular is integrated into findings and discussions section because the study is primarily based on secondary sources.

THE FUNDING OF TERTIARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

The education sector is no doubt an instrument for national development and an asset to any nation. It is also a formidable tool for socio-economic, political and cultural development of the human society. Having been considered as one of the main pillars of the human society, human beings are able to transmit, develop and improve knowledge, skills and abilities. Education generally makes man, by developing skills and competencies, imparting knowledge and learning from the school and colleges which carry individuals well into their personal and professional lives, including in their later years. Education is the surest route to development in any society, country or organisation. In fact, the importance of education cannot be overemphasized (Igbuzor, 2006). Without education various socioeconomic activities in the societies will remain stagnant and the

human society will continue to wallow in ignorance. Despite this fact, Nigeria is still far from providing this basic necessity to the greater proportion of her people as a result of poor funding.

The Education sector is one of the sectors that have suffered a prolonged budget inequality in the annual budget of Nigeria. Yusuf (2003) highlighted in his study that the observed pattern of budgetary allocation to education revealed that Nigerian governments (both state and Federal) did not consider education expenditure as a matter of policy priority. For example, the review of the 2017 Federal Appropriation Bill and Estimate prepared by the Citizens Wealth Platform (CWP) shows that the allocations detailing the priorities of government in the recurrent (personnel and overheads) and capital votes established that the total allocation accruing to the Federal Ministry of Education is ₦448,443,102,614 which represents 6.14 per cent of the total annual budget for 2017. The above figure and percentage as presented by the Citizens Wealth Platform shows that the education sector occupies the sixth position in the budget priority of the Nigerian. It however lags behind the international standard of 26 per cent as prescribed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). UNESCO has made a recommendation of 26% of annual budget to be allocated to education to salvage this sector from numerous inequalities (Igbuzor, 2006).

Unfortunately this underfunding of education has been on for so many years. See the table below showing the Federal Government Expenditures on Education as Share of Total Federal Expenditure, 1997–2002.

Table 1: Federal Government Expenditures on Education as Share of Total Federal Expenditure, 1997–2002. (Percent)

BUDGET HEAD	BUDGET YEARS					
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Recurrent	12.3	12.0	11.7	9.4	9.5	9.1
Capital	6.1	7.5	5.0	8.5	6.0	6.0
Total	9.9	9.6	9.0	9.0	7.6	8.0

Source: Federal Government of Nigeria, Annual Budget (various years). Reported in Herbert (2002).

Clearly the table above indicates that the 26% prescribed by UNESCO has never been adhered to. What is disturbing however is the fact that the allocations were higher than what have been allocated to education in recent years. In other words, instead of improving the budget allocation to education the Federal Government has consistently decreased the allocation each year. For example, in the 2017/2018 budget Appropriation has decreased further to 6.14 per cent (Budget Office, 2017). The budget appropriation which is below the 26 per cent prescribed by UNESCO can therefore be said to be responsible for Nigerian education system which can be said to have fallen below the international standard in recent years compared to the products of some foreign or other international schools. It is in an attempt to redress the government budgetary neglect of the education sector, especially and the tertiary level that led the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) to demand that the private sector should contribute to a Trust Fund for educational development in the country. Hence the establishment of Education Trust Fund (ETF), which later became Tertiary Education Trust fund (TETFund). Since its inception, TETFund has been helping to prevent the total collapse of tertiary educational institutions in the country especially in the area of infrastructure and human resource development. Beyond this however TETFund intervention has not been sufficient to offset the government budgetary deficit in the education sector.

Due therefore to the poor budgetary provisions for education sector, the government could not increase number of tertiary institutions to match the growing Nigerian population on the one hand, and on the other, the government could not fund those already existing even to the minimum level required for optimum performance. As rightly assessed by Eluemunor (2018), poor funding of our public higher education institutions is so serious that it will eventually collapse and lead to the rise of private universities at the detriment of the poor citizenry. In fact, there is already the proliferation of private tertiary institutions for those who are

dying for quality education for their children/ward and can afford the high corresponding fees. This undoubtedly fuel further the high rate of inequality in the education system.

What is most worrying however is the fact that most of these private schools/institutions are owned by some of the economic stakeholders, decision makers and policy formulators in Nigeria. Thus, to boost the patronage of their private and individually owned schools and institutions, much attention is not given to the development of the education sector and particularly public schools. Rather than creating the atmosphere of adequate budgeting, appropriation and utilization/ implementation of the fund allocated to the education sector, large proportion of it is embezzled by the so called actors and used to establish and improve their private schools. Quite a number of the elites also send their wards overseas to enable them access quality education instead of making sure public schools are developed to international standard. The zest for study abroad by Nigerian has been captured by *World Education News and Reviews* ([WENR](#)), viz.:

After Morocco, Nigeria sends the most students overseas of any country on the African continent, according to data from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics ([UIS](#)). The UIS pegged the total number of Nigerian students abroad in 2010 at just under 39,000, although anecdotal evidence from education watchers in Nigeria would suggest that the number is considerably higher, with many students taking up places at private institutions in neighbouring countries, with Ghana reportedly being particularly attractive (Quoted in ICEF Monitor, 2014)

The reason for this zest by those with greater family income, as the report highlighted, was mainly “...to obtain quality education in other countries to overcome the capacity and quality issues in their own education system.” (Quoted in ICEF Monitor, 2014). Meanwhile, the downtrodden and vulnerable groups continue to suffer the brunt of the budget cum system inequality in the education sector.

This situation is unacceptable. More so, if one considers that education has been classified as a major fundamental human rights in contemporary society as reflected in many international human rights instruments that

provide for education as a fundamental human right. These include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981). Again, in the present globalized society in which every nation is connected to the other, education is perhaps the only instrument for people to adequately cope with the new trend. This leads us to the examination of the inadequate availability of educational resources due to inadequate funding.

INADEQUATE AVAILABILITY OF EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Educational resources include human and material resources that aid proper administration of school and effective teaching-learning process (Usman, 2016). The human resources includes teaching and non-teaching staff while material resources includes both financial and non-financial material resources such as money, classrooms, instructional materials, buildings, infrastructure, equipment, ICT/electronic gadgets, libraries, laboratories, books, etc. We have dealt with the issue of money/funding. The emphasis here is therefore on the educational resources other than money/funding.

Observations have shown that these educational resources are neither adequate nor provided sufficiently in the public tertiary institutions for effective teaching and learning as a result of lack of funds; creating Inequalities in the education sector between the public and private educational institutions. As rightly observed in one study,

.....the resources provided by Government for execution of education projects in Nigeria are inadequate and irregular as highlighted by the frequency of industrial actions in the education sector. Moreso, due to the general level of poverty in the country, the contribution of communities and households to educational provision have been negligible (Usman, 2016).

Inequalities in human resources entail the shortage of teachers in areas of great demand and use of non-professional in subject areas as lecturers in

public institution. The staff students ration is always very high compared to private universities and many universities rely heavily on visiting lecturers and professors. Consequently the teachers in public tertiary schools are over-worked, which affect their efficiencies and effectiveness (Asiyai, 2013).

Material resource imbalance manifest through lack of physical appropriation of text and reference books, technological equipment like computers or learning software and other important facilities as libraries and audio-visual rooms. For instance, a nationwide study carried out by Ayeni and Oyebanji (1997), revealed that public school libraries in Nigeria were still mostly non-functional due to neglect and inadequate funding. Even in this 21st century, which is the age of great advancements in all spheres of human endeavour, the role of school libraries in the attainment of educational excellence is yet to be fully appreciated by most citizens in Nigeria. Okyi (2004) emphasized that the state of school library development (which is one of the most important education services) in most Nigeria public schools is deplorable. The situation has remain virtually the same to date. Most schools/institutions are reported to have libraries that are poorly funded, lack adequate collections and accommodation and are poorly staffed (Ajegbomogun and Salaam, 2011). Contrary to these human and material resources deficits in our public universities, the private universities have been known to have adequate and well qualified academic staff; a sizeable number of which come from abroad.

Similarly, the material resources in these private universities are found to be far more adequate than those found in public tertiary institutions. The resources, both human and materials, may be much smaller than what is found in First, Second and Third Generations public tertiary institutions but nevertheless very adequate because of the smaller students sizes in such private universities.

In addition, the facilities and services in these private universities are of international standard. In American University of Nigeria (AUN), Yola, for example, the students' hostels, their classrooms and lecture halls, their laboratories, their cafeteria, etc., apart from being well furnished and

equipped, they are also well air-conditioned. Their library, though very small compared to Modibbo Adama University of Technology (MAUTEC), Yola, library – even smaller than the Federal College of Education, Yola, Library – they operate a very robust e-library that is very resourceful and on the internet 24/7. We at the Federal College of Education Yola had even found it necessary to hook on the AUN Internet Services at a subsidise rate of about N3mil. quarterly (the rate they call community service rate) in order to access Internet 24/7 and also have access to some of their rich e-resources. This we did only for two years, and we were disconnected because we were unable to pay even the community rate as at when due; reminiscence of the underfunding of the public tertiary institutions such as ours, the Federal College of Education, Yola.

Internet access which is supposed to be a given in tertiary institutions is a serious challenge in Nigerian Public Tertiary institutions including universities (Usman, 2016). In this era of e-governance, e-admissions, e-registration, e-examinations, e-results, etc, it is unacceptable that campuses of all public tertiary institutions are grappling with the serious problems of internet access.

THE EFFECTS OF INEQUALITIES BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES IN NIGERIA

The sum total of the consequences of the underfunding in the public universities compared to well-funded private universities like AUN, Yola, is deficits in provision of quality education to majority Nigerian youths who only have access to public universities because of their low economic statuses. Only the economically wealthy have access to the private universities such as the AUN. The table below is a breakdown of undergraduate tuition and other fees for undergraduate programmes in AUN, Yola.

Table 2: FALL & SPRING TUITION AND FEES (2017 - 2018)

TUITION AND FEES CHARGES	Fall 2017	Spring 2018	FULL YEAR (FALL & SPRING)
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Tuition(15 units @ N53,000/Credit)	795,000.00	795,000.00	1,590,000.00
Housing			
Double Room W/Facilities	325,000.00	325,000.00	650,000.00
Double Room W/O Facilities	228,000.00	228,000.00	456,000.00
Triple Room W Facilities	250,000.00	250,000.00	500,000.00
Triple Room W/O Facilities	180,000.00	180,000.00	360,000.00
Average Housing Fee	245,750.00	245,750.00	491,500.00
Meal Plan:			
21 Meals	339,150.00	339,150.00	678,300.00
14 Meals	248,710.00	248,710.00	497,420.00
7 Meals	136,850.00	136,850.00	273,700.00
Average Meal Plan	241,570.00	241,570.00	483,140.00
Other Fees:			
Technology fees	35,000.00	35,000.00	70,000.00
Sports Fees	25,000.00	25,000.00	50,000.00
Student Activity	30,000.00	30,000.00	60,000.00
Health Fees	10,000.00	10,000.00	20,000.00
eBooks	45,000.00	45,000.00	90,000.00
Graduation Fee (only Graduands)		20,000.00	20,000.00
Total Other Fees	145,000.00	165,000.00	310,000.00
NOTES: Additional credits more than 15 credit course load per semester will be charged at the rate of N53, 000.00			

Source: <https://schoolings.org/american-university-of-nigeria-tuitionschool-fee-20172018-session/>

As can be seen clearly in the table above, tuition fee alone is N1, 590,000.00. When this is added to housing, meals and other fees we have a total sum of N2,874,280 per two semesters; an equivalence of USD 7,984. The question is how many Nigerians parents/guardians can afford such a huge amount

to educate just one child for only two semesters in one academic year excluding summer semester? Consequently majority of Nigerian youths join public universities such as MAUTECH where a total sum a student can expend per annum on housing, meals and other fees does not exceed N150,000; an equivalence of USD 410.96 per session (MAUTECh, 2017) Understandably, the graduate tuition and fees in AUN almost doubled the fees of its undergraduate programmes as clearly indicated in table 3 below.

Table 3: AUN Graduate Fees Structure

GRADUATE FEES STRUCTURE				
COURSE	FALL	SPRING	SUMMER	TOTAL
	N	N	N	N
Ph.D Business Administration*				
Tuition (12 credit hours@N55,000/cr. hr)	660,000.00	660,000.00		2,640,000.00
Ph.D Computer Science				
Tuition (12 credit hours@N55,000/cr. hr)	660,000.00	660,000.00	-	2,640,000.00
Ph.D Information Systems				
Tuition (12 credit hours@N55,000/cr. hr)	660,000.00	660,000.00	-	2,640,000.00
M.Sc. Business Administration				
Tuition (12 credit hours@N55,000/cr. hr)	660,000.00	660,000.00	-	1,980,000.00
MBA				
Tuition (@N55,000/cr hr)	660,000.00	X3	770,000.00	2,750,000.00
EXECUTIVE MASTERS INFO & COMM. SCI.				-
Tuition (12 credit hours/semester@N62,500/cr. hr)	750,000.00	750,000.00	750,000.00	2,250,000.00
EXECUTIVE MASTERS TELECOMMS & WIRELESS TECH.				
Tuition (12 credit hours/semester@N62,500/cr. hr)	750,000.00	750,000.00	750,000.00	2,250,000.00

M.Sc Computer Science				
Tuition (12 credit hours@N55,000/cr. hr)	660,000.00	660,000.00		1,980,000.00
M.Sc Information Systems				-
Tuition (12 credit hours@N55,000/cr. hr)	660,000.00	660,000.00		1,980,000.00
PGDM				-
Tuition (12 credit hours/semester@N53,000/cr. hr)	636,000.00	636,000.00	424,000.00	1,696,000.00
				-
Meal Plan				-
21 meals	339,150.00	339,150.00	171,000.00	849,300.00
14 meals	248,710.00	248,710.00	125,400.00	622,820.00
7 meals	136,850.00	136,850.00	69,000.00	342,700.00
Housing				
Single Room W/Facilities	415,000.00	415,000.00	144,000.00	974,000.00
				-
Other fees:				-
Application fees (new students only, non-refundable)	10,000.00	10,000.00	10,000.00	-
Health Fees		10,000.00	10,000.00	-
Housing Deposit (For Dormitory students only)	50,000.00	50,000.00	50,000.00	-
Technology fees	45,000.00	45,000.00	20,000.00	110,000.00

*** If a student's research work exceeds the 1 year scheduled for completing research work, such student will be required to pay full semester's tuition for every subsequent semester.**

Source: <https://schoolings.org/american-university-of-nigeria-tuitionschool-fee-20172018-session/>

Coming to Postgraduate studies, in public universities such as MAUTECH, the total amount a postgraduate student expends in one academic session on housing, meals and other fees cannot be more than N300, 000 whereas at AUN a Postgraduate student spends between N3, 629,300 and N4, 683,300. Naturally then, public universities such as the MAUTECH which are grossly

underfunded remain the only alternative to the poor Nigerians for their graduate/postgraduate studies. They had to contend with quality of education much lower than their rich counterparts in well-funded private universities.

CONCLUSION

In this paper we have tried to show that inequalities that exist within Nigerian society is being sustained if not enhanced by the inequalities in the Nigerian education system even at the highest sector of the tertiary education level – the universities – through the public/private university divide. The weapon is the underfunding of the public universities which is far-far cheaper and less qualitative than the private universities and therefore more accessible to the poor compared to the private universities which are accessible only to the rich. This is unacceptable in a democratic society which is expected to run a government of the people by the people for the people.

The educational system of a democratic nation should be a catalyst for egalitarian society and should therefore be adequately and properly funded to deliver quality education to the majority of its nationals. Thus, the 26% national budgetary allocation to education recommended by UNESCO should in fact be the barest minimum. In Nigeria in particular TETFund should be dynamic and be reviewing its policies to enable it intervene in emerging critical areas for the development of public Tertiary institutions rather than sticking to its traditional areas of concern. Internet access for example is one of such areas that TETFund should come in to fully fund tertiary education institutions rather than tagging as consumables. Yes, it is consumable but in the era of e-this e-that any higher educational institution that cannot afford a robust internet connectivity because of its cost is doomed to fail in the provision of quality education and quality governance.

RECOMENDATIONS

Based on our findings and conclusion in this paper, the following recommendations are apt, viz.:

1. The educational system of a democratic nation should be a catalyst for egalitarian society and should therefore be adequately and properly funded
2. Public schools/institutions should be provided with adequate human and material resources to deliver quality education to the majority of its nationals.
3. Accordingly, the 26% national budgetary allocation to education recommended by UNESCO should in fact be the barest minimum.
4. TETFund in particular should be dynamic in its policies to enable it intervene in emerging critical areas rather than sticking to its traditional areas of concern.
5. Internet access for example is one of such areas that TETFund should fully fund rather than tagging it as consumables.
6. Any tertiary institution that cannot afford a robust internet connectivity due to cost, is doomed to fail in the provision of quality education in the 21st Century

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