

Diversification of Educational Funds for Quality Assurance in Open and Distance Education in Nigeria

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Abstract *The recent world economic meltdown may result to a serious decline in the quality of open and distance education in Nigeria. Huge amount of money is required to finance an effective and quality open and distance education. This paper ascertained the different ways of diversification of educational funds to enhance the attainment of quality open and distance education in Nigeria. Three research questions were used to guide the study and two hypotheses were formulated. Questionnaire was administered to a population of 120 staff of open and distance education in Enugu state of Nigeria. Mean statistics was used to answer the research questions, and t-test analysis was to test the hypotheses. The result of the study revealed that public and private sectors as well as local income generation were the main sources of financing open and distance education in Nigeria to offset the likely risks of its decline quality.*

Keywords: *Diversification; Educational Funds; Quality Assurance; Open and Distance Education and Economic Meltdown.*

Introduction

The important position occupied by education in national development cannot be over-emphasized because it promotes knowledge, explores and generates solutions to country's socio-economic, cultural and technological problems. The ever-increasing growth in Nigeria's population, the attendant escalating demand for education, the difficulty of resourcing education through the traditional face-to-face classroom self mode and the need to provide education for all had meant that Nigeria must of necessity find an appropriate and cost-effective means to meet the demand for education. This led to the establishment of open and distance education by Nigerian Federal Government to meet the educational needs of Nigerians.

According to Ojo, Ogidan and Olakulehim (2006), open and distance education is an educational approach designed to reach the learners in their homes, offices or any place of residence where learning resources are provided for them to qualify without attending formal classes in person, or create opportunities for life-long learning, no matter where or when they want to study. It focuses on opening access to education and training provision, freeing learners from constraints of time and place and offering flexible learning opportunities to individuals and groups of learners (UNESCO, 2002).

Open and distance education, also known as distance learning, has existed for some time now in Nigeria, it involves acquiring education outside the traditional or conventional classrooms. It makes use of technical media, especially for the purposes of reproducing high quality of teaching materials to instruct great number of students at the same the time wherever they live. Open and distance education was actually established in Nigeria to compliment the conventional face-to-face educational system to enhance the needed quality education in the country.

The Federal Government of Nigeria in the National Policy on Education (2004:45), emphasized the importance of open and distance education and national expectation when it enumerated the goals of open and distance education viz:

- a) To provide access to quality education and equity in educational opportunities for those who otherwise would have been denied.
- b) To meet special needs of employers by mounting special certificate courses for their employees at their work place.
- c) To encourage internationalization especially of tertiary education curricular; and

d) To ameliorate the effect of internal and external brain drain in tertiary institutions by utilizing Nigeria experts as teachers regardless of their locations or places of work.

To achieve the above objective it is obvious that a lot of efforts would be required of both public and private sectors especially in funding. This is the only way the envisaged quality open and distance education can be feasible. Quality in an education can be seen as a multi-dimensional concept pervading every action that goes into making the process of education possible (Egbo, 2007). According to Obanya (2002), quality pervades every element of the activities undertaken in the process of educating and the wide array of beneficial results of educational activities on both individual learners and the wider society. The importance of open and distance education as a public good must be matched by adequate public and private investment to enable the achievement of its goals. However, reverse is the case of this truism in Nigeria as the Federal Government has failed to fulfill its financial responsibilities to open and distance education as it has consistently fallen short of the United Nation's requirement (Okafor and Nwankwor, 2008). Funding of education in Nigeria is problematic as a result of oil glut and poor internal management of local currency, the naira.

Ali (2006) revealed that over the last two decades or so, the overall statutory allocations to Nigerian universities have shown progressive decline. Ndili (2004), advocated that including statutory grants to most universities that operate distance education by the state government where the university operates should be mandatory whether the university was set up by the state government or not. However, Nigeria government has responded to the demand of the governing councils to double its allocation to universities by increasing the recurrent allocation to the sub-sector (Okafor and Okonkwo, 2008). For diversification of sources of educational funds for financing education, especially open and distance education should be shared responsibility among the government as well as the rest of the members of the society. Supporting this, Saint in Okafor and Okonkwo (2008), stated that creative and adequate strategies are needed for financing Nigerian higher education to offset the likely risks of declining educational quality. This paper examined the extent of contributions of government, public and private sectors as well as local income generations in financing Nigeria open and distance education to enhance its quality.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- 1) To what extent does government finance open and distance education in Enugu State?
- 2) What are the extent of private sector's contribution in financing open and distance education in Enugu State?
- 3) To what extent do local income generations contribute to distance education funding in Enugu State?

Null Hypotheses

- 1) There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female staff of open and distance education on the contribution of public sector in funding distance education in Cross River State.
- 2) There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female staff of open and distance education on the extent of contribution of private sectors in funding distance education in Cross River State of Nigeria.

Methods

The survey research design was adopted for this study to elicit the opinions and responses of staff of Open and Distance Education in Enugu State of Nigeria. The entire population of 120, members of staff of open and distance education was used for the study. The study was carried out in Enugu State of Nigeria. A

structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was subjected to face validation by two research specialists. Their observations were used to refine the questionnaire items. The internal consistency of the instrument was determined by using Crobach Alpha reliability test. Reliability coefficient of 0.72 was obtained which was high enough to confirm its internal consistency. Copies of the questionnaire were administered and all retrieved personally by the researcher.

The three research questions were analyzed using mean statistics. The acceptable level of mean score was 2.50 and above.

Results

Table 1: Mean rating of the respondents on the extent of government contribution in funding open and distance education.

S/N	Types of funding	N	X	Decision
1	Allocation of funds by government	120	2.68	Agree
2	Grants-in-aids by government	120	2.56	Agree
3	Provision of infrastructures	120	2.41	Disagree
4	Renovations	120	2.38	Disagree
5	Giving loans	120	2.52	Agree
6	Educational Tax Fund (ETF)	120	3.03	Agree

Table 1 show that all items except items 3 and 4 have each, a mean have 2.50. This indicated that government contributes to the funding of open and distance education in Nigeria by allocation of funds, grants-in-aids, loans and Educational Tax Fund. Public sector rarely provides infrastructures and renovations for open and distance education in Nigeria.

Table 2: Mean score of the respondents on the extent of private sectors contributions to the funding of open and distance education

S/N	Extent of funding	N	X	Decision
1	Donations/gift	120	3.25	Agree
2	Programme sponsorship	120	3.14	Agree
3	Technological assistance	120	3.02	Agree
4	Building of infrastructures	120	3.28	Agree
5	Giving loans	120	2.54	Agree

Table 2 show that all the items have mean score above 2.50, which means that private sectors are involved in funding open and distance education in Nigeria by way of donations/gift, programme sponsorship, technical assistance, provision of infrastructures and giving loans respectively.

Table 3: Mean rating of the respondents on the extent of private sectors contributions to the funding of open and distance education

S/N	Description of funding	N	X	Decision
1	Fees paid by students	120	2.79	Agree
2	Consultancy services	120	3.42	Agree
3	Farm products	120	2.60	Agree
4	Investment ventures	120	2.57	Agree
5	Car park fee charges	120	2.20	Disagree

6	Mounting of educational programmes	120	3.06	Agree
7	Launching/Appeal funds	120	2.72	Agree
8	Income from researches	120	2.15	Disagree

Table 3 indicates that all items except item 5 and 8 have mean ratings above 2.50. This showed that open and distance education in Nigeria is also funded through income generated locally. These include; fees by students, consultancy services, farm produce, investments, mounting of educational programmes, and appeal funds. Open and distance education in Nigeria has little or no funding through car park fee charges, and researches as the items had mean scores of 2.20 and 2.15 respectively.

Table 4: t-test analysis of the mean ratings of male and female staff of open and distance education on the funding of open and distance education by public sectors

Types of respondents	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	Remarks
Male	68	2.02	1.56	264	0.42	Accepted
Female	52	2.1	1.45			

$p > .05$, $t\text{-cal} = 0.42$, $t\text{-crit} = 1.96$

Table 4 reveal that t-calculated of -0.42 is less than t-critical of 1.96 at .05 level of significance and 264 degree of freedom. That means that the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female staff of open and distance education on the funding of open and distance education by public sector is accepted.

Table 5: t-test analysis of the mean responses of male and female staff of open and distance education on the funding of open and distance education by private sectors.

Types of respondents	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	Remarks
Male	68	2.87	1.70	264	0.82	Accepted
Female	52	3.05	1.73			

$p > .05$, $t\text{-cal} = 0.82$, $t\text{-crit} = 1.96$

Table 5 also revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female staff of open and distance education on the contribution of private sectors in funding open and distance education in Nigeria. This is because the t-calculated of -0.82 is less than t-critical of 1.96 at .05 level of significance and 264 degree of freedom. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted.

Discussion

The finding of the study revealed that Nigerian government (public sectors) contributes in funding open and distance education in Nigeria. Nigeria governments do this by fund allocations, grants-in-aids, loans and through the established Educational Tax Fund (ETF). This is in consonance with Okafor and Okonkwo (2008), who revealed that Nigeria government has responded to the demand of the governing councils to double its allocation to the universities that operate open and distance education by increasing the recurrent allocation to the sub-sector. Also Ndili (2004) advocated that statutory grants to most universities that operate open and distance education should be mandatory to state governments whether the university was set up by the state or not.

However, the finding revealed that Nigerian government does not favourably contribute to the provision of infrastructures and renovations for open and distance education in Nigeria. This does not agree with

government's emphasis on the importance of open and distance education and national expectations when it enumerated the goals of open and distance education in the National Policy on Education (2004). It is necessary that the importance of open and distance education as a public good must be matched by adequate public and private investments to enable the achievement of its goals.

Furthermore, the study revealed that private sectors contribute to the funding of open and distance education in Nigeria. Both male and female staff of open and distance education showed no difference in their mean responses on the funding of open and distance education by private sectors in Nigeria. This finding is in line with (Amadi, 2007), who stated that apart from Federal, State and Local Governments funding education, there are other sources of funds such as multinational companies, education tax fund, private companies, and international development agencies, etc. Amadi (2007) also stated that private sectors as well as external resources through development agencies such as World Bank, UNICEF, USAID and Ford Foundation should be mobilized to contribute to the funding of education like open and distance education.

The study also showed that open and distance education is being funded through locally generated income. These include: students school fees/charges, consultancy services, farm products, investments, mounting educational programmes, and appeal funds. The finding is in consonance with Ogbodo and Nwaoku (2007) who discovered that some viable sources of funds to universities include: consultancy services, catering services, business ventures and fees which are funds generated internally. Fees and levies known as "institutional sources" are means through which higher institutions generate additional funds to sustain educational programmes.

Conclusion and Implications for Quality Open and Distance Education

The major purpose of diversification of educational funds is to ensure that the set educational objectives are met through availability and provision of adequate financial resources. The involvement of government and private sectors in funding educational programmes cannot be over estimated. However, this study revealed that both government and private sectors contribute to the funding of open and distance education in Nigeria. Open and distance education is an expensive venture and requires adequate financial provision from all tiers of government and private sectors for a successful implementation (NPE, 2004). Open and distance education in Nigeria is also funded through internally generated incomes, endowment fund, grants-in-aids, etc. These creative and adequate strategies for financing open and distance education would enhance to offset the likely risks of declining quality of open and distance education in Nigeria and in turn, help in the development of the needed high level manpower. A country that wants to develop technologically, economically and socially must make good of her education system.

Recommendations

Based on the finding of this study, it is recommended that funding of open and distance education should be a priority for both public and private sectors in Nigeria, so as to attend to the escalating demand for education as well as minimizing the difficulty in resourcing education through the traditional face-to-face classroom self mode in Nigeria.

To achieve this therefore, there is need for appropriate diversification of educational funds in Nigeria to help in the attainment of quality open and distance education.

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