

Funding of University Education in Nigeria and COVID-19 Pandemic: The Educational Managers' Transformational Lens

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Abstract

The recent outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has widened disparities around the globe in the education industry. Although COVID-19 remains novel, its effect on humanity as a whole is an unparalleled trauma. In order to contain and curtail the COVID-19 pandemic, the academic programmes of schools in many countries around the world have been interrupted. Because of this pandemic, school closures have caused untold academic distress for students. Protecting education budgets has never been more important. According to records, the Nigerian education budget has not met the UNESCO-recommended 10 to 15% of the budget in developing countries for the past ten years. Lack of funding for University education would have an effect on broader development issues such as health, technology, poverty, and economic growth, as well as young people's empowerment. This study therefore x-rays the strategies for university administrators to diversify the ways in which their universities are financially maintained, as the state is not prepared to be solely responsible for the provision of the higher education fund. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the weak condition of our education sector and has had a negative effect on its efficiency. Through their successions, government has paid lip service to education by not significantly investing in the industry.

Keywords: COVID-19, Transformational lens, Educational financing, Budgetary allocation

Introduction

The world economy was obstructed by a pandemic of extreme acute respiratory also known as COVID-19 (SARS-COV-2) viruses affecting at least 214

nations, regions and territories. The development of the disease and its economic consequences are deeply uncertain, making it impossible for policy makers to devise effective micro-economic policies that have a significant effect on education as well. Scenarios also indicate that in certain countries, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has fallen by more than 10 percent and even surpass 15 percent.

According to United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), in 168 countries around the world, over 70% of the student population has been affected by a public health emergency (UNESCO, 2020). Nigeria reported community-transmission cases from the initial cases of imported transmission. This has resulted in thousands of COVID-19 confirmed cases in the region.

The initial response of the Nigerian government was the closure of all schools in an attempt to minimize the spread of the virus, from pre-primary schools to tertiary institutions starting in March 2020, which culminated in an immediate end to academic activities and disruption of academic calendars across schools.

In living memory, the pandemic forced the planet into the worst global recession (World Economic Outlook Update, 2020). This is going to have a lasting impact on the economy and public finances. The implications for low- and lower-middle - income countries have been especially serious. Despite public expenditure limits, policymakers need to intervene to reduce long-term effects for children, with education programmes becoming part of the national COVID-19 stimulus packages alongside health, social security and economic recovery initiatives (World Bank, 2020).

It is possible that the economic shock associated with the COVID-19 pandemic will be far greater than anything experienced since the 2009/2009 financial crisis. The spread of COVID-19 has already had a high human cost and these costs will continue to rise with public health systems unable to cope. The policies put in place by governments to slow the transmission of COVID-19 have contributed to major demand and supply shocks in many countries. In several nations, this has led to major trade disturbances, declining commodity prices, and tightening financial conditions (International Monetary Fund, 2020).

These consequences have already led to a substantial rise in unemployment and underemployment rates, and many businesses around the world will continue to risk their survival (Loayza & Rennings, 2020)

Governments, families, and development partners were the key educational funders in that order. The capacity of each community to finance education would be influenced in various ways by COVID-19. Governments were investing significantly different sums on education before the pandemic. On average, high-income countries spend 43 times as much on primary school education for aged children as low-income countries on average (World Bank, 2020).

The measures being taken to slow the spread of covid-19 are expected to lead to a significant drop in global production. The projections available indicate that real GDP will decline in 2020 for countries in most income groups and regions (Table 1). It is anticipated that low-income nations will defy this trend and continue to rise, but at a much slower pace than before the COVID-19 pandemic. These income classes

and regional averages obscure the variations between countries that are informed by their economic structure and their vulnerability to shocks associated with COVID-19.

For instance, because of substantial declines in commodity prices, many commodity exporting countries such as Nigeria, Brazil and Angola are expected to experience negative economic growth (IMF, 2020b).

Table 1: Growth is forecast to drop in 2020

	2020 Pre-COVID 19	2020	2021
High Income	2.1	-6.7	5.7
Upper middle Income	4.1	-4.4	6.0
Lower middle Income	4.0	-1.6	4.6
Low Income	5.0	0.5	4.7
East Asia and Pacific	3.4	-3.2	6.0
Europe and Central Asia	2.7	-5.7	5.1
Latin America and Caribbean	4.4	-4.0	4.5
Middle East and North Africa	2.8	-6.6	8.9
South Asia	5.4	-0.5	6.1
Sub-Saharan Africa	4.1	-1.1	4.5
All countries	3.6	-3.7	5.4

Source: World Bank Calculations from IMF (2019b and 2020b)

Note: Indicators are unweighted Country average.

The impact on public education spending can be estimated using forecasts of growth and public spending alongside United Nations Population projections. Simple forecasts for 2020 are presented below:

Table 2: Forecasts points to a significant slowdown in public education spending

	2020 Pre-COVID	2020 (b)	2020 (d)	2021
High Income	1.3	5.4	-5.4	-2.6
Upper middle Income	1.9	1.8	-8.3	0.4
Lower middle Income	2.5	1.8	-8.4	0.8
Low Income	14.0	11.1	-0.0	2.5
East Asia and Pacific	1.8	5.0	-5.5	0.3
Europe and Central Asia	2.0	4.3	-6.2	-1.1
Latin America and Caribbean	3.6	3.1	-7.1	1.2
Middle East and North Africa	1.9	3.8	-6.6	-2.1
South Asia	7.2	4.0	-6.4	5.1
Sub-Saharan Africa	7.7	6.5	-4.2	0.1
All countries	3.6	4.8	-5.7	-0.1

Source: World Bank Calculations based on IMF (2019a, 2019b, 2020a & 2020b)

Note: (b)=baseline, (d) downside

The baseline forecast assumes that the proportion of the total expenditure allocated to education is still the same.

The downside prediction assumes that government is reprioritizing their health and social security budgets in the short term as part of their pandemic response.

It implies a 10 percent decrease in the share of the budget allocated to education. The outlook for 2021 is based on the premise that the structure of the overall budget is not subject to any further adjustments. While such predictions are helpful in understanding the possible consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, considering the substantial uncertainties in the underlying assumptions on which they are centred, they should be interpreted cautiously. The pandemic is expected to limit the projected rise in education expenditure by 2020 in low- and middle-income countries. If governments reprioritize their budgets and reduce the share of education allocations, a downside scenario is likely to occur in which per capita education expenditure decreases in almost all income groups and regions of the country. Per capita education spending in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, will be decreased by 4.2 percent. While a return to economic growth in 2021 is forecast, education spending in most countries is projected to stagnate and decline in others.

Table 3: National Budgetary allocation for Education(2010-2021)

Year	Total National Budget	Education Budget	Education % of Total
2010	4.0trn	293bn	7.19
2011	4.22trn	393bn	9.31
2012	4.74trn	453bn	9.15
2013	4.92trn	499bn	10.15
2014	4.69trn	494bn	10.54
2015	4.49trn	434bn	10.71
2016	6.06trn	431bn	7.92
2017	7.44trn	551bn	7.41
2018	8.60trn	605.8bn	7.04
2019	8.92trn	620.5bn	7.02
2020	10.33trn	541.0bn	6.09
2021	13.08trn	742.5bn	5.6

Sources: Budget Office (2021).

Prior to the epidemic, the globe was already experiencing significant obstacles in realizing the promise of education as a fundamental human right. Despite virtually universal early childhood participation in most countries, more than 250 million children were out of school (UIS, 2018), and approximately 800 million people were illiterate (UIS, 2018). University education is a capital intensive project requiring investments of at least 15% of the GDP or 40% of the total education budget (World Bank, 2019).

Source: World Bank Calculations based on IMF (2019a, 2019b, 2020a & 2020b)

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Education continues to get insufficient funding in the national budget. As a result, one could ask how many Nigerian tertiary institutions would be able to adjust to COVID-19's social distancing regulations, which include giving lectures in overcrowded lecture halls and living in tight hostels. As shown in Table 3, when evaluated as a proportion of overall spending, the education sector receives a pitiful 5.6 percent of the total budget, well below the suggested standard and the lowest allocation in ten years, since 2011. Budgetary allocation to education by successive government has remained inadequate which has continued to hinder our national growth and development.

When considering the increased competition for public resources across various sectors of the economy, there is a significant risk that public funding allocations across the states of the federation will decrease in the next two to four years as the Nigerian government battles the economic consequences of the Coronavirus crisis. However, if universities are underfunded as a consequence of any economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, weak intellectuals will be produced as a result of poor teaching and learning, which will have a crippling effect on the labour market's output capacity. The Federal Government of Nigeria may find it impossible to pay the high expense of supporting university education in the nation in the face of the COVID-19 epidemic. The implication of this anomaly is that a lack of institutional funds caused by the COVID-19 pandemic may have an impact on the provision of infrastructure for effective teaching and learning, academic program planning, academic activity direction, reduced staff welfare and retention, porous school plant maintenance culture, and adequate supervision of educational programmes and activities.

Educational Managers' Transformational Lens

Transformational Lens in funding university education in this wise means the opportunities to use as a means of ensuring that intentional steps are taken to examine everything the university administrators do in order to ensure that the needs of stakeholders in higher institutions particularly the parents and students are met for whole-life transformation.

Many countries have already experienced a learning crisis that has escalated as a result of the pandemic. For example, by the time they reach 10 years of age, almost half of all children in low and middle-income countries are unable to read proficiently (World Bank, 2019). Changing this status quo would entail major increases in public financing of education in many countries.

For example, the IMF estimates that additional expenditure of US\$ 284 billion or 8 percentage points of GDP will be needed in low-income developing countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in education and health (Gasper, *et al*, 2019). It is important to note that over the past 15 years, developing countries have invested more in their education systems, but the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to be the clog in the wheel of education development. The way countries respond in terms of funding, however, will go a long way in making this just a temporary setback and in preventing losses in terms of their citizens' education.

It will be crucial to allocate additional funds to colleges, universities and other institutions as schools begin to reopen. It would be necessary to ensure that schools are adequately funded and that they are prevented from pursuing additional fees or donations from parents in order to alleviate the financial strain on households and ensure that children return to school.

Educational institutions will also need additional funding to enforce new health and safety standards, conduct the outreach programmes required to encourage students to return, and provide evidence to demonstrate that the distribution of school grants is an appropriate use of funds to minimize the risk of children dropping out (Snilstveit *et al.*, 2015).

The financing of academic institutions, regardless of the economic climate under which the institutions work, has always been a problematic topic. For this reason, higher education institutions in developing countries, including Nigeria, particularly universities, are constantly exploring ways of achieving financial self-sufficiency. This is endorsed by "Universities and other tertiary institutions are encouraged to pursue other sources of funding such as endowments, advisory services and business projects" in the Nigerian National Policy on Education (Section 8:2013, revised).

It is instructive to note that, as a result of inadequate funding for the education sector, higher learning institutions in Nigeria are now on the verge of collapse. Okebukola (2002) as cited in Halidu (2015) observed that the decline in funding in the Nigerian Public Universities has led to poor condition of service, acute shortage of research and learning facilities for both staff and students, and depletion in academic staff strength through brain drain. This has led to a fundamental decay in the university system in Nigeria, on the social, infrastructural and intellectual levels.

Funding has become a major challenge facing our higher institutions and the capacity of higher education administrators to handle and organise the available resources at their disposal for all practical purposes in the light of the current global COVID-19 pandemic, in order to keep these institutions self-sufficient or not to make them to be moribund.

Universities in Nigeria have two primary sources of funding, namely proprietorship funding and non-proprietorship funding (AbdulRaheem, 2009). The sources of non-proprietor financing include internal revenue generation from profit-making activities, endowments for tuition (only for state and private universities), etc. In most federal and state-owned universities, the owner provides 90% of the funding. It does not pretend that universities' financial futures can never be stable, predictable or adequate.

State education spending is heavily dependent on federal account allocation, rendering its educational targets vulnerable to national resource mobilization (COVID-19, foreign oil price fluctuation) and budget management challenges. Nigeria's federal government has set aside 568 billion naira (roughly USD 1.5 billion) for education in 2020. COVID-19, on the other hand, reduced this allocation to 509 billion naira (almost USD 1.34 billion) (UNESCO, 2020).

Lack of funding for University education would have an effect on broader development issues such as health, technology, poverty, and economic growth, as well as young people's empowerment. This will have a long-term effect on the economic advancement of the country. Since University education offers a forum for improving people's quality of life as well as the continuous regeneration of knowledge, power, and ability in society, allowing for increased productivity and growth.

Therefore, the COVID-19 should be an eye opener for university administrators to diversify the ways of financially preserving their universities, as the state is not prepared to be exclusively responsible for supplying the higher education fund.

The following ways of ensuring the sustainability of higher education in Nigeria should also be discussed, as these should alleviate the effects of COVID-19 on higher education funding.

1. Appeal and Launch Funds: Launch and appeal funds have been an important area used in higher institutions for fundraising. The launch, if well planned, would raise enough funds to help finance the organisation. During the ceremony, excessive spending should be avoided. The support for the launch and appeal should be widely promoted and rich people should be approached to be partners.

2. Honourary Degrees Award: Wealthy politicians want title chains. Honourary degrees such as doctoral degrees should be awarded to people who are willing to give the institutions worthwhile things in the provision of quality service to the people by the university. The honorary doctorate should not be made cheap. This degree should only be awarded to those who have contributed enormously to the universities particularly in terms of providing facilities for the institution.

3. Consultancy Services, Studies and contracts: Higher education institutions may also perform research for large organisations, such as oil and gas companies. The institutions can use the cash accrued from these consultancy services and studies to fund the school projects and programmes. For research from large industries ready to employ their services, the institutions should canvass. Universities can also bid for contracts and use their support for the proceeds. For example, in Universities Engineering Department can undertake road construction, electrical jobs construction, manufacturing, computer networking, and the like. Survey divisions will perform the survey employment. Universities should invite government initiatives to inform the community about the need to contract jobs to universities in order to assist in the financing aspect.

4. Part-Time, Remedial and Long-Vacation Programmes can be institutionalized: Certain faculties of universities, particularly the faculties of Education and Management Sciences can carry out part-time initiatives or distance learning for the working class. This may either be part-time or long vacation programmes. These systems should be rendered in such a way that, in terms of fees and lecture time, non degree holders in the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) can be targeted. If this is beneficial, more civil servants will further the education and more revenue will accrue to the institutions at the same time. Universities can also provide remedial services for those who do not fulfil the entry criteria. The cash from these programmes lead to the financing of institutions.

5. Alumni Association: An institution's old students are typically very proud to remember their Alma Mater. In universities, strong alumni associations should be established. Institutions should pursue their alumni for financial support. Old students, from time to time, should be recognised and invited. In order to invite them from time to time, institutions should keep track of their old students. The universities should keep track record of the wealthy and highly connected alumni and always get in touch with them.

6. Private Contributors: Major groups, such as religious institutions, should be aware of their need to assist with education funding. Universities should make everyone aware of the fact that it is everyone's duty to finance education. The need to help fund our universities education in order to provide both quantity and quality education should be informed to major corporations, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), investors of the country all. Clubs and societies, for example, can also provide services that can assist students in their teaching and learning such as the construction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) centres, boreholes, toilet facilities. Whereas non-governmental organisations can also assist in the funding of universities through the provision of educational programmes, documentary books and textbooks, scholarship, technical equipment, laboratory building, sports equipment, and host of others. University education should educate investors about their needs, so as to surmount the challenge of insufficient funds.

7. Parents Forum Contribution: Parents of the immediate beneficiaries of education should contribute a little to the financing of education. In addition to purchasing textbooks for their children, feeding and housing them, small sums should be obtained from parents as developmental fees. Parents' forum should be established by the universities, where there will be contact between parents and the university. This platform can be used by university to seek for assistance from parents. Some parents may be in a position to grant the university a contract. Some can even contribute cash to fund university projects; granting scholarships to outstanding students, building laboratories, additional lecture halls, and other equipment and facilities. It is believed that funding university education should be corporative efforts of stakeholders

8. Endowment Funds: In university particularly, endowment funds are set up by several higher institutions of learning where wealthy people help to improve quality and quantity education. According to Akangbon (1986, as quoted by Lawal, 2013), the universities to be kept in his honour in perpetuity is typically donated by prominent people. The university might honour some significant personalities in the community to promote good relationships. The purpose is for the name of the donor to be immortalised in the institution. For example, lecture halls are named after these people; laboratories, hostels, classroom blocks, and host of others facilities. The university should always publicise the endowment through the media in order to attract other donors.

9. Tuition fees should be charged: Tuition fees should be charged by university to cushion the effect of shortage of fund from the state pocket. If this should be done by the university, scholarship/bursary should be offered to those students who cannot

afford it as it is deemed fit. The funding situation of universities, especially federal and state universities where token are charge as tuition fee, will be greatly improved by this.

Others include the development of a foundation programmes (diploma courses), open and distance learning, establishment of business enterprises, hostels, schools, primary schools, bookshops, printing press, filling stations, guest houses and conference centres, car wash, car park, biological garden (livestock rearing), creative arts), agriculture and food processing, shop, radio station, foreign grants/foreign help and a host of others.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disastrous impact on Nigeria's educational system. Nigeria's economy is based mostly on crude petroleum exports. The educational sector's viability and administration are challenged by falling earnings from crude oil sales on the international market. Because of rising costs of delivery in university education caused by a combination of enrolment pressure, resistance or failure of institutions to adapt more efficient and productive financial management styles, and government's inability to keep pace with cost pressures, the face of other factors, it has become clear that government alone cannot fund university education in Nigeria (Faboyede, Faboyede, & Fakile, 2017).

The overall advancement of a country is directly proportional to the quality of its citizens' educational attainment, and the quality of education is dependent on long-term funding.

Nigerian education has suffered as a result of financial constraints, as the government has been unable to fund higher education effectively and efficiently due to politics, ongoing economic crises, corruption, and, most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic. The Federal Government alone cannot bear the burden of providing university education in Nigeria. Laudable educational goals cannot be achieved if university education is not adequately funded, thus, transformational lens by the university managers. It is only when all these sustainable money-generating strategies are put in place by the university managers to alleviate the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on the university finances that university can survive to some extent during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria and around the world, the national lockdown of educational institutions has caused significant disruptions in the learning of students; disruptions in the academic curriculum, suspension of examinations, creating a vacuum in teaching and learning and possibly cause a shortage of staff in the institutions as a result of novel Coronavirus. Therefore, the governments should not shy away from her inability to finance university education in Nigeria, and should allow universities to source alternative funds by granting them all the autonomy to source funds without interference in the process.

Therefore, it is proposed that the government should allow universities to charge tuition at all levels but, specific consideration should be given to students of poor parents who will be left at the discretion of the management of the university.

More alternative sources should be explored by the universities, because the

universities still have more left uncharted. In particular, state universities should use the commercial sources available as a way to finance universities without the students really being involved in the expense.

Government should increase budget allocation to university education on annual basis. The Minister of Education as well as state Commissioners for Education should lobby National Assembly and state assemblies to increase the education budget, this can be achieved by working closely with the Presidency and Governor's office as well as the House Committees on Education in the National assembly and state assemblies to increase the subsequent education allocation to above 10%, and then steadily grow the percentage upwards moving forward. In a situation where the Executive is unable to make funding increments, partnerships arrangement should be explored with the private sector and international donors to access funding for the education sector.

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