DIVERSIFICATION OF EDUCATIONAL FUNDS
FOR QUALITY DISTANCE EDUCATION
IN NIGERIA

BY

CHRIS C. CHUKWURAH Ph.D
DEPARTMENT OF VOCATIONAL AND
SPECIAL EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF CALABAR,
CALABR
churac2006@yahoo.com-08034715757

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ABSTRACT

The recent world economic meltdown may result to a serious decline in the quality of distance education in Nigeria. Huge amount of money is required to finance an effective and quality distance education. This paper ascertained the different ways of diversification of educational funds to finance distance education in Nigeria to enhance the attainment of quality distance education. Three research questions and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Questionnaire was administered to a population of 120 staff of distance education in Cross River state of Nigeria. Mean and standard deviation statistics were used to answer the research questions. While hypotheses were tested using t-test at .05 level of significance. The result revealed that public and private sectors as well as local income generation were main sources of financing distance education in Nigeria to offset the likely risks of its declines quality.

KEY WORDS: Diversification; Educational Funds, Quality Distance Education; World economic meltdown; public and private sectors, income generation.
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-political, 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 distance education by Nigerian Federal Government to meet the educational needs of Nigerians.

According to Ojo, Ogidan and Olakulehim (2006), 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).

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 purpose of reproducing high quality of teaching materials to instruct great number of students at the same time wherever they live. 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 distance education and national expectation when it enumerated the goals of 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 curricula; 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 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 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 distance education as it has consistently fallen short of the United Nation 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 Okonkwor, 2008). For diversification of sources of educational financing education, especially 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 Okonkwor (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 public and private sectors as well as local income generations in financing Nigeria distance education to enhance its quality.

**Research questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does public sector contribute to the funding of distance education in Cross River State?
2. What are the extent of private sector’s contribution in financing distance education in Cross River State?
3. To what extent do local income generations contribute to distance education funding in Cross River State?
Null hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female staff of distance education on the contribution of public sector in funding distance education in Cross River State of Nigeria.

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

Method

The survey research design was adopted for this study to elicit the opinions and responses of male and female staff of distance education in Cross River State of Nigeria. The entire population of 120, comprising 68 males and 52 females of members of staff of distance education was used for the study.

The study was carried out in Cross River 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 Cranach 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 and Standard Deviation statistics. The acceptable level of mean score was 2.50 and above, while the two hypotheses were tested using t-test at .05 level of significance.
### Results

**Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation ratings on the extent of public sectors contribution in funding distance education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Types of Funding</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Allocation of funds by government</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Grants-in-aids by government</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Provision of infrastructures</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Renovations</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Giving Loans</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Educational Tax Fund (ETF)</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows that all items except items 3 and 4, have each, a mean above 2.50. This indicated that public sector contributes to the funding of distance education in Nigeria by allocation of funds, grants-in-aids, loans and Educational Tax Fund. Public sector rarely provides infrastructures and renovations for distance education in Nigeria.
Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation ratings on the extent of private sectors contribute to the funding of distance education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Extent of Funding</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Donations/Gifts</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Programme sponsorship</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Technical assistance</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Building of infrastructures</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Giving Loans</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows that all the items have mean score above 2.50, which means that private sectors are involved in funding distance education in Nigeria by way of donations/gift, programme sponsorship, technical assistance, provision of infrastructures and giving loans respectively.
Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation ratings on the funding of distance education through local income generation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Description of Funding</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fees paid by students</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Consultancy services</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Farm products</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Investment ventures</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Car park fee charges</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mounting of educational programmes</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Launching/Appeal funds</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Income from researches</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 indicates that all items except items 5 and 8 have Mean ratings above 2.50. This showed that 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. 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 distance education on the funding of distance education by public sector.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of respondents</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t-cal</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P > .05, t-cal = 0.42, t-crit = 1.96

Table 4 revealed 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 distance education on the funding of distance education by public sector is accepted.
Table 5: t-test analysis of the Mean responses of male and female staff of distance education on the funding of distance education by private sectors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of respondent</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t-cal</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P > .05, t-cal = 0.082, t-crit = 1.96

Table 5 also revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female staff of distance education on the contribution of private sectors in funding 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 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 Okonkwor (2008), who revealed that Nigeria government has responded to the demand of the governing councils to double its allocation to the universities that operate distance education by increasing the recurrent allocation to the sub-sector. Also Ndili (2004) advocated that statutory grants to most universities that operate distance education should be mandatory to state governments whether the university was set up by the state government or not.

However, the finding revealed that Nigerian government does not favorably contribute to the provision of infrastructures and renovations for distance education in Nigeria. This does not agree with government’s emphasis on the importance of distance education and national expectations when it
enumerated the goals of distance education in the National Policy on Education (2004). It is necessary that the importance of 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 distance education in Nigeria. Both male and female staff of distance education showed no difference in their Mean responses on the funding of 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 distance education.
The study also showed that 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.

From the analysis of the hypotheses, it was revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female staff of distance education on the contribution of public sector in funding distance education. This finding has a link with Okafor and Okonkwor (2008) who stated that Nigeria government responded to the demand of governing councils to double its allocation to universities by increasing the recurrent allocation to the subsectors.
The study also revealed that there was no significant difference in the Mean ratings of male and female staff of distance education on the contribution of private sectors in funding distance education in Nigeria. In other words, private sectors contribute to the funding of distance education in Nigeria. This agrees with Okafor and Okonkwor (2008) who said that financing distance education should be a shared responsibility among the government as well as the rest of the members of the society.

**CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR QUALITY 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 public and private sectors in funding educational programmes cannot be over estimated. However, this study revealed that both public and private sectors contribute to the funding of distance education in Nigeria. 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).
Distance education in Nigeria is also funded through internally generated income, endowment fund, grants-in-aids. These creative and adequate strategies for financing distance education would enhance to offset the likely risks of declining quality distance education in Nigeria and in turn, help in the development of high level manpower. A country that wants to develop technologically, economically and socially must make good her education system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that funding of 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 distance education.
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