

Strategies of Funds Management for National Cohesion and Global Competitiveness in Universities in Rivers State

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Abstract- The study examined strategies of funds management for national cohesion and global competitiveness in universities in Rivers State. Two research questions were answered. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised three hundred (300) non-academic staff from the three universities in Rivers State. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select 160 non-academic staff representing 53% drawn from the total population of 300 non-academic staff across the three universities in Rivers State. The research instrument used for the study was a self constructed item questionnaire titled: Strategies for Fund Management in Universities Questionnaire (SFMUQ), scoring was done on a modified 4 likert points of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. Test-retest technique was used to determine the reliability of the study. Reliability index of 0.83 was realized using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient which is high, reliable and adequate for the study. It was found among other things that prudent management of funds is a sine-qua non for achieving global competitiveness and national cohesion in universities in Rivers State, financial autonomy, planning and timely disbursement of funds serve as a panacea for achieving national cohesion and global competitiveness in universities in Rivers State. Based on the findings, it was recommended that university administrators in Rivers State should cultivate a culture of financial prudence to avoid mismanagement of funds, adequate financial autonomy should be given to the universities in Rivers State to boost their revenue base for national cohesion and global competitiveness.

Index Terms- Strategies of funds management, national cohesion and global competitiveness, Universities in Rivers State

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is widely accepted as a major instrument for promoting socio-economic, political and cultural development for global competitiveness. Universities educate future leaders and develop the high-level technical capacities that underpin economic growth and development (Odekunle, 2001). Accordingly, Ibekun (2016) opined that the main purpose and relevance of university education is the provision of much needed manpower to accelerate the socio-economic development of the nation. University education is regarded as an instrument of social change, a panacea for national cohesion and global competitiveness.

To collaborate these assertions, national Policy on Education (2004) outlined the goals of the university education to include among others;

- a) Contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training.
- b) Development and inculcation of proper values for the survival of the individual and society.
- c) Develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments.
- d) Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-relevant and useful members of the society.
- e) Promote and encourage scholarship and community service,
- f) Forge and cement national unity
- g) Promote national and international understanding and interaction.

Considering the importance of university education, there is the need for mapping out strategies for funds management to enhance national cohesion and global competitiveness. Therefore, effective and efficient achievement of educational objectives is heavily dependent on the availability of resources, the quality of the available resources and the efficiency in the management of the available funds. Ebong (2006), stated that for university education system in Nigeria to provide quality education, the country needs efficient

fund management in the schools. This is the responsibility of the school administrators who know that effective utilization of funds is very crucial in the operation of the university system in order to achieve its set goals.

In funding of university system, Ebong and Afangideh (2010), noted that fund are needed for the payment of staff salaries (teaching and non-teaching), procurement of instructional materials, transportation cost of running schools, creation of new building and maintenance of existing ones. However, Maduagwu (2006) decry that funds have not been adequate for running the schools. Maduagwu's view must have been grafted in Enaohwo (1990), whom when he stated that, the most independent challenge in educational development is shortage of funds. Individuals cannot afford the type of education they want for their children yet government cannot do much because of poor revenue base.

Following from Enaohwo (1990), as cited in Maduagwu (2006), it can be conveniently concluded that since government subvention has not been enough over the years, there is need for strategies for fund management in the university system in order to sustain national cohesion and global competitiveness.

What is required is that both the Federal, State Government and stakeholders should adopt strategies for fund management in the university system especially universities in Rivers State. Based on the result of the findings of Afangideh (2010) and Nwile (2008), some of the strategies to be adopted to enhance fund management for national cohesion and global competitiveness in our university system especially in Rivers State include financial autonomy, planning as an administrative tool and other alternative sources of funding.

II. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Education plays vital role in the development of any nation ranging from national cohesion to global competitiveness. Education is an agent which transforms the destiny of man and its society. The wealth and vitality of a nation rest upon the development of its people. Thus, the amount of fund allocated for universities has not been effectively manage over the years weather they are from federal or state government and have degenerated to chronic issues of underfunding of our university which hamper teaching, learning and research which serves as the objectives of the university system.

The university administrators blame the government for underfunding and the government sblame the university administrators of misappropriation, embezzlement, wrong settings of priorities and division of funds allocated to the universities. The university system is yet to justify the huge fund allocated to it. As a result of this, university education is in a great down turn, especially in Rivers State, and the question is why? Despite federal and state governments' subvention to the three universities in Rivers State learning conditions, accommodation of both students and staff, classroom block, researchers' grants, lecturers' remunerations are still in bad shape. Hence the researcher of this study is concerned about strategies of fund management for national cohesion and global competitiveness in the three universities in Rivers State to address the long awaiting issues of chronic underfunding in the university system especially now that the country is experiencing economy difficulties as a result of drop in oil receipt which is the major source of income to federal and state government.

III. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to find out strategies of funds management for national cohesion and global competitiveness in universities in Rivers State. The specific objectives are to;

1. Examine the use of financial autonomy for fund management for national cohesion and global competitiveness in universities in Rivers State.
2. Examine planning as administrative tool for fund management for national cohesion and global competitiveness in universities in Rivers State.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study is guided by the following research questions.

1. In what ways has financial autonomy been used for fund management for national cohesion and global competitiveness in universities in Rivers State?
2. In what ways has planning as administrative tool been used for fund management for national cohesion and global competitiveness in universities in Rivers State?

V. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical position of this study is anchored on the African political economy model of education funding popularized by Aina (2007). The theory states that different structures in the society (including the economic, social and political structures, together with the value, believe system interact with one another and they are interdependent. Aina (2007) opined that the model focuses on how

political and economic forces shapes the context, in which Nigeria universities carry out their functions of teaching and research. It helps to explain the realities of the specific political, economy and social depression, structural adjustment and the debt burden, political instability, reduction in government subvention, all impact in a special way on the educational system. Aina (2007); stated that borrowing from the Marxian tradition, the economic factor provides the axis around which all movement occur. In order to improve the funding of education programmes in Nigeria, some important elements within the social system are identified. These are the external structures (government and policies) and internal structures. In the opinion of Afangideh (2005), the external structures represent the financial autonomy and administrative commitment variables. From the explanations above, the theory is suitable for the study.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

FINANCIAL AUTONOMY FOR EFFECTIVE FUND MANAGEMENT

Financial autonomy refers to a university which exercises independent control over its day to day operations, funds from government or generated, internally and its curriculum design. Autonomy is generally associated with universities, institutions and implies that sponsoring (federal or state) does not have control over or dictates in matters of universities especially in its funds management. The university system enjoyed relative measures of financial autonomy, they were left to function with zero interference from both the federal and state government. The university system were allowed to organize their own entrance examinations and selection of candidates for admissions without government or its agencies interference. Not more lecturers are employed by the governing council of various universities when the need arises. Members of the governing council are selected from those who have idea of higher education administration. The university system were adequately funded Onwuka (2004), cited in Wali (2007). Financial autonomy of universities in Rivers State cannot be over-emphasized as it serves as a panacea for national cohesion and global competitiveness.

PLANNING AS ADMINISTRATIVE TOOL FOR FUNDING

Agabi (1999) noted that planning is a systematic process by which a given society consciously and in a rational manner, decides the course of action and pattern the growth and development of the university education towards national cohesion and global competitiveness. Planning is systematic because its set of actions are so operationally linked they have to be carried out in sequential order to enhance or achieve optimal result. In view of Agabi (1999), university management in Rivers State are to set priorities in a systematic manner that will ex-ray all the expected project that sources of revenue. Setting of priorities will always avoid wastage and cut down on abundant projects in the three universities in Rivers State.

Planning is a decision making process because it involves deciding courses of action in university growth and development, the decision includes determining educational policies, goals, priorities, objectives targets, programmes, projects and choices to be pursued (Agabi, 1999).

Nwosu (2006), noted that planning is the objectives and goals of the national development effort, estimating and mobilizing the various domestic and foreign resources, skills and allocating them to those specific uses which seen likely to make the greatest contributions to achieve the national objectives.

VI. METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out using descriptive survey research design which is ex-post facto in nature. The target population of the study comprised three hundred (300) non academic staff from the three universities in Rivers State. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select 160 non academic staff representing 53% drawn from the total population of 300 s non- academic staff across the three universities in Rivers State. The research instrument used for the study was a self constructed 10 item questionnaire titled: Strategies for Effective Fund Management in Universities Questionnaire (SFMUQ). Scoring was done on a modified 4 likert points of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. Test-retest technique was used to determine the reliability of the study. Reliability index of 0.83 was realized using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient which is high, reliable and adequate for the study. The instrument was administered personally by the researcher and all the copies distributed were retrieved without loss. Frequency tables, percentage and mean scores were used to answer the research questions and the mean above 2.5 was seen as agreed while below 2.5 were seen as disagreed. Data collected was computed, analyzed using frequency table, mean and ranking system. The scores above 2.5 were accepted while those below 2.5 were rejected in the final analysis. The weighted mean is as follow:

SA = 4 points, A = 3 points, D = 2 points, SD = 1 point

$$4+3+2+1 = \frac{10}{4} = 2.5$$

VII. RESULTS

Research Question 1: In what ways has financial autonomy been used for fund management for national cohesion and global competitiveness in universities in Rivers State?

| S/No | Questionnaire items | SA | A | D | SD | Total | Mean | Ranking |
|------|--|-----|----|----|----|-------|------|-----------------|
| 1. | University that have control of admission procedures can raise funds for running university administration for national cohesion | 80 | 40 | 30 | 10 | 510 | 3.2 | 3 rd |
| 2. | University that are given autonomy to raise funds can improve their revenue base for global competitiveness | 70 | 50 | 25 | 15 | 495 | 3.0 | 4 th |
| 3. | University that operates consultants service can get more fund for the implementation of project for national cohesion | 100 | 30 | 20 | 10 | 540 | 3.4 | 1 st |
| 4. | University that is in charge of funds for employment of its staff can raise fund for easy payment of salaries for global competitiveness | 60 | 80 | 12 | 3 | 512 | 3.21 | 2 nd |
| 5. | Charges fees for the provision of facilities can improve their financial base for global competitiveness | 50 | 70 | 22 | 18 | 472 | 2.95 | 5 th |

From the table above, all the items 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 had criterion mean of 2.5 and above and were all accepted in the final analysis. The respondents agreed that control of admission procedures, given autonomy to raise funds, consultancy services, taking charge of funds for employment of its staff and charges of fees for the provision of facilities are some of the ways financial autonomy has been used for fund management for national cohesion and global competitiveness in universities in Rivers State.

Research Question 2: In what ways has planning as administrative tool been used for fund management for national cohesion and global competitiveness in universities in Rivers State?

| S/No | Questionnaire items | SA | A | D | SD | Total | Mean | Ranking |
|------|---|----|----|----|----|-------|------|-----------------|
| 6. | Timely release of funds to universities is capable of improving the revenue base | 60 | 50 | 35 | 15 | 475 | 2.96 | 2 nd |
| 7. | Appropriate sanction for administrators found wanting as a measure to avoid embezzlement of fund | 50 | 70 | 22 | 18 | 472 | 2.95 | 3 rd |
| 8. | Judicious use of funds allocated to universities is capable of leading to effective fund management | 72 | 38 | 30 | 20 | 282 | 3.0 | 1 st |
| 9. | External and internal audit in the universities to serve a strategies for effective fund management | 65 | 35 | 32 | 28 | 457 | 2.8 | 4 th |
| 10. | Employment of administrators can be enhanced through years of experience | 40 | 50 | 45 | 25 | 425 | 2.6 | 5 th |

From the data above, all the items 8, 6, 7, 9 and 10 with mean of 3.9, 2.96, 2.95, 2.8 and 2.6 respectively were accepted because their weighted mean was above 2.5. the respondents agreed that timely release of fund to universities, appropriate sanction for administrators found wanting, judicious use of funds, external and internal audit in the universities and employment of administrators based on the years of experience are some of the ways planning as administrative tool been used for fund management for national cohesion and global competitiveness in universities in Rivers State.

VIII. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In research question 1, the ways financial autonomy has been used for fund management for national cohesion and global competitiveness in universities in Rivers State, it was generally accepted that university can raise funds for running university administration for national cohesion, university that are given autonomy to raise funds can improve their revenue base for global competitiveness, university that operates consultants services can get more fund for the implementation of project for national cohesion, university that is in charge of funds for employment of its staff can raise fund for easy payment of salaries for global competitiveness and university that charges fees for the provision of facilities can improve their financial base for global competitiveness. This finding agrees with Bema (2014) who posited that the achievement of educational goals is the function of adequate financial autonomy and funding support through the yearly budgetary allocation by the Rivers State government through minister of education.

In research question 2, the ways planning as administrative tool been used for fund management for national cohesion an global competitiveness include the followings, timely release of funds to university is capable of improving the revenue base, appropriate sanction for administrators found wanting as a measure to avoid embezzlement of fund, judicious use of funds allocated to universities is capable of leading to effective fund management, external and internal audit in the universities serve as strategies for effective fund management and employment of administrators can be enhance through years of experience. This is supported by Nwosu (2006) who noted that planning is the objectives and goals of the national development effort, estimating and mobilizing the various domestic and foreign resources, skills and allocating them to those specific uses which seen likely to make the greatest contributions to achieved the national objectives.

IX. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the paper concluded that effective fund management is a sine qua non for achieving national cohesion and global competitiveness in universities in Rivers State. Hence there is need for financial autonomy and timely release of funds to universities in order to enhance their revenue base for national cohesion and global competitiveness.

X. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusion and as well as the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made for implementation.

1. Adequate financial autonomy should be given to the universities in Rivers State to boost their revenue base for national cohesion and global competitiveness.
2. University administrators in Rivers State should cultivate a culture of financial prudence to avoid mismanagement of funds allocated to them.
3. Government and other stakeholders in education such as Banks, multinational corporations should through in-service training organize seminars, workshops, conferences to the university administrators in Rivers State to update them on fund accounting principles.

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