

Planning of Higher Education in Nigeria: Challenges and Way Forward

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ABSTRACT: Higher education in Nigeria is the post-secondary school education. It is the most sensitive educational because of its roles in the social, economic and technological development. Higher education in most part of the world is well planned and managed. It is unfortunate that the Nigerian higher education faces many challenges due to poor planning. This article discusses the challenges facing planning of higher education in Nigeria. Qualitative data was used to support the various points raised in the article. This study sourced the qualitative data from print materials and online resources. The article identified: inadequate funding of planning education, inadequate data, and shortage of professional planners in higher education, poor capacity of educational planners, shortage of planning materials, political instability, political influence and poor planning methods used for planning higher education as the challenges facing planning of higher education in Nigeria. To address these challenges, the article recommends as follows: government should increase the fund for educational planning, generate current data for planners, employ more professional planners with specialization in higher education, provide educational planners with adequate planning materials, ensure stable policies and political environment, fight all forms of institutional corruption and stop influencing educational planners.

KEYWORDS: Challenges, Higher education, objectives, Planning, Programme, policies

1.0 Introduction

The Nigerian educational system comprises the basic education, secondary school education, higher education and other formal and informal education. Higher education in Nigeria is the largest in Africa. The Nigerian higher education includes the polytechnics, college of education and the universities. Higher education is an organized education that deals with the business of teaching, researching and the provision of community services.

National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004), defines Higher Education as the Post-Secondary Section of the National education system, which is given of Universities, Polytechnics and colleges of technology including courses as are given by the Colleges of Education, Advanced Teachers Training colleges, Correspondence Colleges and such institutions as may be allied to them. The objectives of higher education in Nigeria include: the acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value orientation for the survival of the individual and societies; the development of the intellectual capacities of individuals to understand and appreciate environment; the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to develop into useful members of the

community; the acquisition of an overview of the local and external environments (FGN, 2004). National Policy on Education again stated that higher educational institutions should pursue these goals through: teaching, research, the dissemination of existing and additional information, the pursuit of service to the community; and by being a store-house of knowledge (FGN, 2004).

The federal government does the planning of education in Nigeria with the participation of the state and local government through their ministries of education and commissioners, Directors of education and chief executive officers of education in various educational institutions across the country. The federal government handles the planning of federal higher institutions while the states government deals with the planning of state higher institutions using the guideline developed by the various federal government commissions and agencies in charge of higher institutions in the country.

For effective planning, supervision and external administration of higher institutions in the country, the federal government through the federal ministries of education established some commissions and agencies like National Universities Commission for planning of universities, National commission of colleges of education for planning of colleges of education and National Board for Technical Education for planning of technical education in the country. All these commissions are saddled with the responsibilities of ensuring effective planning, supervision and administration of higher education in the country.

Many challenges plague Nigerian higher education and these challenges include; inadequate funding, shortage of teachers, inadequate infrastructural facilities, overcrowding and poor quality of education. These challenges are linked with the poor planning of higher education in Nigeria. Generally, education in Nigeria has not received comprehensive planning and this is affecting the entire educational system. There is a problem with planning of education in Nigeria, (Moja, 2000, Ogunode., Gregory & Abubakar, 2020). Thompson (1981) and Mgbekem, Ntukidem, Etor (2004) agreed that the Nigerian educational system has often been criticized for poor planning inherited from colonial masters. It has been condemned for being unable to meet the needs and aspirations of the country because of its non functionality, irrelevant curriculum, unrelatedness of the learning experiences etc. (Ozigi & Canhan, 1979, Mgbekem, Ntukidem, Etor, 2004). Mgbekem, Ntukidem, Etor (2004) observed that the education process has been faulty, inadequate and inefficient for Nigerian purposes: e.g. non-achievement of a national goal of technological transformation. Planning Education in Nigeria (even though recent) is beset with myriads of problems but as observed by Agwu (2006), "the falling standard of education in Nigeria has been discussed privately at homes and workplaces and in public both in churches and mosques. With the recent Post-Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) screening examinations for university admission, the evidence is becoming clearer even to the doubting Thomas." He concluded that it is impossible to dissociate the crises in planning education (PE) from the collapse of the Nigeria employment sector"(Ileleji, 2014). Whenever there are challenges implementing educational programme or projects, the first thing to evaluate is the planning. When the educational system is not plan properly, its implementation will be difficult. This article will discuss the challenges facing planning of higher education in Nigeria.

2.0 Concept of Higher Education Planning

This outlining the objectives and programme of higher education, it identifies the means of realizing the objectives and programme of higher education. Planning of higher education involves the process of identifying goals, programmes and policies for the development of higher education and stating

the human and materials resources that will achieve the programme and goals. Higher *education planning* may be defined as a systematic design of action for realization of higher education programme and goals in the country. Higher education planning defines, describes or determines programme, actions, policies, conditions and needs of higher education in future and strategically identified means and how to realize the programme and needs identified.

Reasons for the planning of higher education include: shortage of resources, to realize the objectives of higher education, to ensure effective allocation of resources for implementing higher education programme; to achieve optimum resources distribution, to ensure production of personnel for higher education, to ensure adequate infrastructural facilities for implementation of higher education, to reduce wastage in the administration of higher education and to ensure quality education in higher education.

3.0 Challenges facing Planning of Higher Education in Nigeria

The following are the challenges facing planning of higher education in Nigeria: inadequate funding of planning education, inadequate data, shortage of professional planners in higher education, poor capacity of educational planners, shortage of planning materials, institutional corruption, political instability and political influence as the challenges facing planning of higher education in Nigeria.

3.1 Inadequate Funding of Planning Education

Inadequate funding of educational planning in Nigeria is an enormous problem facing the planning of education, especially the higher education. The budgetary allocation for the educational sector is inadequate and this is affecting other commission and agencies under the federal ministries of education in the country. The funds released for programme like planning of education are not adequate to critically carried out a comprehensive educational planning programme in the country. Poor funding of educational planning is responsible for the poor quality of educational planning we are experiencing in the country. Victoria & Owuama (2016) conducted a study that aimed at determining the constraints to planning and implementation of higher education programmes was carried out, with emphasis on the six higher institutions in Rivers State. The result of the study revealed among others that inadequacy of funds, planning without accurate statistical data, political influence, and misappropriation of funds and shortage of qualified staff were major constraints. The findings also revealed that there was a significant difference between male and female unit heads on the perception of constraints to planning and implementation of higher education programmes. Abubakar & Ogunode (2021) did a study that evaluated the challenges facing the planning of special education in Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, Nigeria. The study concluded that inadequate funding, inadequate data/information, political instability, changes of educational policies, poor capacity development of planners, and inadequate professional educational planners are problems facing planning of special education in FCT. Akpan, (2014), Onah (2006) and Peaking (2020) all agree that inadequate funding is a problem facing the planning of education in Nigeria.

3.2 Inadequate Data

Inadequate data is another fundamental problem facing the planning of higher education in Nigeria. Lack of data is a general problem facing the entire educational institutions in Nigeria. Educational data on every form of educational institutions are not generated on time and are not available to take decision and to plan. Educational planners need data on students enrolment, infrastructural facilities, numbers of teaching and non-teaching staff, the qualification, experiences, number of students graduating every years, gender distributions, academic scores of all students, geographic distribution of students, Nationalities of students, etc. Data is very important for planners and administrators for

taking decision and to plan. Without data, no meaningful educational planning can take place. The Executive Secretary of National Universities Commission said that for the Nigerian University System (NUS) to be respected globally, it must live above board by managing an effective and reliable information system that would guarantee accurate, reliable and timely data that could be used in advising government on issues of national planning. He observed that without accurate data, effective and strategic planning would not only be difficult for the university but also for the government. He said that as Ivory Tower, we expect Universities to have adequate and reliable information across all variables such as the total number of students enrolment; total number of students by programme; faculty; gender; age; mode of entry into the university; Local Government of origin; State of origin; nationality; geo-political zone; distribution in term of PhD, Masters, PGD programmes and students (NUC, 2016). Higher institutions do not generate data on time and not even available sometimes. NEEDS (2014) submitted that it was challenging to obtain data with current statistics for the assessment, mainly due to the fact that current data on the education sector was not available in the public domain. The assessment therefore relied on available data, some of which was over three years old and had not been updated at the time of the study. The reluctance of government officials also limited the assessment of releasing data or responding to surveys and inquiries despite several follow-up visits, contacts and reminders. NEEDS (2014) also observe that the major challenge is the non-availability of qualitative data on polytechnic education, the National Universities Commission Boss, a commission established to handle supervision of universities in Nigeria acknowledged and confessed that when he was newly appointed in August 2016, there was no reliable statistical data to plan his programmes adding that the lack of data affected the pace of his work. The NUC Boss, however, promised that the statistical digest would be published every year to highlight the development and situation of the Nigerian Universities. So, the lack of data on higher institutions in Nigeria is responsible for the planning of higher education in Nigeria (NUC, 2018). Inadequate data is a challenge facing planning of education in Nigeria according to (Akpan, 2014, British Council 2014, Ogunode 2014)

3.3 Shortage of Professional Planners in Higher Education

Shortage of professional planners with specialization on higher education is another challenge facing planning of higher education in Nigeria. In Nigeria, there are shortage of professional educational planners especially in the higher institutions. This problem is affecting the planning of higher education. The shortage of professional educational planners in Nigeria is due to lack of manpower planning, few higher institutions offering the programme and poor investment in the programme. Ogunode (2018) carried out a study that investigated the challenges facing the planning of Basic Education in FCT, Abuja, Nigeria. Result collected and analyzed in the study showed that: inadequate educational planners, poor capacity of educational planners, inadequate funding of planning, inadequate planning tools, political influences, political instability and lack of reliable data/information are the challenges facing planning of basic education. According to Ogunode (2021) another challenge preventing effective educational planning in Nigeria is inadequate educational planners. There is shortage of professional educational planners in the federal ministry of education, states ministries of education and in the department of education in the various local governments in the country. The shortage of professional planners in the various ministries and agencies of government handling planning of education is affecting planning of education in Nigeria. Uche (1995), Gbenu, (2012), Ileleji (2014) and Akpan, (2014) observed that another limitation to educational planning in Nigeria is the shortage of professional planners in the country.

3.4 Poor Capacity of Educational Planners

Another challenge facing planning of higher education in Nigeria is poor capacity development of the planners working in the federal ministries and commission and agencies of government handling planning of higher education. Many educational planners working presently in majorities of the ministries and agencies are not going for constant training and retraining programme to improve their planning skills and capacity. Ogunode (2021) observed that poor capacity development of educational planners working in different agencies and department of education both at the state and federal level is preventing effective planning of education. Many educational planners since employed have not gone for training and retraining programme to help them improve on their planning capacities. Training and retraining programme is vital for educational planners. It helps them acquire new knowledge and skills of modern planning. Educational planners who are exposed to training and retraining programme perform well than those who are not going for training. Ogunode (2018) submitted that that poor capacity of planner, political influence, political instability, inadequate data, inadequate fund to plan, pressure group, inadequate planning are the challenges facing the planning of higher institutions. Ololube, (2013) stated that most educational planners in Nigerian do not have complete competence in planning. Qualified planners are the single most significant resource that can lead to greater and efficient planning productivity as performance. In planning, what is needed is the effective utilization resources by connecting the totality of knowledge, skills and talents to achieve planning objectives. The quality of planners should not be anything less than the basic acceptable standards worldwide.

3.5 Shortage of Planning Materials

Shortage of planning materials is one of the major challenges preventing effective planning of higher education in Nigeria. Ogunode, Gregory & Abubakar, (2020) did a study assessed the political officeholder attitudes towards planning of education in FCT. The results revealed that there was a significant relationship between the attitudes of political officeholders and poor planning of education in FCT. The finding revealed among other thing that 100% of the respondents disagreed that political officeholders are providing necessary planning tools for educational planner to plan education while majorities of the respondents disagreed that political officeholders have positive attitude toward educational planning, majority of the respondents disagreed that adequately funding are provided for educational planning. It was also discovered that majorities of the respondents disagreed that political officeholders are supporting the capacity development of educational planners. Inadequate planning material is another challenge facing planning of education in Nigeria, (Ogunode, 2021, Noun 2009, Akpan, 2014)

3.6 Institutional Corruption

Institution corruption is a big problem preventing effective planning of higher education in Nigeria. Funds released for planning, supervision, administration of higher institutions are been looted or misappropriated by some officers in the ministries and agencies of government responsible for planning of education. Corruption has penetrated some ministries and agencies of education in the country leading to a reduction in the volume of monies meant for the development of the educational programme in the country. Ogunode (2021) submitted that corruption has penetrated the ministry of education. Funds made available for planning have been diverted by officers working in the various agencies and department handling planning of education. Corruption is one of the biggest challenges preventing the effective planning of education in Nigeria. Ogunode (2021) and Gbenu, (2012) observed that high level of corruption and wastage of resources in which the limited fund made available is diverted into personal purses and sometimes used for projects not budgeted for. Transparency International says 66 percent of the money Nigerian governments allocate to education

is stolen by corrupt officials. According to the report, corruption is commonplace in education systems across the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). “This affects education access, quality, inclusion and learning outcomes with devastating consequences, not only for national economic growth but also for the life chances of children, their families and communities,” the report said. The report highlighted “Resource misallocation, corrupt procurement, exchange of sex for grades, examination malpractices, fake qualifications, teacher absenteeism, and corrupt recruitment practices” as the various corruption risks and challenges facing education systems in all the countries (Ogunode 2021, Premium times, 2020).

3.7 Political Instability

Political instability is another problem facing planning of higher education in Nigeria. The change of political leaders and political party affects the planning process and planning implementation. The former administration in Nigeria from 2011 to 2015 came up with a plan of mega universities in Nigeria, the expiration of the tenure led to the termination of that plan document. WENR (2017) submitted that In 2013, the federal government announced plans to create six regional ‘mega-universities’ with the capacity to admit 150,000 to 200,000 students each. Akpan, (2014) observed that in Nigeria the leader in power even changed educational policies and plans. Therefore, we have not given our educational plans enough time as pacified in the plan to mature before they are terminated. The success of any plan or policy cannot be ascertained until its implementation and evaluation. The most serious problem in the Nigerian educational system is premature termination of plans and policies and this affects educational planning. Deedam, Akpe & Juliana (2019) observed that Nigerian government makes a lot of promises but cannot deliver on their promises. They are not committed enough in continuing and completing plans put in place already by their predecessors. Ogunode, (2021) political instability is another problem preventing effective planning of education in Nigeria. The Nigerian political structure and system are designed for change of government every four years. The changes in government affect planning processes because different political party has their different political agenda and programmes. Political instability has had its toll on educational programmes. Planning process started by one administration is brutally interrupted by the next and the differences between federal and state government education policies are quite challenging. The inability of the Nigerian political structure does not allow for education planners to be accountable for their wrong doings. Ogunode,(2020) carried out a study, and the findings showed that; political instability, inadequate planning information, inadequate planning materials, poor educational planner training, inadequate funding for planning activities and a shortage of professional educational planners are the challenges facing planning for secondary schools in FCT, Abuja, Nigeria.

3.8 Political Influence

Political influence is a very serious problem facing the planning of education in Nigeria. Politicians both at the federal and states level especially the at the position of president and state governors influence location of higher institutions to their states and communities to attract development and achieve political gain by altering the national document on siting of educational institutions in the country. Presidents, state governors, ministers and honourable members are found with the habit of influencing the educational planners and administrators of higher institutions to locate higher institutions in their communities. This act has made the sitting of higher institutions not evenly distributed in the country. Some states have many higher institutions than the others. Ololube, (2013) submitted that the existing political arrangement has influenced the control over educational planning in Nigeria. According to Ogunode (2021) political power or political influence is a major problem preventing effective planning of education in Nigeria. Political officeholders influence the

educational planners to locate educational institutions in their states and communities. Educational planners are not allowed to plan especially in the sitting of educational plants across the country. This problem of influencing educational planners is responsible for the concentration of educational institutions in one particular zone while other zones are having less educational institutions in the country. Adesina (1982) and Agabi (1999) who reported that political constraints on planning and implementation at any level of education arise from politicization of knowledge by political leaders in power. Even in situations where technical planners try to prove the rational superiority of their decisions, there has been evidence of arbitrary use of political power to impose socio-political decisions over others. Okoli, Ogbondah, & Ewor, (2016) submitted that there has been political interference in the establishment of universities in Nigeria. With the return of civil rule in 1999, the spate of government's establishment of federal universities continued, beginning in 2002 when the Obasanjo administration resuscitated the National Open University, Lagos, which was suspended in 1984. The administration also established the Federal University of Petroleum Resources (FUPRE), Effurun in 2007. The political crises that surrounded the establishment of this university manifested when the Yar'Adua's regime attempted to relocate the university to Kaduna State. This attempt was met with brick walls as it was vehemently opposed by the people of the Niger Delta region through students' protests, and threats from South-South Governors' Forum. Thus, Ojameruaye (2009:10) writes: *the governors of the South-South geo-political zone met in Asaba, Delta State to express their indignation over the purported movement of the University of Petroleum Resources from Effurun to Kaduna. At the end of their meeting, the governors threatened to withdraw from the amnesty deal of the Federal Government if the contentious issue was not resolved. It was after the Asaba meeting, that the Presidency sent the Minister of State for the Niger Delta, Mr. Orubebe, to re-assure the Governors that the FG did not intend to relocate neither the PTI nor the FUPRE from Effurun to Kaduna as alleged.*

Similarly, in 2007, there was a proposed plan by Governor Rotimi Amaechi to relocate the Rivers State University of Science and Technology from its present site in Nkpolu to a permanent site in Ikwerre Local Government Area, as part of the Greater Port Harcourt City Project (The Port Harcourt Telegraph, 2012 in Nyewusira, 2014). It is pertinent to note here that Governor Amaechi hails from Ikwerre Local Government Area. The honourables also influence sitting of universities to their communities against the national planning. *A bill to establish Aerospace and Aeronautics University in Oka Akoko, Ondo State, passed second reading on the floor of the Nigerian Senate. The bill was sponsored by Senator Prof. Boro face representing northern senatorial district in Ondo state.* Gbenu, (2012) observed that legislature has a direct influence on the planning processes as the body responsible for policy formulation on educational development. Generally, the legislature is compelled to serve the interest of other special interest groups. There is therefore the possibility of conflicts between legislature and the rational ideas proposed by the technical planners which has been based on statistical analysis of the education system. The legislature represents the government; the technical planner is responsible for analysis of the education system, making available projection for enrolment, physical facilities, funds and personnel required for an educational project.

3.9 Poor Planning Methods

Poor planning method adopted by educational planners planning higher education in Nigeria is another problem preventing effective planning of higher education. Poor or inadequate feasibility studies in planning and lack of comprehensive statistics are responsible for the failure of development plans in Nigeria (Ibetan and Oghator, 2013). Nigeria planners did not carry out intensive feasibility studies and comprehensive statistics about the cost of the project before

including them in the development plans. This resulted to littering the nation with uncompleted and abandoned projects. Gbenu, (2012) observed that poor planning technique is one of the effects of having incompetent planners manning planning section in the ministries. Some of them are not well versed in modern planning techniques that will make the job easy at minimized cost. They can hardly use or interpret data, and of course can hardly subject data to real analysis. Ololube (2013) who observed in Nigeria that educational system is encountering many significant impediments in terms of implementation and the educational system quality assurance in the last decades due to lack of effective planning. He identified shortage of accurate data, finances, qualified planners, poor national economic performance, unsuitable governing structure, interference and instability as responsible for low quality in educational planning.

4.0 Way Forward

To address this challenges, the article recommends the following: government should increase the fund for educational planning, generate current data for planners, employ more professional planners with specialization in higher education, provide educational planners with adequate planning materials, ensure training and retraining programme for educational planners, ensure stable policies and political environment, fight all forms of institutional corruption and stop influencing educational planners.

- a) The federal government should increase the funding of planning of education in the country;
- b) The government should empower and reform all commissions and agencies charged with responsibilities of data generation and distribution in the country to ensure effective generation and supply of data for planning of higher education in Nigeria;
- c) More professional educational planners should be employ in the various agencies, commissions and ministry of education where planning of higher education is taking place;
- d) The government should provide adequate planning tools for all educational planners working in the commissions, agencies and ministry of education;
- e) The government should ensure educational planners working in the ministries, agencies and department of education are constantly going for training to boost their planning capacity. Training on forecasting, projection and planning methods should be emphasized (Ogunode, 2021).
- f) The government should fight all forms of corruption in the ministries, agencies, commission and department of education to allow funds meant for planning to be used for planning;
- g) The government should develop a model that allows participation of all political actors in the country to participant in policy formulation and education planning so that the exit of one political party from office will not stop the implementation of the plan already done (Ogunode, 2021).
- h) The politicians and political actors in the government should allow the educational planners to do their work professionally and should avoid influencing their planning document to favour more allocation to their constituencies (Ogunode, 2021).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the article defined higher education as the post-secondary school education and outlined that challenges facing planning of higher education to include: inadequate funding of planning education, inadequate data, and shortage of professional planners in higher education, poor capacity of educational planners, shortage of planning materials, political instability, political influence and poor planning methods used for planning higher education as the challenges facing

planning of higher education in Nigeria. In order to find lasting solutions to the problem faced by planning of higher education in Nigeria, the article recommended the following: government should increase the fund for educational planning, generate current data for planners, employ more professional planners with specialization in higher education, provide educational planners with adequate planning materials, ensure stable policies and political environment, fight all forms of institutional corruption and stop influencing educational planners.

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